

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ABBOT BEYNE SCHOOL**

Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124449

Headteacher: Mr D G Marriott

Reporting inspector: Mr David Cox  
10297

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 250759

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Voluntary controlled  
Age range of students: 11 – 18  
Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Linnell Building  
Osborne Street  
Burton-on-Trent  
Staffordshire

Postcode: DE15 0JL

Telephone number: 01283 239835

Fax number: 01283 239852

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs M Fletcher

Date of previous inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10297	D Cox	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements.</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9086	R Watkins	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?</p>
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English English as an additional language.	
1779	D Leonard	Team inspector	Science	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design	
11933	D Driscoll	Co-ordinator	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular opportunities?
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	History	
17404	J Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
32178	J Shears	Team Inspector	Geography	
15208	A Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
12985	S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	

30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	
11720	P Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
2597	C Jackson	Team inspector	Educational inclusion Business studies (6 <sup>th</sup> form)	
30973	G Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30825	K Hayton	Team inspector	Physics (6 <sup>th</sup> form)	
1819	R Crowther	Team inspector	Psychology (6 <sup>th</sup> form)	

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)  
3 Harrowby Road  
West Park  
Leeds  
LS16 5HN

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Abbot Beyne School is broadly the same size as most other secondary schools, and is a comprehensive school in Burton-on-Trent, educating students between the ages of 11 and 18. There are 1135 students on roll, which is significantly higher than when the school was last inspected. There are 147 students in the sixth form which is much higher than previously. The school is popular with parents and is over-subscribed. The school has a multi-cultural intake. The main ethnic minority group is from Pakistani background.

The intake has changed over the last decade. Fewer students come from the immediate vicinity of the school, and the trend has been towards more ethnic minority students and economically disadvantaged students from the more deprived areas of Burton. Many students within the Pakistani community travel across the town which is a distance of five miles or more. Approximately 14 per cent of students speak English as an additional language, which is high. There are 12 students or students at an early stage of language acquisition.

Twenty-one per cent of students are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average and is slightly higher than that noted in the previous report. The overall socio-economic circumstance of the students is below average.

The majority of students had below average levels of attainment on entry to the school although the current Year 7 is well below average. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is average. There are 126 students or students on the special educational needs register; this is 12.5 per cent of the 11-16 school population, which is below the national average. There are 5.8 per cent of students with statements of special educational need, which is above average. Most students on the register have either moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties or specific learning difficulties (dyslexia).

A new headteacher was appointed and took up post shortly after the previous inspection. The school became a specialist Visual Arts College in September 2002.

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

This is a good school where students achieve well. In many areas the school is improving because of the very good leadership of the headteacher. Teaching is good. Students now leave Abbot Beyne with better results than would normally be expected given their attainment on entry. Students in the sixth form do better than expected and leave with results that are above average. Overall, the school is providing very good value for money.

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

- Students achieve well in Years 10 to 13 because of the good teaching they receive.
- The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher is very good; financial planning and the use of resources are very good
- Pastoral systems are good, and students are cared for well.
- Students achieve very well in design and technology, and art and design, because of the very good teaching.
- Provision for students with special educational needs in the support bases is very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.

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

- Students underachieve in religious education because they do not receive enough lessons in Year 10.
- In Years 7 to 9, students do not receive enough lessons in citizenship to allow them to make enough progress and in Years 10 and 11 the teaching of citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- There are not enough lessons in personal and social education so the provision is unsatisfactory.

- Teaching in Years 7 to 9, whilst satisfactory, is not as good as that seen in Years 10 to 13.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in March 1997. GCSE results continue to improve and students are now achieving well. The quality of teaching has improved. The very good leadership provided by the headteacher has brought about many improvements in the school's systems; for example, there is now a better and more consistent system for school improvement planning. The sixth form has made good progress; standards and results have been maintained at a time when students from a wider range of attainment have been recruited. The school has addressed the key issues from the previous report well.

## 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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	A
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	B	*	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

*\*There are no national figures available at the time of writing.*

By the end of Year 9 standards are below average and students achieve satisfactorily. Standards are above average in art and design and French, and average in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, science, citizenship, German, music and religious education where they are below average and English where standards are well below average. Students' achievements are very good in art and design and French, and good in all other subjects with the exception of English, mathematics, science, music and religious education where achievement is satisfactory.

Results in the 2002 National Tests were well below the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science when compared to all schools. Results were well above average in science, above average in mathematics but below average in English when compared with similar schools. The trend in results is below the national trend although this is at the same time as the attainment of students on entry has fallen.

By the end of Year 11, standards are average and students achieve well. Standards are well above average in art and design, and design and technology, and average in all other subjects with the exception of citizenship where they are below average and religious education where standards are well below average. Overall, students achieve very well in art and design, French and design and technology, well in English, science, geography and history, and satisfactorily in all other subjects with the exception of citizenship and religious education where achievement is unsatisfactory. Students in religious education in Year 10 do not have enough lessons to develop the skills and knowledge and their achievement is unsatisfactory. In citizenship, students underachieve because the teaching is unsatisfactory.

Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average overall and were well above average when compared to similar schools. The trend in the school's results at GCSE has been broadly in line with the national trend. Boys' and girls' results were both close to the national average. There is a difference in the performance of the different groups of students represented in the school. Students of Pakistani



backgrounds achieved better results than white students given their standards on starting the courses. The school met its GCSE targets last year and has done so since the previous inspection.

The achievement of gifted and talented students is similar to that of other students. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. Students who are at the early stages of language acquisition are supported well and make good progress. Other students for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students. Overall, students' and students' standards of literacy are below the national average. Students' and students' standards of numeracy are broadly average.

Standards are above average in the sixth form and students achieve well. In the sixth form, in subjects inspected in detail, standards are now well above average in French and information and communication technology, and above average in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, business studies and physics where standards are average. Achievement is very good in French, and good in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, business studies and physics where achievement is satisfactory. Results in 2001 show that students left school with above average results. However, females attained much higher results than the males. Results were similar in 2002.

Examination results in 2001 were very high in English literature which placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results were well above average in design and technology, above average in biology, music and other social sciences, average in art and design, computer studies, general studies, below average in chemistry, geography and mathematics and well below average in economics, other sciences and physics.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes are satisfactory overall and at times, most often in Years 10 and 11, they show high levels of interest and good concentration in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall but generally better in Years 10 and 11. Exclusions are high in comparison with what happens in other schools.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development and their relationships with each other and with staff are good,
Attendance	Attendance has improved somewhat and is satisfactory.

Sixth form students show good, responsible attitudes to learning.

## 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 quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 13. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 in art and design, and good in all other subjects with the exception of English, mathematics, science, religious education and music where it is satisfactory. In Years 10

and 11, teaching is very good in art and design, and design and technology, and good in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, information and communication technology, religious education and music where it is satisfactory, and in citizenship where it is unsatisfactory.

In Years 10 to 11, the quality of teaching is better than that seen in Years 7 to 9 because it is better structured and teachers manage students well. In Years 7 to 9, a small minority of teachers struggle to manage students and this leads to learning being disrupted. In Years 10 and 11, there is greater use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and reinforcing the work of previous lessons enables students to build upon prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students. Teachers use encouraging comments to motivate students. Teachers plan their lessons well. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are very good in the learning and pupil support bases.

The staffing of citizenship is unsatisfactory where the high dependency on non-specialist temporary teachers has led to students making unsatisfactory progress in this new course. The teaching of basic skills such as literacy, whilst satisfactory, is not consistent across subjects or within subjects. The marking of students' written work, whilst satisfactory overall, is not done in enough detail to improve their skills in literacy.

Teaching is good in the sixth form and students make good progress as a result. Teachers manage students well. This leads to trust and a mutual respect between teachers and students. Students respond to the good teaching by working hard; their notes are detailed and their files well organised, providing a valuable basis for further study and revision. There are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons, and to develop their capacity for independent study and research.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Despite significant improvements, the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for students with special educational needs. In the two specialist support bases, provision is very good.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good provision. Links with parents and the wider ethnic minority community are very good and help students to feel confident in the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for students' moral and cultural development is good; it is satisfactory for their spiritual and social development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good attention is paid to students' welfare and personal guidance.

There are not enough lessons in religious education in Year 10 to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, so the school fails to meet statutory requirements in this respect. There are not enough lessons for personal and social education and citizenship. The sixth form curriculum does not meet fully the requirements for religious education. There is satisfactory provision for careers and vocational education. The school has satisfactory links with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The quality of leadership and management of the school is good overall. The headteacher has introduced many positive and far-reaching initiatives and is providing very good leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good understanding of the school's work; they fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are good procedures for identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Very good use is made of specific grants from outside agencies. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.

The school has a good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum. There are enough resources in the main school but resources are inadequate in the sixth form. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is good.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The good standard of teaching.</li> <li>• The good care that students receive.</li> <li>• The way the school is managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are not always kept well informed about the progress their children make.</li> <li>• The amount of homework that students get.</li> <li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all the positive comments made by parents. Parents are justified to some extent about how well they are kept informed because annual written reports for information and communication technology do not always give a clear picture of how well their children are doing. Homework is set regularly but students do not always complete it. The flow of information to parents has improved and has some good features. However, the school itself has recognised that it does not seek the views of the parents enough.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is about the same size as that found in most other schools. There are currently 63 male and 84 female students in the sixth form. The students come from a very wide range of backgrounds that are very similar to those of the main school. Overall standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are average. The school provides a suitable range of two-year courses leading to A-level or advanced vocational qualifications, as well as one-year intermediate courses. Approximately 50 per cent of students stay on into the sixth form with a small number of students joining the sixth form from other schools.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good standard of education for students and its cost effectiveness is very good. The quality of teaching is good and leads to students achieving well and attaining better results than would normally be expected given their standards on entry to the sixth form. The sixth form meets the needs of the students well. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is good.

### Strengths

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is good; standards have been maintained at a time when the sixth form has been recruiting students from a wider range of attainment.
- Students' attitudes are good and there are good relationships between students and teachers.
- Students achieve very well in French because of the very good teaching.

### What could be improved

- The sixth form curriculum does not meet fully the requirements for religious education.
- The level of resources for students is unsatisfactory and there are not enough opportunities for students to develop study skills, to read about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own studies.

*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	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in Year 13 are average. Teaching is satisfactory and students do as expected.
Physics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in Year 13 are average. Teaching is satisfactory and students do as expected.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Business studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in Year 13 are average. Teaching is satisfactory and students do as expected.

Information technology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Music	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Psychology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
English literature	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
French	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching is very good and students do much better than expected.

One lesson of chemistry was observed. Students were investigating halogens. The teaching was satisfactory and students made sound progress. Two biology lessons were observed. In a Year 12 biology class, students were consolidating work on plant mass-flow; students made good progress because of the good teaching. In a Year 13 class, students were investigating the structure of the human skeleton; students made sound progress because of the satisfactory teaching.

In a Year 12 art class, students were developing their ideas towards a final piece of work on moods, atmospheres and emotions; students made very good progress because of the very good teaching.

In a Year 13 geography class, students were investigating different soil types; students made good progress because of the good teaching. In a Year 12 history class, students were discussing the impact of political and religious causes of the English civil war; students made very good progress because of the very good teaching.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Advice to and guidance for students are good overall. The quality of support for their learning and academic progress is good. They rarely feel like changing courses, and most make good progress. Subject teachers monitor them carefully. There are good procedures for promoting attendance. The school gives students good guidance on careers and opportunities in higher education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is good. The academic and pastoral systems have been combined to get a clear picture of a student's progress. Results are analysed well and the sixth form uses the same systems as the main school for ensuring the quality of teaching.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are very glad that they stayed on in the sixth form and are enjoying their studies.</li> <li>• They feel that the quality of education in Years 12 and 13 meets their expectations.</li> <li>• They appreciate the good quality of teaching in the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are unhappy with the advice available about future options and about whether the school responds to their views.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by students. However, inspectors found that the spread of advice about future options is already being broadened to match the needs of the students now in the sixth form. Although teachers are responsive to the needs of individual students, systems are lacking for more formal and wide-ranging consultation of sixth form views.

## **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. Students join the school at the beginning of Year 7 with below average standards and by the end of Year 9 standards are still below average. By the end of Year 11, standards are average. Students achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and well in Years 10 and 11.
2. In the 2002 National Tests for 14 year olds, results were well below the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science when compared to all schools. Results were well above average in science, above average in mathematics but below average in English when compared with similar schools. The trend in results is below the national trend although this is at the same time as the attainment of students on entry has fallen.
3. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in art and design and French, and average in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, science, citizenship, German, music and religious education where they are below average and English where standards are well below average.
4. Overall, students achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 given their standards when they joined the school. Students' achievements are very good in art and design and French, and good in all other subjects with the exception of English, mathematics, science, music and religious education where achievement is satisfactory.
5. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average overall and were well above average when compared to similar schools. The trend in the school's results at GCSE has been broadly in line with the national trend. Boys' and girls' results were both close to the national average. There is a difference in the performance of the different groups of students represented in the school. Students of Pakistani backgrounds achieved better results than white students, given their standards on starting the courses.
6. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average in art and design, and design and technology, and average in all other subjects with the exception of citizenship where they are below average and religious education where standards are well below average.
7. Overall, students achieve very well in art and design, French and design and technology, well in English, science, geography and history, and satisfactorily in all other subjects with the exception of citizenship and religious education where achievement is unsatisfactory. Students achieve very well in art and design because of the very good teaching they receive.
8. Students in religious education in Year 10 do not have enough lessons to develop the skills and knowledge and their achievement is unsatisfactory. The two-term gap between Year 10 and 11 lessons reduces their recall and their commitment to the study of religious education.
9. In citizenship, students underachieve because the teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and there are not enough lessons in Years 7 to 9. Teachers deliver a

lesson that is provided by the co-ordinator, but there is little evidence that they adapt the lesson to the needs of the students they teach. Students complete little written work other than worksheets and do not have files or books in which to store their work. As a consequence, there is no method by which teachers and students can assess their attainment or monitor their progress. Temporary staff have no previous work on which to build or judge the level at which to teach.

10. The school met its GCSE targets last year and has done so since the previous inspection. The targets for 2003 are lower than those for 2002 because the group of students currently in Year 11 had lower levels of attainment on entry to the school.
11. The achievement of gifted and talented students is similar to that of other students. The school is in the process of setting up a programme of activities to boost the performance of these students.
12. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. In the two support bases, students achieve very well because of the expertise of specialist staff and the organisation of small group work. When students with learning difficulties enter the school in Year 7, their attainment in both literacy and numeracy is well below national expectations, and for a minority it is far below. A few cannot read. However, expert teaching leads to quick improvements. For example, in last year's Year 7, gains in literacy skills far exceeded targets set. A significant factor in students' very good achievement is the emphasis staff place on raising students' self-confidence and on making them feel valued. By the end of Year 11, consistently good support enables students to tackle GCSE and other external examinations, in which they do well.
13. Overall, students' standards of literacy are below average. However, standards are generally below average in Years 7 to 9 but by the end of Year 11 they are average. Thus the majority of students have skills that enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. Those who are unable to do this by themselves receive good quality support.
14. Most students are able to read independently and understand how to work out the meaning of words from their context. Higher attainers read aloud with good expression; middle and lower attainers have limited expression and do not understand how to project their voices. Most students are willing to make an oral contribution to lessons, though a minority are reluctant to do so.
15. Students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narrative, description and reporting. In Years 10 and 11 students produce lengthy, well-structured writing when they are required to do so. The work of middle and lower attaining students is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.
16. Students who are at the early stages of language acquisition are supported well and make good progress. Students' needs are kept under review and bi-lingual assistants are deployed effectively. Links with parents and the wider ethnic minority community are very good and help students to feel confident in the school. Other students for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students.
17. Students' standards of numeracy are broadly average. In lessons and work seen there are some good examples of numeracy. For example, in geography, students



draw two contrasting graphs to illustrate temperature and rainfall when comparing climate differences and its impact on people.

### **Sixth form**

18. Those students currently in Year 13 and those students who left the sixth form in the summer of 2002 entered the sixth form with standards that were average. Very few students do not complete a course of study once they have started it.
19. Whilst most students follow two-year courses leading to A-level or Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education qualifications and do well, other students follow one-year courses, do well and then proceed to do advanced level courses. Results in 2001 show that students left school with above average results. However, females attained much higher results than the males. The results for males were broadly average whilst those for females were well above average. Results were similar in 2002. Results are similar to those noted in the previous report but students now enter the sixth form with a wider range attainment.
20. Examination results in 2001 were very high in English literature, which placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results were well above average in design and technology, above average in biology, music and other social sciences, average in art and design, computer studies, general studies, below average in chemistry, geography and mathematics, and well below average in economics, other sciences and physics.
21. In the subjects inspected in detail, standards are now well above average in French and information technology and above average in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, business studies and physics where standards are average. Achievement is very good in French, and good in all other subjects with the exception of mathematics, business studies and physics where achievement is satisfactory.
22. The reasons for the different rates of progress made on the different courses of study are directly linked to the quality of teaching. So, for example, the teaching on the French course is very good and students achieve much better than expected, while on the physics course both teaching and achievement are satisfactory.
23. Students' skills in communication, in use of number and in information and communication technology are broadly average. However, students are not provided with enough opportunities to develop study skills, to read about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own studies.

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

24. Students' personal development and their relationships with each other and with staff are good, as at the previous inspection. Parents are happier now about behaviour, which has improved since the previous inspection and is satisfactory. Students' attitudes are satisfactory overall and at times, most often in Years 10 and 11, they show high levels of interest and good concentration in lessons. Attendance has improved somewhat and is satisfactory.
25. Attitudes and behaviour tend to be better in lessons in the upper school. This is partly because students learn how to live up to the school's expectations but also because in Years 10 and 11 they more often meet with stimulating teaching. Attitudes and behaviour also vary between subjects. Where teaching is enthusiastic and

knowledgeable, students of all ages and abilities usually show a correspondingly good level of motivation; for instance great interest and a good sense of independence are the norm in information and communication technology and in art and design. Year 9 students, for example, responded exceptionally well to lessons on web page design. Classes of both higher and lower achieving students became completely wrapped up in complex tasks because these were so well planned to extend their skills; a high achieving group showed great concentration and care over the task of inserting 'buttons' into the tables they created. Enthusiasm for extra-curricular activities is high, with students involved in a wide range of sports teams and also much keen participation in musical performances both within the school and in the local community.

26. Relationships between students and teachers are usually good but, in occasional lessons in various age groups, a few students are uninterested in their work and reluctant to co-operate with the teacher. This slows the pace of learning for everyone because of the time it takes for the teacher to correct those who are not concentrating. Occasionally, if the teacher does not follow the strategies in the behaviour policy well enough, unsatisfactory behaviour persists and very little learning takes place. Boys and girls from across the range of ethnicity may show unsatisfactory behaviour, though problems are more frequent with boys and in lower attaining groups. However, attitudes of students with special educational needs when they are in the pupil support unit are always very good in response to the high quality of support they receive there.
27. Around the site students generally behave well, even when staff are not at hand to supervise them. They mostly show a sense of responsibility for getting to lessons on time though a few linger between buildings. From time to time individual behaviour becomes really poor, resulting in short-term exclusion. Short-term exclusions are more frequent than at the previous inspection and are high in comparison with what happens in other schools. Exclusion is the most fitting response to some incidents of very poor behaviour. However, others, while still serious, might in other schools be dealt with successfully by arranging for students to work under close supervision away from their classes. The school did develop a scheme whereby students were removed to a more secluded room under the supervision of staff but due to a lack of funding it was unable to continue with the scheme. Overall, similar proportions of Asian and white students are involved in exclusions. Exclusions involve boys much more often than girls and Asian girls are seldom excluded. The school persists in efforts to improve individual behaviour, so the rate of permanent exclusions is no higher than that in most schools.
28. Other aspects of students' personal development are for the most part good. Good social understanding is seen in the way they willingly organise themselves to work together, listen to each others' ideas and even on occasion accept criticism of their work from others. This all helps their progress. Older students on the school council contribute to the school community, confidently discussing ideas. However, younger ones are less sure about putting ideas forward because there are no formal arrangements to help them do this. Students mostly show a satisfactory sense of personal responsibility for their work, for instance by remembering their kit for physical education lessons.
29. Moral understanding is good. Students grasp concepts of right and wrong, and recognise that they must follow the rules if the school is to be a comfortable learning environment. Bullying causes few problems because staff are prompt to deal with any cases that they are told about. Consequently students show good respect for each

other's differences. Individuals with particular medical or educational needs can mention these without fear of meeting with any hurtful reaction. Similarly, students drawn from different ethnic communities get along amicably with each other, though lack of shared interests at times results in a degree of separation. For instance, Asian students have little involvement in extra-curricular musical activities.

30. With regard to spiritual values, students show much goodwill towards others' feelings and they respond well when non-material values are touched on in lessons. For instance, in geography, they consider seriously the effects on wildlife of an oil spillage at sea. However, their capacity to consider the range of religious beliefs represented in the school is limited because their knowledge of them is not developed consistently enough.
31. Attendance in the 2001/02 academic year was 91 per cent. This is broadly average and is better than at the previous inspection, when it was just under 90 per cent. It has risen slowly over the past two years. The upward trend is continuing in the current year, with the help of extra efforts now being made by the school. Awards for good attendance help to motivate students; their awareness is raised by comparing the attendance levels of different tutor groups and there is very good follow-up for any unexplained absence. Despite overall increases in attendance, there is room for further improvements in every year group, especially in the present Year 11 where ten or so students cause continuing concern by their poor attitudes to learning and very poor attendance. Poor attendance, especially in lower achieving groups, in some instances slows students' progress. However, the continuing efforts to support students mean that even those with poor attendance nearly all achieve at least one GCSE success. Analyses made by the school show little evidence of differences in attendance levels between students of different ethnic groups. Even though overall absence levels are falling, unauthorised absence has gone up to 1.6 per cent, which is above the national average. This arises from the strict approach that staff now take when they consider whether to accept excuses given for absence, rather than indicating an actual increase in truancy.

### **Sixth form**

32. The good, responsible attitudes to work noted among students at the previous inspection have been maintained and this aids their progress. Helped by their teachers' expectations, they organise themselves well to cope with their work. As often happens in sixth forms a number of students find room to criticise aspects of the provision but nevertheless they have a mature determination to make the most of the opportunities they have chosen to take. Those studying French are particularly well focused on improvement.
33. When teaching is really good students work with great enthusiasm; for instance this is very evident in psychology where the lively teaching methods increase their motivation as they get to grips with this subject for the first time. Their interest decreases somewhat when tasks are less stimulating, for instance in physics where the demands are often less, but they still usually work conscientiously. Confidence is sometimes comparatively low in their approach to oral work, for instance in information technology. They mostly try to make good use of private study time to keep up with the independent work required. Helped at times by their teachers' prompting, they usually keep their folders of work in good order.
34. Wider aspects of students' personal development are good. Their relations with staff are strong because they appreciate the way teachers are always ready to give extra

help and support. Similarly they willingly co-operate with each other to overcome problems in their work, and this aids their progress. The Young Enterprise scheme makes a valuable contribution to students' personal development. The few students who undertake responsibilities within the school community, for instance as head boy and girl and through the peer mentor scheme, make a very good contribution. However, the capacity of many other students to contribute is limited because of lack of opportunity. For instance, there are no formal means for most students to contribute to decisions about the organisation of their own common rooms, let alone express and discuss their views about the functioning of the school. In questionnaires issued by inspectors, a significant minority feel they are not treated as responsible young adults. Some would like the happy school community to be strengthened further. For instance, students from the range of different ethnic backgrounds get along amicably but some white students feel they would understand each other better if they knew more of each others' religious beliefs and customs. Students with musical skills enjoy continuing their involvement in public performances. They all respond well to opportunities to help those in need in the wider community; for instance Year 12 students organise themselves amicably to run charity fund-raising events as part of their tutorial programme.

35. Students' attendance is better than that seen in Years 10 and 11 and is satisfactory. A degree of freedom is extended to students about whether they spend study periods at home or use the school facilities. They generally use this freedom responsibly and make sure that they arrive for lessons on time, reflecting their good motivation to learn. Attendance is promoted by the good systems for following up any concerns about absence.

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

36. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The last inspection indicated teaching and learning were variable in quality but generally satisfactory. Accompanying the significant change in staff over the last five years has been the central drive to put teaching, learning and achievement at the top of the school's agenda. Through significant amounts of in-service and the sharing of good practice the quality of teaching and learning has improved.
37. The adoption of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies has helped improve standards of teaching. Teaching is now satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 whereas previously it was unsatisfactory in nearly one in five lessons. In Years 10 and 11, the quality of teaching is better than that seen in Years 7 to 9 because it is better structured and teachers manage students well. In Years 7 to 9, a small minority of teachers struggle to manage students and this leads to learning being disrupted. These teachers have not yet got to grips fully with the changing nature of the pupil intake and do not use strategies that enthuse and challenge students. Occasionally poor attitudes to learning of the minority, mostly boys, reduce progress because of interruptions to the progress of the lesson, whereas in Years 10 and 11, when a pupil drifts off task, a quiet word with a smile from the teacher is enough to bring the pupil back on task.
38. In Years 10 and 11, there is greater uniformity in the structure of lessons. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and reinforcing the work of previous lessons enables students to build upon prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. For example, in a very good textiles lesson, the teacher constantly referred back to what students should be learning during the lesson and checked at

the end that students were well prepared for the next; students made very good progress in this lesson with their GCSE practical projects.

39. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students. Teachers use encouraging comments to motivate students. Students' progress is constantly encouraged by warm comments of praise. In geography, for example, the teacher's "Come on, guys" given with a smile was always quickly responded to.
40. Teachers plan their lessons well. The balance between different types of activities generally keeps students interested and motivated. An example of very good planning was seen in a Year 11 English class on the understanding of persuasive speech. The lesson was broken down into small well-designed tasks. There were discernible gains in students' knowledge, skills and understanding and a brisk pace of learning moved them forward step by step to produce work of a high standard.
41. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, particularly in Years 10 and 11. This was evident in an excellent Year 10 physical education lesson on the topic of health related exercises. The teacher used her excellent knowledge to get students to devise high quality exercise circuits of relevance to different groups of adults. However, the staffing of citizenship is unsatisfactory where the high dependency on non-specialist temporary teachers has led to students making unsatisfactory progress in this new course.
42. The teaching of basic skills such as literacy, whilst satisfactory, is not consistent across subjects or within subjects. For example, in a history lesson, the teacher insisted that students give a fuller answer to her questions and did not accept single word answers. By doing this, the teacher not only extended the students' understanding of the topic but also got the students to explain the terminology they were using. On the other hand, in a religious education class, the teacher missed many opportunities to correct basic spelling errors. The marking of students' written work, whilst satisfactory overall, is not done in enough detail to improve their skills in literacy. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes are not always corrected.
43. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are very good in the learning and pupil support bases. Specialist staff have a very good knowledge of students' needs and of how to break up learning into small steps. They provide a variety of activities, which helps students to sustain concentration. For example, in a Year 7 integrated studies lesson, students did a spelling test, practised reading and handwriting, and studied an extract from *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Oral work centred on Anne's personality. A brief video clip gave students a visual experience of life in World War II. Students learnt very rapidly because the teacher and two learning assistants focused closely on basic literacy skills, and had a very good relationship with the students and high expectations of what they could achieve. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good because they enjoy the varied activities and respect their teachers. Occasionally, material used is too difficult – as in a Year 8 lesson on the holocaust – and learning is only satisfactory, but generally work is well matched to students' capabilities. Marking is very good and oral comments to students on their work clearly explain what a pupil needs to do to improve.

### **Sixth form**

44. The quality of teaching is good; students now receive more consistently good teaching compared to that noted in the previous report. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. For example, teachers in information

technology have an extensive knowledge of the subject and a deep understanding of the software that enables them to answer questions off the top of their heads or use their experience of industry to bring the subject to life.

45. When teaching is most effective, teachers ensure that the lessons include variety, that the pace is brisk and that the students have good opportunities to make their own contributions. This means that students are actively involved in their own learning, concentrate well and learn quickly. They learn how to present their views and defend them, as was seen in a lively Year 12 lesson on the motives of the characters in two poems by Robert Browning. Most students respond well to the teaching they receive, have positive attitudes and work hard. Students are attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in their subjects.
46. There is regular and structured marking with generally helpful feedback. Careful questioning of the students leads to them thinking beyond the immediate situation and looking much deeper into the pieces they study.
47. Activities are well sequenced so that students increase their knowledge and understanding during lessons. Materials are used well to expand students' knowledge and to explore topics being studied. However, on occasions, opportunities are missed for students to work independently to gather information for themselves and report back to others. Some teachers make insufficient use of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning.

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

48. Despite significant improvements, the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9 students do not receive enough lessons in citizenship to allow them to make enough progress so they do not reach the standards of which they are capable. There are also not enough lessons in personal and social education so the provision is unsatisfactory. In Year 10, there are not enough lessons in religious education to meet the demands of the locally agreed syllabus so students are underachieving. The other problem in Years 10 and 11 lies with the group of students who are on the work-related learning course that takes place at the local college of further education. This course meets the needs of the students well. However, the timing of lessons is not sufficiently well co-ordinated between the college and the school, so students end up having to miss lessons in other subjects such as English, mathematics and information and communication technology. This problems with co-ordination means that the school is not ensuring that all students are receiving equal access to the curriculum.
49. Nevertheless, the work-related learning course is one example of the good links that the school has with other schools and colleges. Other features of these links include the numerous links that exist with primary schools that help students to settle quickly in Year 7. One example is the 'Bubbles' project where students from Years 6 and 7 work together on experiments such as finding the amount of carbon dioxide in a bottle of lemonade. As part of its specialist status, the school plays a leading role in arts development with other local primary and secondary schools.
50. The great strength of the curriculum is the very good range of clubs and other activities that take place outside of lesson times. The range and quality of the musical activities are very good and sport too is strong in these respects. However, one aspect that is really outstanding is the way that the school ensures that students from

more deprived backgrounds all have the opportunity to take part in trips and visits, including visits to other countries in all years. The school is now using its extra-curricular provision to strengthen its ties with the local Asian community; a local Asian cricket club uses the school as its home ground and encourages Asian boys to participate both in and out of school time. One very exciting development is the move to take activities into the community, rather than have them all based at the school, which has been made possible by the school's specialist college status. The school has other good links with the community, such as artists and poets in residence, which provide students with a different view of the way that creativity can be approached, or the many links with local industries that provide students in business studies with the opportunity to see theory being put into practice.

51. Overall, the school makes good provision for students with special educational needs. In the two specialist support bases, provision is very good. Teaching groups are small and teaching assistants are expert at helping students learn. In withdrawal groups as well as during in-class support, teaching assistants use individual education plans well to raise standards. Teachers generally liaise closely with the assistants and this helps students learn. Where links are not so clear, as occasionally in science, the learning assistant is not so effective. Assistants give generously of their time so that the two bases are open at breaks and lunchtimes for students to receive help with work, to use computers or to socialise. The pupil support unit makes very good provision for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Students say their behaviour has improved as a result of the social skills work carried out by the teaching assistant who runs the base. Another good provision is the integrated studies course, which enables small classes of Years 7 and 8 students to work with the same teachers for several subjects. They benefit from the continuity of learning and from the individual attention they receive. For older students, the Youth Awards Scheme provides good opportunities for learning life skills, and one-to-one support enables students who find writing difficult to make good progress.
52. The strategy for teaching literacy is satisfactory. The school has a literacy co-ordinator who has been in place for a short time. Some of the initiatives that have been introduced have contributed to the raising of standards. For example, most departments have identified key words in their subject and ensure that students recognise these and use them properly. Others have been less effective. Thus as part of its response to the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for literacy, the school provides lessons for the lowest attaining students in Years 7 and 8 which are designed to help them improve their basic skills. Whilst this arrangement provides some support where it is needed, timetabling arrangements mean that students have reduced time in other subjects, including drama, religious education and French, in order to attend their extra literacy lessons. This places students at a disadvantage compared with the majority of their peers. Shortened lessons are a particular disadvantage in drama. Overall, however, much depends upon individual subject departments and, whilst this results in some good practice, there is inconsistency.
53. In information and communication technology and design and technology students are given very good opportunities to write for different audiences. In design and technology, students in Years 10 and 11 write high quality extended evaluations, though in Years 7 to 9 much of the writing is confined to completing writing frames. In art and design and history students are required to undertake their own research and to produce full written reports. In geography practice is variable. On some occasions the teacher was not really aware of the problems students faced in trying to express themselves in writing. On other occasions the teacher fully recognised students' problems and provided them with models of how they should structure their writing.

The extent to which teachers attend to inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar is variable.

54. The contribution that subjects make to developing students' competence and skills in understanding and using number is generally satisfactory. All teachers have had training to acquire understanding of the needs of the National Numeracy Strategy. There is a clear whole-school policy document and departments are developing their own policies to support this.
55. In spite of significant changes and improvements in the curriculum there are still some areas that are in need of improvement.

### **Sixth form**

56. The sixth form curriculum is good. The school provides a wide choice of courses for its students and these are chosen so that they build well upon the GCSE and vocational subjects available in Year 11. The good links that the school maintains with other providers in the area means that full advantage is taken of the flexibility that joint staffing can provide. A strength of the curriculum is the very good way that the courses are planned to meet the requirements of examination syllabuses. This is brought about by teachers paying very close attention to examination criteria when they plan lessons and assess students' work. However, not all students study religious education, which is a breach of statutory requirements, and opportunities for sport within the school day are very limited.
57. The courses meet the needs of the students well and offer good equality of access; this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when the range of courses was limited. Different courses are offered in the same subject, such as the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course and AS-level course in information technology, so that students can choose the type of course that suits them best. Lower attainers can follow a one-year intermediate level course that then allows them to continue to a higher level by spending three, instead of the more usual two, years in the sixth form.
58. The school also makes very good provision for enrichment activities. Students involve themselves in many school and community-based projects, which are successful in helping them to develop responsibility and self-confidence. The curriculum is also successful in offering a variety of other opportunities ranging from sport through to music and drama.
59. The curriculum has undergone significant changes since the previous inspection. The introduction of the new system of AS-level and A-levels has been managed well and there is a much broader range of subjects now on offer so a much broader range of students is staying on at school. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

60. Provision for the spiritual and social development of students is satisfactory; provision for their moral and cultural development is good.
61. Assemblies, while providing useful opportunities to consider moral and multi-cultural issues, do not regularly provide acts of worship and reflection. Students are informed about the festivals as they are celebrated, but they would appreciate opportunities for



greater understanding of the beliefs and ceremonies behind them. In many subjects students are given the opportunity for reflection and evaluation of their achievements. In religious education, for example, the study of miracles in Year 7 enabled students to consider the wonders of nature as well as miraculous accounts of healing. Through art and design, they reflect on the spiritual aspects of the art of other cultures and are able to explore the use of art to display emotion and demonstrate concern. Through participation in the school productions students develop confidence and self-esteem, and are encouraged to believe in themselves. The school celebrates the success of its students in formal presentation evenings as well as through its system of merits.

62. Provision for moral development is good. The school has a clear code of conduct and teachers generally act as good role models for their students, treating their work with respect. Staff promote good attitudes, emphasising the benefits of sharing, and respect for the work of others. Students in the support unit are encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and to consider its impact on others. In many subjects students consider moral issues, such as the environmental damage of oil spillage in geography, and in history and religious education the ethical aspects of making war. The journals kept by students in Year 9 geography identify global issues and raise awareness of the needs of others. The free choice of a project in art based on a social issue provides good opportunities for students to express their concerns and develop their understanding. Students organise fund-raising events to support charities of their choice and are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility for others.
63. Provision for the social development of students is satisfactory. Some students have very good opportunities for social development through their role as pupil counsellors and upper school council representatives. They organise school activities and act as ambassadors for the school. A very good range of extra-curricular activities enables students to develop social skills and to interact with their peers in informal situations. The adventure holidays are good social events. They enable students to develop the skills needed for team building and help raise self-esteem amongst the students. The school has not identified the range of students who benefit from these activities, and the lack of time for personal and social education and citizenship reduces the opportunities for these skills to be developed by all students. While they work positively together and there are good relationships in class, students do not mix readily with a wide range of their peers outside their lessons.
64. The school makes good provision for the cultural development of the students and prepares students well for life in multi-cultural Britain. Links with local breweries have enabled students to identify with the local culture as it has developed, and its role as 'school in residence' has enabled the art and design department in particular to benefit from, and contribute to, local firms. The school provides good opportunities for all students to travel overseas, and trips are organised to France and Germany in addition to the residential trips in England. A small group of students are planning a trip to Malawi that will strengthen the school's links with schools there. As a specialist arts college the school is developing its links with the arts and students benefit from the skills and innovations of several artists in residence who run workshops as well as supporting lessons. The planned sculpture garden is being developed in collaboration with the local primary schools, under the leadership of a nationally acclaimed artist, and the proposed gallery in school will provide excellent opportunities to celebrate students' achievements in art.
65. Asian influences in textiles are developed with the support of the local community, and the school is seeking to build upon the skills of its wider community through its

outreach classes. The school jazz band and school band provide very good occasions for social and spiritual development when students play together locally or on the national stage. The Beyne foundation subsidises individual music tutorials to enable more students to join these bands; however, the range of students taking part in the schools music is limited. Western music predominates and there is insufficient celebration of ethnic music through extra-curricular groups. No students from ethnic minorities have chosen to become members of the school band or learn an instrument. Opportunities are provided to celebrate the culture and achievements of different groups in music, dance and physical education lessons.

## Sixth form

66. The overall provision for the moral and cultural development of the students is good. Provision for spiritual and social development is satisfactory for the majority of students. In some areas, such as in art and design, students are able to explore their emotions and to reflect on moods and atmospheres through their work. In science, observation of bone formation with the aid of a microscope provided a valuable moment of wonder at the complexity of the human form. There are very good opportunities for personal development for the minority of students who take responsibility through their role as prefects. This enables them to act as role models for the younger students and as ambassadors for the school. They take a lead in the upper school council, in the student counselling and in the organisation of all school events. For students who do not have this experience opportunities for leadership and management responsibilities are more limited. The sixth form organise whole-school charity fund-raising events such as the collection of shoe-boxes at Christmas and the 'Red Nose Day' activities.
67. Provision for the social development of the sixth form is satisfactory. The student management team organises social events such as visits to the 'Snowdome' and inter-school competitions such as 'Superstars', and the end of year 'leavers ball' is well supported. There are few arrangements for sport to be used as a social event and there is little opportunity for sixth form students to undertake sporting activities in school unless it is part of their course. The tutorial programme in Year 12 enables students to explore a wide range of issues such as their legal rights and responsibilities, and to gain some economic awareness through the 'World Game'. The programme in Year 13, however, is focused on university preparation and so is only suitable for those students who are intending entering higher education. The Young Enterprise Award is successfully undertaken by a significant number of students and provides them with good experience of management and co-operative working.
68. Sixth form art and design students benefit greatly from the links with local brewing industries and from the visiting artists in residence. They gain inspiration from artefacts from the past and some of their work is displayed at the firm. Their work is further enriched through visits to local and national galleries. Links with the Birmingham Conservatoire have provided valuable resources and workshops for music students who perform in the community and on the national stage. The school prepares students well for life in multi-cultural Britain. Students gain multi-cultural awareness through some overseas visits, such as the business studies trip to Brussels to visit the European Parliament, and in information technology they consider the need to be aware of cultural differences in the light of globalisation. The sixth form suite provides a clean and attractive area for students to work and relax although it does not yet reflect the ethnic diversity of its members or their personalities.

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

69. The good care and guidance noted at the previous inspection have been maintained. Staff create a sense of friendly community by their supportive approach to the care of each individual. Parents are happy with the care extended to students. One aspect is less consistent, in that management of behaviour is for the most part good but there is an over-dependence on exclusion as a sanction for poor behaviour. Use of data collected about students' achievements was previously underdeveloped, but now good use of it is made to help plan for their further steps in learning.
70. Good pastoral liaison with the feeder primary schools helps Year 7 students to settle in happily when they join the school. The heads of upper and lower school together with the heads of year ensure that there is effective care for all students. Suitable communication systems are in place to overcome the problems posed by the split site. Staff are alert to cater for any individual needs that arise from medical conditions or any other personal circumstances. For instance, students who spoke little English when they first joined the school talk appreciatively of the way staff helped them settle in and cope with learning the new language. Good arrangements are in place to liaise regularly with outside agencies to support individual needs, such as those of looked after children. Educational guidance is good. Students appreciate teachers' readiness to help over any difficulties with work. A supervised homework club runs for any who may find it hard to work at home. There is much encouragement for students to do their best. The progress reviews that are regularly produced often help motivate them to reach or exceed their projected grades. They value the praise cards that contribute to their personal records and that are sent home to tell parents of any special success. Year 11 are also supported by the targets set to improve their attitudes to work.
71. Management of behaviour is, overall, satisfactory. A good, well thought-out policy is in place. Teachers' expectations and the quality of support extended to students generally encourage positive attitudes to work and satisfactory behaviour but there are occasional times in lessons when teachers do not apply the policy successfully. Various appropriate strategies, such as an 'on report' system, are used to support any pupil who finds it hard to live up to the school's expectations. In addition, though, the use of exclusion has risen considerably since the previous inspection and there is now an over-reliance on this sanction. Records indicate that at times exclusion is used fittingly for very serious breakdowns in behaviour. However, exclusion also follows other breaches of discipline, such as use of unacceptable language, which while demanding stern action, might on occasion be dealt with effectively by other means. For a time, the school removed poorly behaved students from their classrooms to continue their work elsewhere under strict supervision. Staff found this worked well in reinforcing expectations of behaviour, but discontinued it because it was not possible to continue to fund the scheme. The pupil support unit gives very good, successful support to students with identified behavioural difficulties, for instance by providing guidance on anger management.
72. The sense of friendly community does much to prevent bullying or racist incidents from arising and there is an effective response to any instances that do develop. Students are confident that there is always someone to turn to if they need support and that any problems that arise within the school are sorted out quickly. Pastoral staff carefully investigate and resolve any instances that come to their attention. The availability of trained peer mentors adds to students' sense of security and is a valuable additional source of help.

73. Monitoring and promotion of attendance are good. A high profile is given to encouraging attendance and good steps are taken to follow up absence. The attendance officer appointed at the start of the school year makes an important contribution. She is well aware of those students who may miss school without good reason. If they fail to arrive in the morning she follows this up promptly by a phone call or home visit. She keeps in close touch with pastoral staff about any problems and also liaises with the education welfare officer over the most persistent absentees. Routines are in place to track attendance in lessons, especially in the case of a few students with a history of truancy. These routines are generally effective but because of the difficulties posed by the site, staff are seeking to improve them further, by using the computerised system to help with spot checks of attendance during the day. The good efforts to promote attendance are resulting in progress towards the target of 93 per cent attendance that the school has set itself.
74. Other aspects of students' well being receive good attention. Good procedures are followed to respond to any child protection concerns that arise. Two senior members of the pastoral staff share responsibility, so that there is suitable access to support within each of the two widely spaced buildings. They liaise frequently so that the arrangement works effectively. Arrangements regarding health and safety are satisfactory. A comprehensive policy and very well-detailed procedures have been developed. Concerns arise over the unsatisfactory conditions in a drama room and about a risk presented in the science department by an unventilated flammable liquids store. The toilets in the lower school building are also a concern; their condition is such that some students prefer to go all day without using them.
75. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. Systems are well established and provide information about each pupil's level of attainment and targets for examinations. The school collects and records a substantial amount of data on its students when they enter the school, including National Curriculum test results at the age of 11 and data about students' standards from the local primary schools. The very good procedures for the collection and analysis of data enable students to be placed into classes based on their attainment. As students progress through school, further data is collected centrally which informs the heads of department and the class tutor about the progress of individual.
76. During Years 10 and 11, heads of department monitor students' progress well against the standards attained and predicted grades to ensure students have access to a range of courses and accreditation that are suited to their needs. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results are analysed and the data is well used to indicate areas for further development. Many departments, such as art and design, design and technology and science, analyse GCSE results comprehensively to provide detailed feedback on the performance of students and the trends in the subject itself. For example, in design and technology, the results are closely monitored to ensure that particular groups of students are performing as well as they should so that teaching can be adapted if necessary. This has led to a significant rise in the performance of all students.
77. The special educational needs co-ordinator and learning assistants make themselves available at breaks and lunchtimes so that the two bases are open to students who wish to work or socialise. The very good relationships between specialist staff and students mean that students feel comfortable in sharing concerns with trusted adults. As a result, students' self-esteem increases. The very good links with primary schools allow for students to meet the co-ordinator before they move to secondary education and she, in turn, gains valuable information about their needs.

78. The assessment of students with special educational needs is very good. Staff keep careful records of what students achieve. For example, the teaching assistant who co-ordinates literacy support makes a graph of students' progress in spelling, and students can easily check how they are getting on. This increases the motivation to learn. Data collected from regular assessments feed into the writing of targets for the individual education plans. Students, themselves, help to write their targets, so they know what is expected of them. The co-ordinator makes good use of information received from subject teachers to review the plans twice yearly, and to inform the annual reviews for students with statements.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

79. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress in the sixth form are very good. A substantial amount of data on students' attainment is collected and recorded when they enter the sixth form. This information is then made available to the heads of department and to tutors; it is regularly updated and there are frequent opportunities for students to meet with their tutors to review their progress. At subject level, teachers keep a close eye on students' performance and in several subjects, such as information technology, science and design and technology, students are closely involved in reviewing their own progress.
80. The use made of information from assessment in order to plan the curriculum is good. Students have access to a wide range of courses that suit their needs, including vocational courses. In addition, teachers are skilled at choosing components of the course that are tailored to meet the interests of those that they are teaching. In some departments such as art and design, there is a systematic recording of students' progress and consistent monitoring of standards. In design and technology, for example, there is good use of assessment information to identify the needs of individual students, which enables teachers to match their work closely to the needs of their students. In most subjects data is gathered and is then discussed with the students in order to set targets and raise achievement as well as to provide advice and guidance about students' future options.

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

81. Support and guidance for sixth formers are good. Advice starts before students first join the sixth form. They are encouraged to consider the opportunities it offers but are also helped to think about the full range of post-16 routes open to them. In autumn 2002, induction of Year 12 into normal sixth form routines was disrupted by the late completion of building work in the sixth form centre. Happily the problems are now in the past and students appreciate the social and study facilities they can now use. Information is satisfactory for those joining from other schools and the head of sixth helps them settle in and integrate with other students. The sixth form now provides for students with a greater range of abilities than previously and attracts students from a wider range of ethnic backgrounds. It is coping successfully with this change. The choice of courses offered supports a broad range of the interests, needs and aptitudes of those who wish to join.
82. Requirements of effort, behaviour and attendance are explained clearly in the contract that each student signs. Tutors together with the head of sixth form are alert to help them live up to the expectations. Students are well supported in their studies by their teachers; they appreciate the greater independence appropriately expected of them in

their work but also speak warmly of how supportive teachers are if they ever ask for help to overcome difficulties. Good systems are in place to ensure teachers know when they need to intervene, for instance if attendance or attention to coursework slips. Regular written reviews of students' performance in relation to possible examination grades help them gauge how they are doing in each subject and this motivates their efforts. The tutorial programme gives relevant coverage to aspects such as study skills. In addition a system of one-to-one meetings between students and their tutors is a good source of support and guidance, both personal and academic. The psychology department is notable for the good account taken of students' own views about the provision; they appreciate the way the teacher responds to the regular departmental student surveys.

83. Careers' guidance together with the tutorial programme give good attention to meeting students' needs for advice about their future options. In the past support has centred on students seeking entry to university and this aspect remains strong. Links with two local universities help to focus and support students' efforts. Efforts are now also being made to cater for the needs of those who intend to follow other routes into training or employment, for instance by taking a group to an employment fair, but there is room to further consider ways how the tutorial programme can help meet the needs of this group.
84. Sixth form students benefit from similar good procedures for their welfare and satisfactory health and safety procedures to those seen in the main school.

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

85. The school continues with its efforts seen at the previous inspection to inform and involve parents. For their part, parents usually support the school's expectations and so contribute to their children's achievements. Parents are generally satisfied with the school. They are rather more positive in their views than at the previous inspection and in particular are happy that teachers expect students to work hard and help them to do their best.
86. The flow of information has improved and has some good features. Tutors mostly check students' planners regularly, to make sure that they are recording homework requirements for parents to see, though parents are less consistent in remembering to inspect and sign them. The lively newsletters are packed with readable content. The prospectus and governors' annual report are generally informative. A range of helpful booklets is used to inform parents and students at all stages. For instance they tell parents about the work that will be covered each year in the different subjects. The school undertakes translations of documents where this is relevant to parents' needs. Students are motivated by the praise cards that are posted home to tell their parents of any particular effort or success. The physical education department is pro-active in involving parents; parents of targeted GCSE students are invited to meet with the head of department with a view to boosting the support they give at home for examination preparation. Links with parents of students with special educational needs are very good. Very good efforts are made to inform and consult them, so that there is a good level of involvement of parents, for instance in annual reviews of statements.
87. Arrangements for reporting students' progress include useful interim reviews about how they are doing, as well as the full reports that are sent home each year. These reports in most respects give a helpful account of what students have studied and the progress they have made, though variations between subjects in the way

achievements are recorded mean that they are rather less clear than they might be. A more serious failing is that they often lack a section about information and communication technology and this omission means that they are unsatisfactory overall. Consultation meetings for parents to meet with teachers are offered every year and these have a satisfactory degree of success, attracting up to three in every four parents. The school is keen to attract more parents by exploring different arrangements for meetings and by reaching out to different sectors of the community that it serves. Good use is being made of the opportunities for this arising from the school's new arts college status. For instance the programme of adult education classes based at the school in liaison with the local college is being extended by a course on textiles targeted at Asian women and held at a centre accessible to them.

88. Pastoral staff strive to develop partnership in tackling any difficulties. The welcoming approach of staff and their willingness to respond quickly to any queries result in parents having a good level of confidence about contacting the school. The steps taken to involve parents continue into the sixth form, where good care is taken to involve parents when there are any emerging problems with a student's work or attendance. 'News and views' meetings are offered to inform and involve parents in wider school issues but these meet with a rather limited response so only canvass the views of a small minority of parents. However, parents give good support to activities in which their children are involved, such as team sports and musical concerts, contributing to the success of such activities.
89. Students in the sixth form receive appropriate information, for instance via an open evening, before they make the decision to join. Those who come enjoy studying at the school. Like younger students, they are appreciative of the provision made for them and are happy about the support readily extended to them on an individual basis by their teachers. They appreciate the flexible approach to meeting their individual needs and preferences for courses of study and the support they get to help them make the best of their opportunities. Those who completed questionnaires for the inspectors show a degree of discontent, especially with the advice available about future options and about whether the school responds to their views. The spread of advice about future options is already being broadened to match the needs of the students now in the sixth form. Although teachers are responsive to the needs of individual students, systems are lacking for more formal and wide-ranging consultation of sixth form views.

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

90. The quality of leadership and management of the school is good overall. Since the previous inspection, the very good quality leadership provided by the headteacher has brought about many positive changes. The headteacher has a highly visible presence around the school, is approachable to students and teachers and manages the school well. His vision for the school is very clear; he knows where he wants the school to be in the short, medium and long term. There is a real sense of commitment to creating an environment within which every one of the students feels valued, respected and able to succeed. Fundamental to the school's work is a commitment to inclusion and this can be seen in the good relationships that exist between the different groups of students represented in the school. The result of this approach can be seen in the good teaching provision, the increasing popularity of the school and students now achieving well.
91. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is fully supported by the good senior management team. The headteacher has broadened the base of the senior

management team to help translate the aims of the school improvement plan into achievable plans or action. For example, the director of the specialist Visual Arts College is now part of this team and many new innovative schemes are being introduced. All members of the senior management team have line management responsibilities and work closely with the heads of department and other teachers to ensure that the school's vision is understood by all. Monitoring systems are good and a detailed school self-review mechanism has been developed that reviews at least one department or whole-school issue each term. Members of the management group are well informed; for example, there is very good expertise on the collection of data regarding students' performance which is helping to inform teachers about how well students should be performing. Together with the headteacher they have helped to steer the school through a period of significant change. A strong shared commitment to succeed has been created.

92. The school's aims embody much that is happening in the school. There are good, effective systems in place, which ensure that the school operates smoothly and efficiently. For example, administrative staff have been trained to operate on both sites and to know how each site functions.
93. The quality of leadership and management provided by many middle managers is good. However, there is variation in the quality of leadership and management at this level ranging from excellent through to unsatisfactory although only one department is unsatisfactory. For example, the subject leader for physical education is providing excellent leadership and management, which have resulted in above average examination results and students achieving well at GCSE. However, in religious education, leadership is unsatisfactory. The head of department does not have a clear understanding of how to bring about improvement in a subject that was of concern at the previous inspection.
94. The quality of leadership and management of learning support is very good. The co-ordinator is a very good teacher and administrator, who leads by example. She has built up an excellent team spirit within the large group of teaching assistants. As a result, all are fully committed to furthering both the personal and the academic development of the students. The co-ordinator monitors the work of the department through regular meetings and scrutiny of the teaching assistants' records, but she has too heavy a workload to monitor the work of the assistants in lessons. Consequently, the opportunity for her to share her expertise, especially with new staff, is missed.
95. The governors have a good understanding of the school's work. Each department has a governor link who helps heads of department review and develop their improvement plans and represents their interests in the governors' meetings. The chair of governors has a very good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and she has identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. There is an excellent relationship between the headteacher and the governors. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory duties; however, it does not meet the following statutory requirements:
  - to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students;
  - students in the sixth form do not receive their full entitlement to religious education;
  - there is not enough time to teach religious education in Year 10, so the school fails to meet statutory requirements in this respect;



- there is no annual written report to parents of all students in information and communication technology.
96. Since the previous inspection, a new system and cycle of school improvement planning has been introduced and this has resulted in a school improvement plan that is of a good quality, focuses on raising achievement and sets a clear agenda for improvement. All areas of the plan are linked to raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Whilst subject improvement plans are linked to the school improvement plan, they do vary in quality. For example, the improvements suggested for physics within the science improvement plan are weak and contain little that is worthwhile and will help to move the subject forward. The school's priorities are appropriate and the school is fully aware of the areas for development noted in this report.
  97. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. The headteacher, the senior management team and the governors have set challenging targets for improvement for 2003. The school has often exceeded its GCSE targets. The school compares its performance with similar attaining schools in the local education authority and with national benchmarks. However, the school itself has recognised that it does not seek the views of the parents enough.
  98. The school makes good use of new technology. For example, there is a fibre-optic link that connects the computer systems of the two sites which in turn helps the communication and smooth running of the two sites. Very good use has been made of specific grants. For example, funds from gaining specialist Visual Arts College status are being put to good effect in improving the school environment and increasing the community's use of the school.
  99. The financial planning in the school is very good and links well with the school improvement plan. The last auditor's report highlighted very few areas for improvement and the school has responded positively to the report's recommendations. The school receives a basic budget that is well below the national average. The school is providing very good value for money and the sixth form is very cost effective.
  100. The school has a good match of teachers and other support staff to meet its curricular needs. In design and technology, for example, teachers are very well qualified to teach the different strands of the subject and this leads to students achieving very well. The staffing of citizenship is unsatisfactory because of staffing difficulties. Consequently students are not making enough progress in their studies, and this has led to students making unsatisfactory progress in this new course.
  101. Although there have been significant changes to teaching staff in the last two years, the school has a very active recruitment policy and this has led to many very successful appointments that have provided new impetus to driving up of standards. The availability and use of educational support staff to meet students' needs are good. Support staff are placed in curricular areas and this enables them to provide regular support to students with special educational needs.
  102. The school has established very good practice to support teachers in maintaining and developing their professional skills. There are very good systems in place to match training to the school's development plans and to update and improve teachers' expertise. The school's procedures for performance management are good. Training is closely linked to whole school development planning with arrangements to share

experiences with other teachers. Teacher training to improve students' literacy competence across the school, however, is at an early stage of development and strategies for improvement are not developed in many subjects.

103. Since the last inspection the staffing provision has improved and is now mostly good. The in-service training of teachers and other staff is now having a good impact, that has resulted in improving the quality of teaching and learning.
104. Accommodation in the main school is unsatisfactory. The site is large and insecure. There is too much litter, particularly near the lower school building. Upper and lower school buildings are inconveniently situated at either end of the site with about 15 minutes walk between them. Neither building is accessible to students with physical disabilities. The lower school building is too small to accommodate the current number of students and this number is projected to increase further. Corridors are overcrowded between lessons and students need to move to the upper school building for some of their lessons. Staff must also move between buildings; this has a detrimental effect on learning when lessons start late. In addition, the shortage of space at lower school necessitates teachers moving between rooms, again having a detrimental effect on students' learning because equipment for lessons cannot always be transported easily, for example in mathematics and modern foreign languages. The resource centres in both buildings have recently been refurbished. While that at upper school is well used by students during lessons and at other times, the centre at lower school is too small and access at lunchtimes is limited to a single year group. Drama at lower school is taught in a wholly unsuitable disused scout hut. Standards in physical education are adversely affected because the gymnasiums are too small, restricting students' progress in games such as badminton and volleyball. The accommodation for students with special educational needs in both bases is well organised and welcoming, with excellent wall displays celebrating students' work.
105. While the level of resources is adequate, there are areas of concern and provision has been enhanced by the school's creative bidding for funds from a range of agencies and providers. This has enabled monies to purchase extra resources as evidenced by the recent Arts College initiative which is already making a difference and can be linked to high standards in art and design and design and technology. While most subject areas have basic equipment there is unsatisfactory provision in religious education where the absence of artefacts inhibits learning.
106. The school has just enough computers to meet its needs, but not enough to allow it to expand its courses, such as into Year 8 or providing more GCSE classes. Away from the main computer rooms, there are sufficient computers in other areas to meet the needs of other subjects and in the sixth form for private study. Resources for special educational needs are satisfactory, but there are too few computers in the learning support room and this restricts the way students can learn. However, good use is made of the adjacent computer room when it is available.
107. In most subjects, class sets of textbooks are in good condition and available for lessons, but they are very dated in modern languages and the provision in religious education is unsatisfactory. The school is unable to provide additional textbooks that can be taken home which places pressure on staff in subjects such as modern languages and geography to provide additional worksheets. Learning is restricted by the absence of textbooks as it reduces the range of tasks that can be set for homework. As a result, the school's expenditure on consumables and paper is high. Rooms that are allocated to specific departments have good displays and available materials but many teachers have to teach outside their subject area and in so doing

either have to carry resources with them or do without. Both solutions are unsatisfactory and lead to duplication of resources and less effective teaching.

108. The school has attempted to improve its resource provision by the establishment of two learning centres which have replaced the traditional libraries. Both centres have computers and Internet access for the students and are well used especially in Years 7 to 9. Much old book stock has been removed and new stock purchased following consultations with heads of department and in line with their schemes of work. The book stock of over 11,000 items is still rather low and needs to be increased to meet the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy, citizenship and the school's planned expansion of multi-cultural education.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

109. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The co-ordinator, who took up post two years ago, has had a significant impact on widening the scope of the sixth form. Students from a wider range of attainment now join the sixth form and there is now a greater emphasis on attracting students from the various ethnic groups represented in the school.
110. There are good systems in place for providing students with guidance and advice during their time in the sixth form. The co-ordinator successfully manages a good team of tutors. There is a good relationship between the sixth form and the main school. The co-ordinator of the sixth form encourages students to work and support younger students in Years 7 to 9 on the Linnell site and this can be seen in the positive attitudes that many students in Years 10 and 11 have.
111. The same very good financial systems are apparent in the sixth form. The sixth form funding subsidises Years 10 and 11. However, the sixth form is very cost effective given the low level of funding that it receives.

### ***Resources***

112. The same good match of teachers to subjects apparent in the main school exists in the sixth form. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach and this is an important factor in the above average standards that students reach. In French, for example, the subject expertise of the teachers ensures that students make very good progress. The same good systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning operate in the sixth form as for the main school.
113. Accommodation in the sixth form is good. The sixth form centre has recently been refurbished and provides attractive teaching spaces for the lessons timetabled there. Students like the study areas; they have a positive effect on learning by providing opportunities for them to develop independent study skills. The common rooms are attractive spaces, allowing students to relax between lessons and have some autonomy in managing their own affairs in an adult atmosphere.
114. Resources in the sixth form are inadequate. Students have limited opportunities to develop study skills and to undertake their own study due to the inadequate range of resources. This was evident in mathematics and physics. New computer facilities have been provided within the sixth form centre and students are making satisfactory use of these to enhance their studies.



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

115. To improve further the quality of education provided and students' standards, the management of the school should:

Improve the achievement of students in religious education in Year 10 by providing enough lessons in religious education. (Paragraphs: 7, 8, 48, 217)

Improve the achievement of students in citizenship by:

- providing enough lessons;
- improving the quality of teaching by ensuring all staff have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject.

(Paragraphs: 7, 9, 41, 48, 100, 156-158, 160)

Provide enough lessons for the personal and social education programme. (Paragraphs: 48, 63)

Improve the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 by:

- ensuring there is a more consistent approach to managing students in the classroom;
- improving the quality of marking by ensuring all teachers follow the school's marking policy consistently;
- ensuring there is a more consistent approach to the teaching of literacy.

(Paragraphs: 15, 37, 42, 71, 124, 128, 134, 137, 138, 146, 147, 153, 172, 180, 181, 190, 204)

### **Sixth form**

Improve the level of resources for students and provide more opportunities for students to develop study skills, to read about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own studies. (Paragraphs: 23, 47, 225, 228, 233, 235, 247, 263, 267, 268)

### **Minor weaknesses**

Provide religious education for all students in the sixth form. (Paragraph: 56)  
Provide annual written reports for information and communication technology to parents of all students in the main school (Paragraphs: 87, 192)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	155
	Sixth form	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		74

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	7	36	41	60	10	1	0
Percentage	5	23	26	39	6	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	1	8	15	14	0	0	0
Percentage	3	21	39	37	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	988	147
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	236	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	57	3
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	123	3

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	160

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	39

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
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64
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## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	127	91	218

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	73	73
	Girls	54	56	63
	Total	104	129	136
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	48(60)	59(63)	62(60)
	National	66(64)	67(66)	66(66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	13(24)	34(32)	23(30)
	National	32(31)	45(43)	33(34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	79	72
	Girls	69	65	51
	Total	142	144	123
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	66(60)	67(74)	56(55)
	National	67(65)	70(68)	67(64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	19(25)	36(38)	29(20)
	National	32(31)	44(42)	34(33)

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



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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	68	87	155

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	33	62	66
	Girls	44	81	86
	Total	77	143	152
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	50(42)	92(90)	98(96)
	National	50(48)	91(91)	96(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	38.3
	National	39.8

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	29(15)	22(27)	51(42)
	Average point score per candidate	15.4(18.9)	21.4(18.1)	18(18.4)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9(17.8)	18(18.6)	17.5(18.2)

		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	29	22	51	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	15.4	21.4	18	n/a	n/a	n/a
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***

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

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>No of students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
914	88	3
0	0	0
10	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
1	12	1
7	0	0
149	15	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
6	0	0
1	0	0
26	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68.65
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.5

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	748

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.7
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	21.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2806930
Total expenditure	2747659
Expenditure per pupil	2473
Balance brought forward from previous year	41062
Balance carried forward to next year	100333

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1135
Number of questionnaires returned	337

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	57	6	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	57	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	55	11	5	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	56	17	4	1
The teaching is good.	28	58	5	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	44	23	7	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	48	4	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	43	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	17	53	20	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	27	56	7	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	60	7	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	50	10	3	8

## 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 **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths**

Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of the good teaching.

The newly appointed head of department has a clear vision of how standards might be further improved.

#### **Areas for improvement**

Students achieve less in Years 7 to 9 than they do in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching is inconsistent in Year 7 to 9.

116. In 2002, results in the national tests for 14 year olds were well below the national average for all schools and below the national average for similar schools. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results have fluctuated over the past five years. In 2002, results in English were below those obtained in mathematics and science.
117. In 2002, results in the GCSE examination were average. Students did significantly worse in English in comparison with their performance in most other subjects they studied. Results in English literature were well above the national average but a seventh less of Year 11 was entered than is the case nationally.
118. Standards being currently attained are consistent with the examination results obtained in 2002. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, this means that achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory and, by the end of Year 11, it is good. The main reason for the difference in achievement is that teaching is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students.
119. In all year groups there are higher attaining students who can express themselves fully and contribute well to whole-class and group discussions. As students move up the school, and into Years 10 and 11, they gain in confidence, appreciate that they can increase their own understanding by taking part in oral work and so are more ready to make their contributions to lessons. Middle and lower attainers express themselves briefly and find difficulty in expanding their ideas in response to questions. A small number of students are reticent and only contribute when the teacher coaxes them into doing so. Most students listen carefully to others and are respectful of different points of view. Students have the chance to increase their confidence by exploring new social roles through improvisation in drama lessons.
120. By the end of Year 9, students have read a satisfactory range of literature. However, few students are able to closely analyse the meanings and usage of words and so tend only to understand the gist of what they have read. There are some exceptions, as was seen in a Year 9 lesson when students were able to explain in some depth the meaning of extracts from *Macbeth*, in response to questions posed by the teacher. The standard of students' reading aloud is generally well below expectations. Whilst

higher attainers read aloud with good expression, middle and lower attaining students, who are in the majority, read with limited expression and do not understand how to project their voices. By the end of Year 11, students go on to examine more demanding texts and to develop a deeper understanding of what they study. Higher attainers are able to successfully undertake challenging tasks, such as comparing Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* with Browning's *Porphyria's Lover*. Lower and middle attainers remain hesitant readers, though most of them can use the context to work out the meanings of words. The lowest attainers are discouraged by unfamiliar words and are not able to read independently.

121. By the end of Year 9, students have developed some skill in writing in a variety of styles, including narratives, descriptions, leaflets and different types of letters. By the end of Year 11, students go on to extend their range considerably. High and middle attaining students can write full commentaries upon the development of characters in *Romeo and Juliet*. They can also produce leaflets supporting the work of charities. In these they can present the case for the charity well and make it all the more persuasive through the effective use of desktop publishing techniques. Most students take a greater responsibility for improving their work than they did lower down in the school, as is seen in the additional effort that goes into redrafting material. However, the work of many middle and lower attaining students is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Students' use of information and communications technology is satisfactory.
122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Examples were also seen of very good teaching across Years 7 to 11 and some unsatisfactory teaching, in Years 7 to 9. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. One feature is that teachers have high expectations of students. This means they plan their lessons well, and expect students to work at a brisk pace, to behave well, to concentrate hard, to actively participate in the lessons, to produce their best quality written work and to take a pride in their folders and, indeed, in all aspects of their work. These high expectations were seen in a Year 10 lesson on *Romeo and Juliet*. The high quality of the planning ensured that a number of interesting tasks were included that gave students good opportunities to actively participate in the lesson. The teacher explained the learning objectives for the lesson in a clear, concise manner then expected students to respond with an appropriate effort. They did, and the quality of learning was very good. Teachers and students had also co-operated well to ensure that all folders were of a high standard. They were neat and well organised, the marking was of a very good quality, and everything was up to date. Students appreciated the quality of attention they were receiving, knew it was helping them to improve their standards and were happy to say so.
123. Teaching is also effective when the teacher uses methods that take into account students' prior attainment and their current needs. Thus, for example, in a lesson for lower attaining students in Year 11 the teacher recognised that whilst students may understand what was required of them, they did not possess the skill to be able to express themselves satisfactorily in writing. She helped them to do this by presenting them with a model of how they might write. Time was well spent discussing this, with the result that students felt they could move on and do themselves justice. At all stages the lesson was lively and purposeful and learning was rapid. Questioning was used effectively in a number of lessons to test students' understanding and to ensure their participation in lessons. Teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the courses they are teaching and this means students have a good sense of purpose in their studies.

124. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, lessons lack pace and variety and students are not given sufficient guidance and help on how they should complete tasks that have been set. The result of this is that students give up on the work, become noisy and frustrated and behave inappropriately. In other instances the teacher's planning is unsatisfactory, resulting in there being insufficient work to keep students productively occupied throughout the lesson. In some classes insufficient written work is set for students to practise and develop their skills in writing. Some of the marking is superficial and does not show students what they need to do to improve. In some classes, when work has been completed, it is stored by the teacher. The effect of this is to limit opportunities for students and their parents to go back over completed work and monitor progress.
125. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved in Years 10 and 11 but is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision of how standards might be improved although she has been hindered by frequent staff changes.

### **Literacy across the school**

126. Overall, students' standards of literacy are below average. However, standards are generally below average in Years 7 to 9 but by the end of Year 11 they are average. Thus the majority of students have skills that enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. Those who are unable to do this by themselves receive good quality support.
127. Most students are able to read independently and understand how to work out the meaning of words from their context. Higher attainers read aloud with good expression; middle and lower attainers have limited expression and do not understand how to project their voices. Most students are willing to make an oral contribution to lessons, though a minority are reluctant to do so.
128. Students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narrative, description and reporting. In Years 10 and 11 students produce lengthy, well-structured writing when they are required to do so. The work of middle and lower attaining students is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **English as an additional language**

129. Students who are at the early stages of language acquisition are supported well and make good progress. Students' needs are kept under review and bi-lingual assistants are deployed effectively. Links with parents and the wider ethnic minority community are very good and help students to feel confident in the school. Other students for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

Teachers work well together as a team and are eager to raise the achievement of students. There are good arrangements for assessing how well students are progressing in mathematics so that students and teachers can see what they need to do to improve.

### **Areas for improvement**

There is a need to improve teaching methods in Years 7 to 9 so that students are engaged and attentive throughout the lessons.

There is insufficient structured use of information and communication technology in order to support learning in Years 10 and 11.

130. Results in the 2002 National tests for 14 year olds were below the national average for all schools but above average for similar schools. When compared to all schools, the results in mathematics were in line with those in science but higher than those in English. Boys do better than the girls. Over the last five years the trend in results has been below the national trend.
131. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were broadly in line with the national average. The results in the 2002 examinations were higher than the previous year. When compared with students from similar schools, the proportions of students achieving A\*-C grades was well above the average. Although the boys achieved as well as the girls overall, they gained a greater proportion of A\*-C grades. There has been an improving trend broadly in line with the national trend. Students did not do as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects.
132. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards at the end of Year 9 are below average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement for all students. The school has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy into its planning of lessons and this has had a positive impact on numeracy skills. Students' demonstrate sound number and algebra skills; for example, the higher attaining students are able to apply their understanding of standard form by using it in calculations. Although middle attaining students understand that the gradients of straight lines can be identified from the standard equation, they have greater difficulty in recognising the common properties of parallel lines. When studying shape and measurements, lower attaining students can calculate areas of rectangles and understand that the area of a triangle is half the rectangle, whilst middle attaining students progress to calculating areas of triangles using the formula. Students' understanding of statistics is sound and ranges from plotting and using cumulative frequency graphs to plotting scatter diagrams to draw the line of best fit. Although higher attaining students understand how to plot cumulative frequency graphs, they do not progress to using those values to compare distributions. Lower attaining students can calculate the mean, mode and median for a small set of discrete data.
133. Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement for this group of students. Numeracy skills are sound and are improving. The higher attaining students build on their previous understanding of solving quadratic equations and simultaneous linear equations. They use this understanding to solve simultaneous equations where one equation is a quadratic function. A minority of students have difficulty in factorising and this slows their progress, but with support from their teacher they consolidate and use this to solve the quadratic equation that they obtain. When middle attaining students are revising the use of trigonometrical ratios, they quickly recognise that the tangent of an angle is the same as the gradient of the hypotenuse. Lower attaining students have a secure understanding of how to create scatter diagrams and although their understanding of positive correlation is sound, they struggle to describe negative correlation.
134. Standards of numeracy and literacy are generally average in mathematics, but overall standards of presentation vary. Where they are good, students set their work out



clearly, spell mathematical terms correctly and structure answers well. However, not all work is carried out to this standard. Minorities of students do not show how they work out answers and this impedes their learning. There are errors in spellings, particularly when writing mathematical terms, and these are not always corrected. When given the opportunity, students contribute well in class discussions. They confidently explain the methods they use to work out answers while the rest of the class listen attentively. Although computers and graphic calculators are used in lessons, it is not a clear element in the plans for the modules of work in Years 10 and 11 and the quality of their use is inconsistent. It is an integral part of the course in Years 7 to 9 where it is built into planning of the resources and this supports the work that students do well. They learn how to use spreadsheets to support their work on data handling and they use graphic calculators to plot linear and quadratic functions. The higher attaining students then solve simultaneous equations from graphs of quadratic and linear functions.

135. Students with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. They are placed in small classes and learning support assistants work well with teachers to ensure that students are integrated in the lessons, stay on task and have help in understanding difficult concepts.
136. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and, in the better lessons, there is an enthusiasm for the subject that motivates students to want to learn. Teachers plan their lessons well. They identify clear learning objectives and effective use is made of the three-part lesson. The starter activity is enjoyed by students and often acts as an effective introduction to the main part of the lesson, consolidating skills previously learnt and preparing students well for the main activity. In the better lessons, there is an appropriate balance between different types of activities and this generally keeps students interested and motivated. This was evident when students were extending their understanding of pie charts to represent data. The teacher made sure students could work out the angles to create the pie charts before they progressed to reverse the process and learnt how to calculate the population given the angles and proportions of the pie chart. Occasionally, individual work by students is too long and there is a lack of variety of tasks. In those lessons, students do not sustain concentration and stray off task. Students in Years 10 and 11 are generally well involved in lessons. In the best lessons, teachers ask students to explain how they worked out the answers. This encourages students to explain what they are doing and this promotes an improvement in learning. However, there are occasions when teachers ask for answers without asking, "How did you do that?" In the better lessons, teachers question students effectively to assess if they have understood one concept before progressing onto more difficult work.
137. The management of students is generally good; it is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, behaviour is good and students work well with each other. This leads to a positive atmosphere for working and students generally want to learn. When given the opportunity, students work well together. Students generally listen attentively to their teachers and respond well to questions. This was evident in a lesson where the teacher identified a weakness in calculating areas. The students had difficulty in understanding the difference between perimeter and area. However, their teacher recognised this and by encouraging students to work together, by the end of the lesson they could calculate areas of rectangles and areas of shapes made up of rectangles. In a minority of lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9, students do not fully concentrate when working by themselves and are not always listening to their

teachers. In these lessons, they shout out answers and do not listen to each other. This slows down their rate of learning.

138. Teachers generally plan homework well so that it consolidates learning. It is set regularly for middle and higher attaining students and supports the work that students do in class well. Standards of presentation of work of the higher attaining students' work are good and they generally structure answers well so that they are developing good practice. The quality of marking is inconsistent. There is some good quality marking when teachers indicate where students have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve, but this is not always the case and some marking is just crosses where the pupil does not know where they have gone wrong. The overall quality of leadership and management of mathematics is satisfactory. The teachers work well together and they are keen to raise achievement in mathematics. There are good procedures for assessing students' performance as they progress through the school. The performance of students is monitored well with planned assessments and there are procedures in place to monitor students' attainment from these tests and from work set. However, the arrangements for students to move between groups as result of these assessments are limited at Years 7 to 9 because of timetable restrictions. Teachers liaise well with the primary schools. The outcome of this liaison with the feeder schools is the effective introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy for Numeracy and the development of the three-part lesson. It also assists in the smooth transition that takes place when students join the school. The department has developed the use of the National Numeracy Strategy in planning all lessons and this plays a fundamental role in improving numeracy skills of students and their enthusiasm for the subject.
139. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The attainment of students by the end of Year 11 has remained broadly in line with the national average.

### **Numeracy across the school**

140. Students' standards of numeracy are broadly average. In lessons and work seen there are some good examples of numeracy. For example, in geography, students draw two contrasting graphs to illustrate temperature and rainfall when comparing climate differences and its impact on people. There is a positive contribution from work in information and communication technology when students present data in different forms. Science contributes well to students' competence and skills in using number. Their number skills are adequate for the tasks set, but their data-handling skills are practised effectively. In history, however, there are too few opportunities for students to use statistics and the quality of the presentation of any graphs is poor.

### **SCIENCE**

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

#### **Strengths**

GCSE results are improving as a result of good teaching.

Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because they are attentive and working towards clearly defined targets.

Students' practical skills improve rapidly as a result of frequent experimental work.

#### **Areas for improvement**

Learning is disrupted in Years 7 to 9 because a small minority of students misbehave.

Middle and lower attaining students make less progress than they should because work is not closely enough matched to their needs.  
Students' learning is held back as a result of their limited understanding of key words.

141. Results in the national tests for 14 year olds were below the national average in 2002 for all schools but were well above average when compared with similar schools. The results were similar to those in previous years, but they have not improved as much as those nationally because students are now entering the school with lower standards in science than previously. Results in science, when compared with all schools, were similar to those attained in mathematics and better than those in English.
142. GCSE results were average in 2002, representing better progress than expected for these students in relation to their national test results two years earlier. Almost all students were entered for the examination and they did well at all levels, including those gaining the highest (A\* and A) grades. Boys did better than girls. Results have improved over recent years.
143. When students enter the school in Year 7, standards are below average. For example, almost all know that water changes from liquid to solid when placed in a freezer, but few can give an accurate description of differences between the properties of water and ice. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory in their first three years in the school, but standards are still below average by the end of Year 9, matching recent national test results. Higher attaining students achieve well, but middle and lower attaining students are held back because they have limited understanding of key words in science, restricting their ability to recall and explain earlier work. For example, students in a middle set in Year 9 were unable to describe filtration with precision because they could not recall the meanings of words such as solution and precipitate. Lower attaining students leave too much work unfinished and fail to draw out the main learning points. This was the case in Year 7, when students measured the extension of an elastic band as weights were added but were unable to spot any pattern in their results because they were incomplete.
144. Standards improve by the end of Year 11 and are average, matching recent GCSE results. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because they have better understanding of the technical language of science and, in most cases, sustain concentration throughout lessons. For example, almost all can describe osmosis in terms of particle movement through a membrane and higher attaining students can attempt an explanation of this phenomenon in terms of particle sizes.
145. Students' skills in handling laboratory apparatus are below average when they enter the school. However, a strength of the department is that almost all lessons provide opportunities for them to carry out practical work. As a result, their skills improve rapidly; by Year 11, they work carefully and safely with potentially hazardous materials, as when investigating the effect of heat on solids such as iodine and ammonium chloride. However, other aspects of scientific enquiry, such as planning investigations, are insufficiently emphasised in Years 7 to 9. Information and communication technology is well used in science lessons, for example in measuring changes in temperature during neutralisation and using a simulated 'walk in a graveyard' to investigate weathering of rocks.
146. Students with special educational needs make similar overall progress to other students, but there are variations. For example, in Years 7 to 9 learning support assistants do not always focus attention for long enough on small numbers of

potentially disruptive boys. As a result, they work for short periods, but quickly lose interest as soon as the support assistant moves to help another pupil. Support for students whose home language is not English is insufficient. Where provided, it is very effective; for example in Year 8 a Punjabi-speaking pupil made good progress in understanding reflection and refraction of light because he was given one-to-one help by a learning support assistant speaking his home language. However, worksheets are often not well enough adapted for students who lack fluency in English. This was the case in Year 10 when they struggled with the meaning of 'economic viability'; as a result, five or six Asian boys gave up and made less progress than they should.

147. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Most students behave well, but a small minority of (mainly white) boys in Years 7 to 9 disrupt the work of other students and slow the pace of some lessons. Key features of good (and occasionally very good) teaching are clear learning objectives, a variety of activities that engage students' interest, and brisk pace. In a very good lesson about weathering of rocks the teacher demonstrated high expectations of what students could achieve by asking them to explain why hot glass shattered when placed in cold water. They rose well to the challenge and showed in response to questions that they were keen to do their best. The teacher dealt quickly and firmly with one or two potentially disruptive students, allowing an excellent pace of learning to be maintained. Learning was very good because students gained clear understanding of how and why rocks weather, and how some features of the landscape were formed. In less good (and occasionally unsatisfactory) lessons, middle and lower attaining students make insufficient progress because the work is too easy for them, while in others the pace is slowed because teachers need to deal with problems caused by disruptive students. In Year 8, for example, the pace of learning about the human body's defence against disease was slowed for all students because some were inattentive, while in Year 9 several girls could have learnt more if work about the cost of electricity had been more challenging than simply identifying which appliances are expensive to run. Marking of students' day-to-day work is inconsistent across the department. About one third of teachers make comments in their marking that show students how to improve their work and set targets for them to do so, but others write comments that are encouraging rather than helpful.
148. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Teachers work well together as a team, for example in up-dating schemes of work, and this is beginning to result in higher standards. However, further development has been hindered by frequent staff changes resulting from long-term illness. Assessment data are well used to track students' progress; as a result they have clear targets for National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. However, students are not set short-term targets to help them reach target levels or grades. The new strategy for science teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not being consistently implemented across the department, resulting in too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning. There are insufficient textbooks to allow students to keep a book at home, restricting opportunities for teachers to set homework tasks that encourage development of independent learning skills.
149. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. National test results are lower now, but the attainment of students entering the school has declined; GCSE results are similar to those in 1997. Overall, teaching was good then and remains good now.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Strengths**

Standards are above average by Year 9 and well above average by Year 11.

Teaching is very good and ensures that all students make very good progress.

Assessment is very good and contributes to high standards.

Students have very good attitudes to this subject and this contributes to their success.

The quality of leadership and management is very good, which has helped to create a vibrant and successful department.

### **Area for improvement**

Students' written work is not marked closely enough to help raise standards of literacy.

150. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show standards to be above the national average with approximately one in ten students reaching very high standards. GCSE results have been well above the national average over the past three years with 90 per cent of students gaining the higher grades A\*-C in 2002. More girls than boys have chosen art and design in recent years and girls have gained a greater proportion of the top grades. In relation to their other subjects, students achieve very well in art.
151. In work seen, standards at the end of Year 9 are above average; this represents very good achievement given students' standards on entry. In Year 7, students can draw the human figure in the correct proportions and to a scale. They can successfully design and make a shield in the African style with dramatic use of line and colour. In Year 8, students can use the correct techniques for building slab structures in pottery. They can also use studies of the architect Gaudi as inspiration for three-dimensional constructions of buildings. In Year 9, students make very good studies of pattern, including geometric patterns, and can do block prints effectively. There are some good links with other subjects, particularly geography. Students in Year 9 have created an exquisite large-scale mural of a rainforest scene in the style of the artist Rousseau.
152. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11 and students achieve very well. Standards in Year 10 are higher than in Year 11. The majority of students have done excellent work in composition, pattern and texture based on studies of Islamic art. Work based on studies of pop art is also very successful. Overall, students do a very good range of work that includes light sculpture, collage and printing. Students' research for all topics is very good. They are helped to focus on the key aspects by the requirement to answer carefully chosen questions on the relevant work of artists and art movements. A significant feature of work in all years is that there are no students with poor attainment.
153. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There are excellent features in all lessons. Chief of these is the teachers' skills in capturing students' interest by a lively, charismatic approach. Teachers have excellent class management strategies. The work is well structured, often in a step-by-step approach that ensures that all students work at a good pace and achieve success. Teachers give very good demonstrations and illustrations on what is to be achieved in each lesson. This strong visual element supports all students and particularly those with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. All students are given individual support in all lessons. This ensures that all, including the gifted and talented, make very good progress. Students have very good attitudes to this subject and behaviour in class is excellent. This contributes greatly to their success. Assessment and marking are very good with lengthy teacher comments guiding students on how to improve their work.

However, the marking of students' written work is not done in enough detail to improve their skills in literacy. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes are not corrected in the majority of cases.

154. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Planning, including schemes of work, is exemplary. There is very good provision for students to work at lunchtimes and after school. There is good use of artists in residence to extend the experiences of students. One of these artists gives very good support by showing students how to use information and communication technology in the development of their work. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development. It includes the spiritual and cultural aspects from a range of art forms including Islamic, Aboriginal, African, Chinese and Japanese.
155. There is good improvement since the previous inspection. The school has built on its success at that time to achieve specialist visual arts college status. This is leading to a much wider range of provision for the students. It enables them to have greater access to practising artists and to exhibit their work to wider audiences. It is also making provision to extend art opportunities to parents and the wider community. Teaching has improved and is now uniformly very good. Drawing is well taught at GCSE. The studios are now clean, attractive and inspiring. All the good and very good features reported at the time of the previous inspection are maintained. These include the displays of work proliferating throughout the school and the studios celebrating a range of achievements by many students. These also enhance the school environment in a very significant way.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

The counselling programme enables students to take responsibility for the well-being of other students.

The school council enables students to play some part in the management of their school. Occasional tutorial periods enable students to benefit from outside experts with advice on drugs and health issues.

### Areas for improvement

Students under-achieve because of unsatisfactory teaching and they do not have enough lessons.

There is no identification of individual departmental responsibilities for the delivery of citizenship and as a result delivery is insecure and management is unsatisfactory.

There are no assessment opportunities in order to monitor the progress of students.

Insufficient use is made of outside agencies in order to enable students to become aware of the range of community support, and to utilise their expertise.

Students have no portfolio of work that would enable them to recognise their progress in the development of their understanding of citizenship.

156. By Year 9, standards are below average. Although students in Years 7 to 9 have no discrete citizenship lessons, the school has identified where some elements are delivered through other subject lessons. In religious education, students considered the importance of forgiveness and were able to reflect on the need to forgive in order to avoid continuous strife. There are good opportunities to review sentences for crimes. Higher attaining students display sound reasoning and justification of the different views expressed. In history, they considered the development of laws and the idea of citizenship. These provide useful contributions to students' understanding; however, there is no central co-ordination of these contributions and no assessment of their progress in citizenship. The 'rolling' tutorial programme provides good opportunities for students to learn about health issues, but there is insufficient time to deliver the elements of citizenship that are not covered through other subjects. Students have opportunities to develop the skills of citizenship through the Year 8 reception duties and through organising charity fundraising. However, there are too few opportunities for them to develop the concept of active citizenship through the individual support of others in the school community. As a consequence achievement is unsatisfactory.
157. Standards in Year 11 are below average. Students considered the history of the European Union and the countries that made up its membership. Higher attaining students identified its aims and were able to evaluate their importance. Most students had limited knowledge of the geography of Europe, however, and very little recognition of the contribution of the Union to their lives. Responses tend to be stereotypical and repeat misconceptions. Despite the fact that teachers challenge these, the lack of continuity in lessons and of some staff means that students do not develop a depth of understanding. A significant proportion of students become passive during lessons, making the minimum effort and relying on the teacher to provide information. There is little opportunity to work on sustained projects or investigations in order to develop skills. Lessons are generally based on oral work and worksheet activities that are not retained in individual files. As a result work is not valued by the students and lessons do not build on previous work, or provide opportunities for them to express their ideas in writing that can be reviewed at a later date. As a result the achievement of students overall is unsatisfactory.

158. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers share lesson objectives with their students and in most lessons these are reviewed at the end. Teachers use a variety of activities to interest and involve their students and the pace of lessons is generally good. However, the lack of a known scheme of work and the need to use temporary staff for some lessons means they cannot build on their own experiences to improve their knowledge and expertise. Teachers deliver a lesson that is provided by the co-ordinator, but there is little evidence that they adapt the lesson to the needs of the students they teach. There are no opportunities for staff to meet to exchange good practice or to discuss the development of students' skills. Students complete little written work other than worksheets and do not have files or books in which to store their work. As a consequence, there is no method by which teachers and students can assess their attainment or monitor their progress. Temporary staff have no previous work on which to build or judge the level at which to teach.
159. There are opportunities for students to develop their understanding of active citizenship around the upper school as representatives on the school council and through organising charity fund-raising events. Counselling by students in Year 11 and by students in the sixth form is enabling students to develop confidence, and a sense of responsibility and service. Through the organisation of sports teams students have the opportunity to lead their peers, and when they are challenged to use their initiative through activities, such as the planning and fundraising for the proposed visit to Malawi, they rise to the occasion. This involves a relatively small number of students, however. So far there has been no co-ordination of activities or volunteers in order to ensure that all students gain experience of active citizenship.
160. The leadership of citizenship is shared, and the lack of clear co-ordination of the subject is resulting in unsatisfactory management. Useful contacts have been established with some agencies outside the school, such as the police and health service, enabling the students to learn important information about drugs and health issues from the agencies themselves. There are plans to extend the range of agencies; however, there are few opportunities at present in the lower school to enable students to benefit from their input. The co-ordinators have correctly identified the areas for development, but the methods by which these can take place are unclear.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

The quality of leadership and management is very good and provides a clear vision for the subject.

Students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 because of the very good teaching.

Students attain high standards in textiles because of the very good teaching.

There is a wide range of courses available to students in Years 10 and 11.

### Areas for improvement

The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not ensure students are consistently challenged.

A small number of students have unsatisfactory attitudes towards the manufacturing course.

161. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well above average. Girls performed much better than boys did overall. GCSE results in 2002 were better than the previous year overall and reflect a rising trend.



162. The curriculum is broad and balanced and opportunities for the use of information and communication technology, in particular designing and making using computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), are evident in Years 7 to 9. A good example of this is the Year 7 torch project where students are given the opportunity to use a computer-aided cutter to apply a logo to their product. In general, design skills, evaluation and analysis are less well developed than making skills. This is evident in all material areas.
163. The standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are average and this represents good achievement. For example, in a Year 7 class, students make rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding of triangulation techniques when constructing models of bridges. Students' have above average graphical skills by the end of Year 9; they use drawing projection techniques well to illustrate their designs. Their technical vocabulary is average which represents good progress, given their lack of technical language when they join the school in Year 7. The way that teachers organise projects for students to follow in Years 7 to 9 does not ensure sufficient planned progression to take into account prior learning between the units taught; this leads to a lack of challenge for higher attaining students in some of the material areas.
164. The standard of the students' work is well above average in Year 11 and students achieve very well. As in the work in Years 7 to 9, practical skills are well developed. Most students show confidence in using a range of materials and processes and use product analysis as an effective research technique. Students' work is often outstanding, particularly in textiles where coursework is highly creative, thoroughly analysed and manufactured accurately with precision and care. One of the strengths of the department is the extent to which students work independently; a good example of this is within electronic products where students confidently design, test and build electronic circuits. Information and communication technology is used well across the whole department and is having a beneficial effect upon standards. The quality of making, particularly in textiles, is of a very high standard. Standards achieved in the manufacturing course are below average. A small number of students on this course have unsatisfactory attitudes and this occasionally affects badly the progress of all students.
165. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and the learning it promotes are good. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are planned well, and the pace of lessons is often brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and students with special educational needs progress at a rate that matches those of other students. However, work is not sufficiently matched to the standards already reached by some students and this restricts the progress they make. The department has identified gifted and talented students; however, schemes of work and lesson activities are not sufficiently varied to ensure a consistent challenge for the highest attainers. Homework is regularly set across the department and is used well to reinforce learning. The department has an effective system for the assessment of students' work based upon National Curriculum Levels; this gives students a clear understanding of how well they are doing.
166. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 10 to 11 is very good. Teachers are always well planned and students are actively engaged in a variety of interesting, challenging activities. The teachers are particularly well matched to the needs of the classes they teach and are well informed about the detailed examination board requirements for all of the courses they teach. The pace of

learning in lessons is always brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. The standard of marking and ongoing assessment is very good; teachers assiduously mark students' work and set targets for future improvement. Students are generally aware of their own performance targets and know what they need to do to improve. The monitoring of students' work during Year 11 is good. Students' progress is regularly reviewed at departmental meetings and the head of department contacts parents for support when necessary.

167. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. Students respond positively to the very good teaching they receive, relationships are firm yet friendly and the atmosphere that this creates enables students to learn effectively. A strong feature of all lessons is the way in which students show an interest in the activities, work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. Students are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety.
168. The department makes a good contribution to the development of the students' literacy skills. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it through wall displays in classrooms. The use of literacy cards, for example in the Year 7 pizza project, ensures the development of a technical vocabulary. In addition, students are given opportunities for speaking and discussing their ideas with both peers and the teacher. Students' numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed through activities such as accurate measurement, marking out and weighing.
169. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The head of department is very effective and provides a clear vision and direction for design and technology education. Using self-evaluation as a tool, the head of department understands the strengths and weaknesses in provision and has produced a detailed development plan for improvement. The department has benefited greatly from investment since the previous inspection. Overall, the quality of resources is now very good; however, there are an insufficient number of cookers for whole-class teaching in food technology and the temporary room used for the teaching of food is unsatisfactory for practical activities and should not be used for health and safety reasons.
170. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection. Standards are much higher and the quality of teaching is much improved.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

The enthusiastic teaching and warmth of relationships enables students to achieve well. All students respond well to questions in class and answer them with confidence. The department is led well; this has ensured good progress in the last two years.

### **Areas for improvement**

Lower attainers have weak written skills and a limited vocabulary, while middle attainers do not always produce extended written work.  
In Years 7 to 9 more opportunities for fieldwork should be developed.

171. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average. Results have declined in recent years especially with the middle attainers. Students attained significantly worse results in geography than in the other subjects that they studied. In 2002, boys

improved their performance and now boys and girls do equally well. High attainers did well in 2002 and in the three years previous to that. The new head of department has introduced strategies for improving performance but their impact is not yet reflected in the examination results.

172. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average which indicates good progress as students arrive at entry to the school with standards below average. Students use the atlas well and locate places, while Year 7 students display good Ordnance Survey mapwork skills. Students respond well to questions in class with high attainers able to give detailed answers. Students express ideas and are able to make value judgements, as when considering the impact of the Three Gorges Dam in China on local people and when describing the factors that led to a high population density in northern Italy in a Year 8 lesson. They understand the importance of access, trade and position in the European Union. Literacy levels are below average and writing skills weak for lower and middle attainers. Students are encouraged to read aloud and have developed their speaking skills by working in pairs or small group situations. In the very best lessons, students took pride in their work, presented it well and were highly motivated as shown by an excellent Year 8 lesson on climate contrasts between Palermo and Cortina. In this lesson they drew accurate graphs, made calculations and were able to explain and interpret the data so gaining a very high level of geographical understanding. Opportunities for field studies have increased since the previous inspection and this process needs to continue.
173. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average and students achieve well given their standards at the start of Year 10. Students are encouraged to develop their thinking skills and this offers challenge, especially to the high attainers, and is reflected in their good question and answer work. In lessons on Milford Haven students explained the economic and environmental consequences of the *Sea Empress* disaster and made sensitive moral judgements. Good use of photograph interpretation of two cities in Brazil allowed students to develop a very high level of understanding of the issues of health, poverty, living conditions and crime in the shanty towns. Written work is good from high attainers and examples of their coursework showed detail and analysis and were well presented, often using information and communication technology. Lower attainers have weak written skills and a limited vocabulary, while middle attainers do not always produce extended written work.
174. Students with special educational needs make good progress as a result of good teacher support and a high level of individual care. Their progress is constantly encouraged by warm comments of praise. The teacher's "Come on, guys" given with a smile was always quickly responded to. Students with English as an additional language also make good progress, benefiting from the extra literacy input often provided by the teacher or the learning assistant.
175. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 is good. Lessons have a good structure with varied activities. In Years 10 and 11 the teachers have very high expectations of the high attainers and push them accordingly. Middle attainers are not always challenged enough in their responses. In all lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge was very good. In one Year 11 lesson on Milford Haven, students were shown how by modelling they could extend their writing to gain the higher GCSE grades by developing cause and effect. Students were led in their learning and were able to link the oil spill to loss of wildlife; damage to the beaches; fall in tourist revenue; and eventual local unemployment. They visibly improved within 20 minutes and were excited by their own progress. Where learning is less successful, it is because too much time is given to relatively low order tasks. Fieldwork is well

developed in Years 10 and 11 and the students' material on Slapton in Devon is of a high order.

176. All teachers prepare their lessons well. Students' behaviour is good and their response to the high levels of praise and constructive comment is good. Students clearly enjoy the subject so remain on task. When a pupil drifts off task, a quiet word with a smile from the teacher is enough to bring the pupil back on task. Students' progress is encouraged by an effective system of target setting. Books are well marked and praise comments widely used. Some teachers make specific reference in their comments to what is needed to improve and everyone would benefit from using this approach. The department marking policy is applied consistently. Homework is regularly set but on two occasions it was of the 'finish off' type and too brief in content and challenge. The use of the geography journal in Years 7 to 9 is an excellent strategy for homework and extremely effective with the higher attainers. It encourages students to study current world events such as famine in Africa and widens their social, cultural and moral education as well as aiding their citizenship. While classroom resources were available in lessons and in good condition, the absence of textbooks to use at home does restrict the progress of middle attainers. Whenever possible, geography encourages the use of information and communication technology but access to computers is limited. High quality colourful displays especially on the Amazon rainforest make the rooms stimulating for students.
177. The department is led and managed well. The head of department is a good role model with strong organisational skills as shown by a good subject handbook. She monitors progress effectively and encourages the professional development of staff linking it to performance management. Schemes of work have been extensively rewritten and good practice is shared enthusiastically. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection and especially in the last two years. The department is a relatively young team being led with energy and vision and the potential for further improvement is considerable.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

Teaching is good and leads to students achieving well.

GCSE results are improving because teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.

Resources for learning are used well to motivate students.

The quality of leadership and management is good, resulting in good progress in planning the development of the subject and in raising standards.

### Areas for improvement

The arrangements for assessing students' attainment in Years 7 to 9 do not give reliable information to monitor progress.

The schemes of work do not give enough guidance to teachers.

178. Results in the 2002 examination were average. Boys achieved higher than girls did but overall, students' results in history were significantly worse than those they attained in most other subjects they studied. However, the results have improved in recent years as a result of better teaching provision.

179. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement given students' standards when they entered the school. Students have a good sense of chronology and can place events sequentially in time. They know about a range of topics, such as castle construction and health and disease in the medieval period. In Year 7, for example, they know about the effects of the Black Death on communities and how attitudes were influenced by spiritual beliefs, but standards were lower than expected because students did not use the sources of evidence well or develop answers fully in discussion. Standards of higher attaining students are above average. In Year 9, for example, they used a range of sources of evidence very well to assess the attitudes of soldiers on the western front in World War I. They were able to analyse poetry and songs to appreciate conditions in the trenches and reported their findings in detail to the class. Standards of other students, however, are lower because they do not make enough use of sources in explanations and many do not know where the battlefields are located. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because of the individual guidance provided, but the standard of written work is low because of writing difficulties.
180. By the end of Year 11 standards are average. This represents good achievement given the standards at the start of the course. Most students are knowledgeable about topics such as the North American Plains Indians and are aware of the importance of spiritual belief in the culture and traditions. They understand about the significance of the spirits of the dead in guiding their actions but many do not explain written answers in sufficient detail. Students have a sound foundation of history skills. Low attaining students know terms such as 'shaft' and 'coalface' in studies about coal mining and are able to examine evidence and suggest ideas as to the causes of a mine accident. The quality of written work is below average because of grammatical weakness and unfinished work. Some students improve the quality of work through the use of information and communication technology to research and present findings, but many do not use computers enough to develop topics. Higher attaining students have good understanding of topics such as 'crime and punishment' and write well-structured accounts about community policing in evaluating evidence about 'Jack the Ripper' and the Whitechapel murders.
181. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Lessons have clear learning objectives and these are carefully explained to students so they know what is expected. Teachers plan lessons carefully and generally manage students well. This ensures that lessons proceed smoothly, students are kept on task and good progress is made. Learning is most effective when teachers engage students actively in learning and have high expectations of them. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, students co-operated enthusiastically in a simulation exercise to debate the 'closure' of Burton Abbey in studies about the dissolution of the monasteries. They concentrated well because they were given time controls for each task, used the resources effectively to understand controversy between Protestants and Catholics and showed excellent achievement in subsequent class discussion. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in most lessons because their needs are met by additional adult support and resources tailored to help them succeed. Occasionally, however, learning is unsatisfactory when inappropriate tasks are set; students waste time and class control is ineffective. Students' work is assessed regularly with encouraging summative comment. Although some attention is given to correcting spelling errors, there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and not enough attention is given to grammatical accuracy and how the work can be improved.

182. Students learn well in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have a good range of teaching experience. Explanations are clear; concepts are well taught and as a result students improve their understanding of topics and make good progress. Teachers make effective use of available resources. Good quality texts are used to inform and practise reading skills, whilst much use is made of reprographic resources to provide a learning focus. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, sketch drawings of child labour and statements of information about a mine disaster enabled lower attaining students to learn about conditions and engage in evaluating the causes in order to make decisions. Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral and cultural development very well, encouraging them to reflect on the spiritual dimension in shaping the lives of the North American Plains Indians, whilst in Year 10 students learn about issues concerning conscientious objectors during the 1914-1918 war. In some lessons, however, not enough is expected of students in discussion. Answers are brief and lack explanation and consequently students' depth of knowledge and understanding is shallow in some topics. Occasionally poor attitudes to learning of a minority, mostly boys, reduce progress because of interruptions to the progress of the lesson. Higher attaining students write well-organised and detailed accounts in coursework topics, showing clear understanding about issues such as the Women's Suffrage campaign from 1870 to 1914 and how the war brought about significant social change.
183. The quality of leadership and management is good. The recently appointed head of subject has made good progress in planning the development of the subject and in raising standards. The curriculum provision is being improved with the planning of visits and fieldwork. There is a strong team spirit and teachers new to the department are given good support. The subject has procedures for assessing and monitoring progress, but the use of National Curriculum levels to assess and set targets is not established. The teacher assessments of students' levels of attainment reported in 2002 are insecure. There are short-comings in accommodation in the Linnell building for Years 7 to 9. History has one designated room and many lessons are taught in other rooms necessitating the transporting of materials and loss of teaching time.
184. Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE results have improved from below average to average. Teaching has improved and is now good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

Excellent teaching in Year 9 makes up for the lack of progress in Year 8 and students achieve well by the end of Year 9.

Students with behavioural problems make good progress because they enjoy the lessons and achieve real success.

Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 so students make good progress in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

The quality of teaching in Year 7 is not as good as that in Year 9 because the demands made of students are not as high.

The work in other subjects is not co-ordinated well enough other than in Year 8, so nobody has a clear picture of students' experiences.

There are not enough computers available to expand the courses on offer to students.

Parents are not provided with an annual written report on their children.

185. GCSE results were above average in 2002; both boys and girls performed as well as they did in their other subjects. These results are consistent with those in recent years.
186. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average and students are achieving well given their standards on joining the school. Students receive specific information and communication technology lessons in Years 7 and 9 and make a lot of use of computers in other subjects in Year 8. Progress in Year 7 is satisfactory but students mark time in Year 8. In Year 9, however, students really forge ahead and raise their standards to average. Working with text and pictures are strengths in the students' work and standards in this aspect are above average by the end of Year 9. Working in html code to produce web pages, students produce work of a high standard; lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, can all produce a web site containing more than one page while the highest attainers include directional buttons within nested tables. Much of the rest of students' work is broadly average, but some of the literacy standards of middle attaining students are below average with basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
187. Standards by the end of Year 11 are now average and students are doing as well as expected given their standards on starting the course. The standards are not as high as those suggested by previous examination results because of staffing difficulties at the end of last year when the Year 11 classes were without a specialist teacher. This led to them falling behind in their work and not making the good progress that the teaching would now merit. Students in Year 10, on the other hand, are achieving well, as they have not suffered the setback of the previous year and are reaping the full benefits of the good teaching. Practical skills are above average, with all students being confident users of a range of software. The weaknesses in students' work lie in their written work. Evaluations, for example, tend to be descriptive rather than making clear judgements on what works well or does not work while explanations are limited in their scope. Some students are unable to attend all their lessons because they are on the work-related learning course and are at college instead; these students fall behind in their work as a result.
188. Other subjects make good use of computers. In Year 8, this is organised and assessed well, but still tends to be based on making use of the skills that students have already learnt, rather than teaching them new ones. In other years, subjects make satisfactory use of computers but this is not as well co-ordinated so students' experiences of using computers can depend on the particular combination of teachers that teach them.
189. The quality of teaching and learning in Year 7 is satisfactory, but in Year 9 is excellent. In both years, the quality of resources produced by the teachers is very good and matched well to the needs of different groups of students. Teachers also plan their lessons well so that the resources are introduced at exactly the right time. The differences between the two years lie with the expectations that teachers have of their students. In Year 9, the teachers plan to cover topics that are extremely demanding, such as using html code for designing with the lowest attaining students. These lowest attaining classes contain students who have great problems with their behaviour, but, because they find the work fascinating and they receive such good support in the form of both help sheets and well-informed learning assistants, their behaviour is never a problem and they concentrate fully on their work to achieve real success.

190. Students are continually pushed to get through more and more work and they respond by working harder and harder. In Year 7, expectations are good, but still not as good as in Year 9, but the pace of lessons can drop as the same push is not in evidence. Other differences lie with the progress made by different groups of students. Lower attainers in Year 7 tend to get more homework than middle and higher attaining classes, while the amount of homework for some individual classes is nowhere near enough. Similarly, teachers pay good attention to improving writing in lower attaining classes and developing more advanced vocabulary in higher attaining classes. However, insufficient attention is paid to the correction of spelling, punctuation and grammar of middle attainers in Year 7.
191. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good and students learn well. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and, in some ways more importantly, the examination syllabus. Because the students in Year 11 have fallen behind in their work, teachers are linking their lessons very closely to the examination criteria so students will receive maximum benefit in terms of their coursework marks. This is complemented by good quality marking that points out to students exactly what they need to do to get more marks in the examination. A good emphasis is also placed on spelling, punctuation and grammar so students are not penalised in their coursework. One problem that sometimes arises, and is also evident in Years 7 and 9, is brought about by not having enough computers for the number of students in a class. Teachers mostly cope very well with this, by, for example, planning the lesson so that some students are designing or annotating on paper before swapping with others. However, this breaks down sometimes when one pupil needs a computer and has to wait for one to become available.
192. The quality of leadership and management is good. The good leadership has ensured that the subject has been driven forward and has made good progress from the last inspection when students were only making satisfactory progress. The good management is ensuring that teachers new to the school are very well supported and that the priorities for the subject's further development are the right ones to make the biggest impact on standards. Parents are not provided with written annual reports on how well their children are doing and the progress they are making which is a statutory breach. Nevertheless, the school is hampered by some physical constraints. While there are sufficient computers for the current courses, the school does not have enough to allow the planned expansion of courses in Year 8 to take place. More computers cannot be placed in the existing rooms, because there are not enough network points available.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

### **Strengths**

Standards attained in French in GCSE examinations are well above average.  
The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and leads to good achievement.  
The department is very well led and managed, ensuring very good progress since the previous inspection and a significant improvement in standards.  
Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress are very effective.

### **Areas for improvement**

Teaching is not consistent across the department.  
Students do not achieve as well in German as they do in French.  
The progress of a minority of students is hampered in French because they are



withdrawn from half their French lessons for literacy support in Years 7 to 9 and for college courses in Years 10 and 11.

193. GCSE results in French in 2002 were well above the national average. In Urdu they were well below average but numbers entered were very low. Results in French have improved significantly over the last three years and since the previous inspection. Boys perform better than girls in examinations in contrast to the national picture. Students' results in French were not significantly different from those they obtained in most of the other subjects they studied. German was last examined in 2001 when results were below average.
194. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 9 are above average in French, but they are below average in German. This represents very good achievement in French and satisfactory achievement in German in relation to prior attainment. In writing, standards attained are well above average in French; most students write at length and in detail to describe events, such as their daily routine and leisure activities, in the past, present and future tenses. Higher attaining students have a good understanding of grammar and apply rules accurately to express their ideas, including their preferences and giving reasons for their views, for example about their home town. Lower attaining students and students with special educational needs write accurately following models closely, adapting set phrases to suit their needs. Listening skills are very well developed in both languages; students respond promptly and appropriately to instructions and questions in French and German. In French, responses are usually detailed and they display a good degree of fluency, for example to give their views about leisure activities or to give reasons for refusing invitations. However, in some lessons, where students rely too heavily on written prompts, they lack confidence in speaking and their pronunciation in French is adversely affected. In German students' range of vocabulary and structures is narrower and most respond briefly to questioning.
195. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average overall. Average and higher attaining students speak and write at length in French, for example to tell stories and describe events in the past, present and future in detail. They link their ideas together using a wide range of vocabulary and structures to communicate their ideas. For example, in a Year 11 class, students wrote stories collaboratively and then read them to the rest of the group. Listening skills are very well developed; students report back what they have heard in detail. They read aloud with understanding and identify the main points and detail from short texts. In German, standards of work seen are average. Students have a more limited range of vocabulary and structures and are less confident overall in speaking and writing. In Urdu, standards of work seen are average. Students respond appropriately and fairly promptly to questioning and read aloud with a good level of fluency. Writing is usually accurate. Most students achieve very well in French in relation to their prior attainment because of the high expectations of teachers and the high level of challenge in most lessons. In German and Urdu achievement is satisfactory.
196. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. Examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen in French. The quality of teaching and learning in French is very good overall; in German and Urdu it is satisfactory. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and usually use their knowledge to good effect to conduct activities, often exclusively in the language being learned. They challenge higher attaining students to interpret more complex instructions for others and, where this is the case, listening skills are well developed as a result. Objectives are clear and routinely shared with students and

then reviewed at the end of lessons; this effectively reinforces learning by focusing on the key points of the lesson. Activities are usually appropriate and well sequenced, enabling students to build effectively on previous learning, and teachers use questioning and visual prompts well to enable students to respond successfully. Students make the best progress when they are given the opportunity to use the language themselves to practise informally in pairs or gather information for themselves. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson, students were presented with a high level of challenge to express their views about a variety of leisure activities; following practice based on visual prompts, they conducted their own interviews in small groups and gave detailed reasons for their views. However, in lessons where activities are led by the teacher for lengthy periods, opportunities for students to use the language themselves decrease and some students have difficulty in maintaining concentration. Brisk pace, strict deadlines for completing tasks and a good variety of activities maintain students' interest; for example in a Year 11 lesson, groups of students took part in a game of 'consequences' which resulted in their producing imaginative, and often humorous, pieces of extended and detailed narrative in French. The needs of lower attaining students and students with special educational needs are not always adequately met to enable them to succeed. For example, they find listening and reading activities too difficult because they are not given enough time or support to succeed in identifying the main points. In a small minority of lessons activities are too easy and students lose interest and go off task as a result.

197. The majority of students have positive attitudes towards their learning and are concerned to do well. They respond enthusiastically to a high level of challenge and participate willingly in group and pair work and games. They have good relationships with their teachers and work well together, for example to exchange information or complete surveys. However, a minority of students in Year 10 have negative attitudes towards their learning and are unco-operative, despite the best efforts of the teacher to engage them in activities. Where expectations are unclear or activities present little challenge, a minority are poorly behaved and try to disrupt lessons.
198. The department is very well led and managed. Since the previous inspection the department has made very good progress. There has been a significant improvement in both standards and the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection, although there is still scope to improve consistency in teaching and learning across the department. Steps taken to develop teamwork and to monitor, evaluate and develop teaching and learning strategies have been particularly effective in improving standards in French. The use of information and communication technology to support and extend learning is being successfully developed within the department.
199. A high proportion of classes are taught in non-specialist rooms; this limits the range and variety of learning experiences provided because of the difficulty in setting up activities and transporting materials and equipment. Where classes are taught outside the languages area acoustics are often poor and they do not benefit from display to reinforce or support the language being learned. The progress of a minority of students is hampered in French. Students on the literacy progress units programme are withdrawn for one half of one of their three French lessons in Year 7 and for college courses in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is considerably enriched by visits abroad and students are given good support in preparing for examinations in extra classes after school.

## **MUSIC**

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

### **Strengths**

Teachers are hardworking, excellent musicians who pass on their enthusiasm for music well.

Students' performance skills are improved because of the high quality opportunities for extra-curricular musical activities.

Students are keen to learn and respond well to appropriate teaching

### **Areas for improvement**

Teachers' marking of students' work is not consistent so students do not know how well they are doing or what to do to improve.

The schemes of work do not provide enough detail to ensure everything is being covered.

Not all students have access to computers with music software during lessons.

200. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were below average. However, results for the previous four years have been consistently above national averages. Students' results in music were not significantly different from those they obtained in most of the other subjects they studied.
201. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement given students' attainment when they entered the school. Students improve their skills by regular opportunities to create music using electronic keyboards and a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Higher attaining students use their well-developed performance skills to accurately maintain their own part in group performances and create well-structured pieces using a variety of voices and effects on the keyboards. However, they cannot use technical language when describing their pieces or music they hear; for example, in one Year 9 lesson none of the students understood words like 'syncopation' or 'chromatic'.
202. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress although they make good progress when supported by the learning assistants because the assistants can focus directly on problems with reading and co-ordination skills. Literacy skills are improving with regular written work in a variety of styles undertaken in nearly every lesson. However, the written work of lower attaining students is frequently marred by grammatical errors. There are not enough links to numeracy made in lessons or planning. There is only limited access to computers with music software for some students because their teacher is not confident in this area and avoids using the equipment. This prevents them from creating and developing their own compositions using information and communication technology.
203. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average, which represents satisfactory achievement for those students who opt for the subject. Higher attaining students are good performers because they have lots of opportunities to take part in musical groups and concerts. They understand how to imaginatively apply the key components of melody and harmony into their compositions. They show good musical analysis skills as was seen in one Year 11 girl's work on film music where she correctly identified the changes in tonality of the opening theme to *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves*. Higher attainers can follow traditional musical notation and use this to accurately notate their own compositions and read those of others. Students demonstrate good computer skills in music; they manipulate sounds using electronic keyboards and music software. Students use technical vocabulary to describe the music they hear and create, but less musically talented students do not fully understand terms like texture, timbre or modulation. Students in Year 10 have a wide

range of prior musical experience but are already making good progress with the demands of the GCSE course.

204. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in all years. Because teachers are very well qualified, students learn accurate and useful musical skills. Students are eager to learn and enjoy performing music on the keyboards and computers. Relationships between staff and students are a strength of the department. These very good relationships mean that lessons focus fully on learning in a pleasant atmosphere with a good balance of fun and hard work. Some of the teaching is inspirational, enthusiastic and very musical which results in students working hard and thoroughly enjoying themselves. The best lessons had a range of stimulating activities and lots of practical work. Time and change of activities are managed crisply to maintain good pace which ensures all groups of students are challenged and make progress. Less successful lessons suffered from a style of teaching that was too relaxed. Higher attainers and those with special educational needs were not always given work that kept them interested and consequently these students became bored and began to lose concentration. In a minority of lessons some students do not do as well as they should because they are not made to listen to the teacher and consequently fail to make any progress. Marking of work is not consistent, with most comments too brief to give detailed guidance on improving performance so students are not sure how well they are doing or what to do to improve their work.
205. Leadership is good, while management is satisfactory with some weak elements. The inspirational leadership of the head of department ensures that music has a very positive impact on the ethos of the school through a range of well-managed high quality extra-curricular activities. The head of department has focused on the extra-curricular performance opportunities and puts a great deal of time into organising this aspect of the music provision. However, not enough time is spent on the strategic management of the department; for example, the documentation for the subject lacks detail and planning and results in patchy coverage of the curriculum. There is a lack of emphasis on music from cultures other than western which restricts students' understanding of the wider dimension of music and its role in culture. Because there are no short-term lesson plans it is not clear how well parts of the curriculum are being delivered because there is no consistency between teachers' approaches to delivering the subject. This lack of clarity results in inaccurate assessment of students' work and fails to inform the planning of future lessons. Monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice are generally weak, and fail to ensure correct training is given to all members of the department. For example, training in music technology has not been implemented for those staff in need of it.
206. Music makes a good contribution to the life of all students whether they are performers or listeners. There are regular musical activities of high quality throughout the year. The school groups contribute to the local community very well through regular charity concerts. There has been a history of success at national events for various school groups, particularly the Dixieland-style ensembles, and this high standard continues to flourish.
207. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities remains a major strength of the department. Standards have been maintained.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

**Strengths**

Excellent leadership and management have had a significant impact on raising standards of attainment.

Students achieve well at GCSE as a result of good teaching.

Notable improvement since the previous inspection has resulted in higher standards.

**Areas for improvement**

The timetabling of physical education has a negative impact on standards of attainment.

Inadequate accommodation for the subject hinders attainment and progress in indoor games.

208. The 2002 GCSE results were above average, and a significant improvement on the 2001 results. The proportion of students gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national average, and all students gained a grade.
209. Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment. The standards of work seen in the current Year 9 are average, and this represents good achievement. By Year 9, most students can perform the basic skills of invasion games, such as passing, receiving and keeping possession of the ball, effectively. High attaining students can sustain their skills under the pressure of competition, and can adapt them to develop tactical play, well illustrated in netball. Low attaining students are successful in practice, but their skills tend to break down against opposition. Good progress takes place in dance and gymnastics, where students of all abilities develop control and body tension to give quality to their movements. This was demonstrated well by boys and girls, as they learned about 'extension' in gymnastics. Most students have good knowledge and understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. In a netball lesson, the girls were able to warm up independently, in small groups led by a member of their team. They took the responsibility seriously, and many girls knew the names of the muscles they were stretching. Students' skills of evaluating and improving their own and others' work develop well in some lessons, but they are not always given enough opportunities to practise these skills. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into the physical education programme and make good progress alongside their classmates in the majority of lessons.
210. It was not possible to see any Year 11 National Curriculum lessons, or make a judgement on attainment. However, Year 10 students maintain good levels of learning in the health and fitness aspects of their course. Students were given the responsibility to plan, perform and evaluate their own training circuit for a chosen sport, working in small groups. Very good learning took place as they successfully tackled and completed this challenging task, which tested their knowledge and understanding of the methods and principles of fitness training. High quality work was produced by the majority of groups, particularly in their justification for and evaluation of what they had done. Standards at GCSE are above average overall, reflecting good achievement. This was well illustrated in students' written coursework, and in a theory lesson, where the focus was on fitness training. Students showed a good knowledge and understanding of the topic, and of the principles of training which athletes use to improve performance. Several students made a significant contribution to discussion, describing their own experiences of training at a high level in sport, thus helping the whole group to relate theory to practice. Students make good use of information and communication technology in their coursework; very good learning took place in a one-to-one lesson for a pupil with severe learning difficulties, using the computer to revise the circulatory system. Above average standards in the practical aspects of the course were well demonstrated by Year 11 boys in a football lesson

211. Extra-curricular sport provides good opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to flourish in their chosen sports. Successful links with the community and local sports clubs enhance and extend students' standards of attainment, both in school and beyond. Individual students regularly gain representative honours at county, regional and, sometimes, national level in a variety of sports.
212. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Most teachers have very good specialist knowledge, prepare well and plan lessons carefully, as seen in a Year 7 dance lesson where students were well motivated and made good progress, through well-designed tasks. There were discernible gains in students' knowledge, skills and understanding in a gymnastics lesson, where clear objectives were shared with students, and a brisk pace of learning moved them forward step by step to produce some creditable performances. In contrast, there was unsatisfactory learning in another movement lesson, where the quality of work did not improve as much as it could have done, because the students were not taught the basic principles of movement needed to achieve the performance tasks, effectively. Developmental work within the department has focused on encouraging students to think, well illustrated in warm-up activities where good learning about the effect of exercise on the body is taking place. The cool-down aspect of lessons is less well developed. Good use of questioning makes students think more deeply about what they are doing. This was well illustrated in a swimming lesson, where students' evaluation of each others' work was central to learning, enhanced by the teacher's use of questions to guide their observation and response. Questioning was used particularly well in a GCSE theory lesson, where probing questioning prompted students, of all abilities, to extend their thinking. Very good marking of written coursework also challenges students to extend the depth and breadth of their learning. Good relationships between staff and students, and the teachers' skills in organising and managing their classes, contribute significantly to the high levels of participation, standards of dress and good behaviour in lessons, which reflect students' positive attitudes to the subject.
213. Excellent leadership and management have turned round an ailing subject area, and moved it significantly forward since the last inspection. A strong team approach has been established enabling the department to embrace change and high staff turnover, positively. The head of department's clear vision and sense of educational direction has successfully focused on raising standards of attainment. A major curriculum review has enabled the school to gain the Sportsmark Award. The department has been closely involved in a national project concerning 'assessment for learning', resulting in very good procedures for assessment, including the introduction of Year 7 baseline assessment. The quality of documentation is excellent. Despite the good work of the department over recent years, provision for physical education is only satisfactory, because there are timetabling and accommodation problems, which adversely affect attainment and progress. Timetabling difficulties have led to some students being taught by unqualified teachers. Also, there are regular occasions when a mixed sex group is timetabled with only one teacher present, and either the boys or the girls are left unsupervised in the changing rooms. This has safety implications, and invariably results in an unacceptably late start to lessons, as seen during the inspection, when a third of a lesson was wasted. The indoor accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory, because it does not allow adequate provision for the indoor games of badminton, basketball and volleyball.
214. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are now average, and there has been a significant rise in GCSE results to above average, with a well above average proportion of students gaining the higher grades.

The quality of teaching has improved to become good overall with examples of very good and excellent teaching.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

The enthusiasm and interest of the teachers encourage students to reflect on issues raised. Teachers treat the responses of students with sensitivity and respect; as a result students respond readily.

Students have good opportunities to study the key features of the major faiths in the lower school.

Use of art and poetry is enabling students to express themselves in different ways.

### Areas for improvement

There are not enough lessons in Year 10 for non-examination students, and students underachieve.

The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory.

Schemes of work are not sufficiently developed to guide teachers so they can undertake long-term planning of lessons.

There is insufficient assessment of students' attainment, which means that their progress cannot be measured.

Inadequate staffing is resulting in a lack of consistency in provision.

There are no textbooks in the lower school to support delivery by non-specialist teachers.

215. Results in the 2002 GCSE full course religious studies were well below average. This represents a significant fall from the results in 2001 when they were above average. Results have fluctuated widely over the last three years; however, all students who followed the course gained at least a pass grade. Girls attained higher results than boys, and more girls follow the course.
216. Standards in Year 9 are below average; this represents satisfactory achievement given the students' attainment on entry to the school. Higher attaining students reach standards that are average for their age, and most students achieve higher standards in their oral work than in their written work. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, along with their peers, due to the opportunities for paired discussion and the supportive questioning of their teachers. Students have good opportunities for reflection on the concepts they study. They reflect on the concept of evil and suffering and consider their existence alongside an all loving, all-powerful God. Students demonstrate understanding of the difficulties presented, and higher attaining students present a clear account of different views and demonstrate some understanding of the place of free will. However, responses are brief and have limited depth of analysis. With good support and questioning by teachers, students recognise the main features of the faiths they study, but recall is limited and without direction they do not readily make links with earlier work.
217. Standards in the Year 11 statutory religious education course are well below average. Students in Year 10 do not have enough lessons to develop the skills and knowledge and their achievement is unsatisfactory. The two-term gap between Year 10 and 11 lessons reduces their recall and their commitment to the study of religious education. Students have good opportunities for discussion about contemporary moral questions; however, there are insufficient opportunities to put their thoughts into writing or to

record what they have learnt. As a result they have little opportunity to review their work or build on prior learning.

218. Students following the GCSE course attain below average standards. This represents satisfactory achievement given their prior attainment. Higher attaining students following the GCSE course attain average standards. Students have a sound grasp of the key features of the Christian faith. In Year 10, students record much detail and give clear explanations supported by reference to biblical text. They make few personal judgements, however, and in Year 11 there is a greater emphasis on their own response and judgement. They can apply what they have learnt to their coursework, and their study of Coventry Cathedral demonstrates sensitivity and recognition of the significance of the Christian faith. Students have a good grasp of the moral dilemmas surrounding the question of abortion and the sanctity of life. Higher attaining students present the different views clearly and are able to make their own judgements, supporting them with evidence. The attainment of some students is affected by their absence and by lack of commitment to study. They are willing to be involved in discussion, but they demonstrate a lack of maturity in response and written work lacks depth. A minority fail to complete their coursework. Lower attaining students make satisfactory progress when they are committed to their GCSE course, as a consequence of the good support for their coursework given by their teachers.
219. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and results in students making satisfactory progress in lessons. In the best lessons teachers make the aims of the lessons clear and planning includes a variety of activities that support the development of students understanding. Teachers treat the responses of students with respect and as a result they are encouraged to become involved in the oral work of the class. Homework is imaginative and students are encouraged to display their understanding in a variety of ways. In some lessons progress is reduced when teachers dominate the oral work, and spend too long informing students. Where there is a lack of direction in discussion, the aim of the lesson becomes lost and progress is reduced. The department is managing a long-term staffing shortage that is resulting in lessons being taught by non-specialist and temporary teachers. Lessons are planned day to day to support this situation and this reduces the opportunities for teachers to develop the direction of the work, to build on prior learning and to prepare for future lessons.
220. The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory. After an extended period without clear leadership owing to long-term staff ill-health the organisation of the department has declined. Schemes of work are in the process of being developed. There is no system of assessment and as a result the attainment and progress of students cannot be monitored. The newly appointed head of department has correctly identified the areas for development, but these have yet to be prioritised and organised into a manageable plan. Short-term temporary teachers are supported by lesson plans, but there is no opportunity to monitor this provision and some students do not receive a consistent and continuous learning experience. There are no textbooks for students that could support non-specialist teachers and provide continuity for students, other than those following the GCSE course. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.



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

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

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

### *GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	13	85	87	31	43	4.6	5.8
Chemistry	11	91	90	36	43	4.9	5.9
Biology	17	100	88	29	34	5.6	5.2
Physics	14	57	88	0	40	2.6	5.7
Other sciences	10	50	90	0	30	1.8	5.2
Design and technology	4	100	91	75	30	7.5	5.4
Economics	7	57	89	29	36	3.7	5.5
Computer studies	12	100	86	17	23	4.7	4.6
Art and design	8	100	96	38	46	6.5	6.6
Sports/PE studies	3	100	92	33	25	5.3	5.0
Music	2	100	93	50	35	7.0	5.7
Geography	10	80	92	30	38	4.2	5.7
History	3	67	88	33	35	5.3	5.4
Religious education	1	100	92	0	38	2.0	5.8
Sociology	4	75	86	25	35	4.0	5.3
Other social studies	14	86	87	36	34	5.9	5.3
General studies	45	80	85	31	30	4.7	4.9
English literature	9	100	95	89	37	9.3	5.9
German	1	100	91	0	40	4.0	5.8

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus for the inspection was on mathematics and physics but chemistry and biology were also sampled. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were below average in chemistry and above average in biology. One lesson of chemistry was observed. Students were investigating halogens. The teaching was satisfactory and students made sound progress. Two biology lessons were observed. In a Year 12 biology class, students were consolidating work on plant mass-flow; students made good progress because of the good teaching. In a Year 13 class, students were investigating the structure of the human skeleton; students made sound progress because of the satisfactory teaching.

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and support students well in the classroom. The good attitudes of students contribute well to their level of commitment to studying. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject.

#### Areas for improvement

There are not enough opportunities for students to make extended contributions in class discussions.

Students have limited opportunities to develop study skills, to read about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own study.

221. The school offers mathematics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. In total 22 students study the subject in the sixth form of whom 12 students are studying it at A-level. The school offers AS-level and A-level in the three areas of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. The school also gives students the opportunity to retake their GCSE.
222. In the 2001, results in A-level mathematics were below average. Students' A-level results in 2002 were much better than those in 2001 and their achievement was satisfactory. Students achieved better results in mechanics than they did in statistics and pure mathematics. Results have fluctuated over the past five years. In 2002, female students did better than male students.
223. In 2001, 14 students were entered to retake their GCSE in mathematics and 36 per cent attained GCSE grades A\*-C.
224. Standards are now broadly average in Years 12 and 13 and this represents a sound level of achievement given their attainment on joining the sixth form. Students are successfully extending their GCSE work into new areas; for example they have the opportunity to study mechanics and extend the work on statistics that they were introduced to on their GCSE mathematics course. When studying mechanics, students demonstrate a secure understanding of the equations of uniform acceleration and apply them appropriately when solving problems of vertical motion under gravity. In statistics, they extend their understanding of representation of data to stem and leaf diagrams, using them appropriately to calculate the mean and median

of a distribution. By Year 13, students progress to understanding how to use the binomial distribution and can use the Poisson distribution well to model random events. In pure mathematics, students in Year 13 are introduced to the basic geometry of the circle and progress to calculating the tangent of a point on the circle by implicit differentiation. Although the majority of students use integration by parts using the formula, a minority struggle to decide how to approach the problem and their understanding is limited as they do not structure their answers effectively.

225. Students are generally alert throughout the lesson and a high level of concentration is maintained. In the better lessons, they generally participate well in discussions, responding to questions in articulate ways. However, in a minority of lessons, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons and to develop their capacity for independent study and research.
226. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and all students learn at a satisfactory pace as a result. It is never less than satisfactory and there are examples of good teaching. The best feature of the teaching is the good knowledge and understanding of teachers. Subject content is accurate and teachers explain principles well. This promotes the students' confidence and respect for their teachers. Most students respond well to the teaching they receive, have positive attitudes to the subject and work hard. Students are attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in the subject. Although teaching methods are sound, and in the better lessons students are generally asked probing questions which develop good thinking skills, this is not always the case. There are instances where the didactic approach makes too little demand on students. In a minority of lessons, although the teaching is overall satisfactory, there are limited opportunities for students to explain what they are doing through well-chosen questioning. Where questioning is used effectively, students generally respond well and this enhances their learning. They participate well and make suggestions in articulate ways. The higher attaining students respond well to the challenging level of work and this enhances their learning. The students in Year 13 have a mature approach to mathematics and are well motivated. Consequently they put in a good level of intellectual effort and acquire new knowledge expeditiously. In the better lessons, the teachers build on previous understanding, for example of simultaneous equations, when calculating equations of circles given three points on the circle. The teachers conduct lessons at a sound pace, resulting in average gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. In the better lessons, however, the lessons progress at a brisk pace and students respond well to the demands made of them, making good gains in learning. Students are alert throughout the lesson and a good level of concentration is maintained.
227. Effective use is made of homework to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work are good. There is a good programme of regular formal assessments that allows teachers to see how students are progressing over time so that they can give effective support for those experiencing difficulties. Work is generally well presented and well organised.
228. Sound leadership and efficient management are rooted in effective consultation and collaboration amongst teachers. There is a clear commitment by the whole team to improve standards by raising achievement for all students. The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. Although the level of resources is generally satisfactory, the students have limited opportunities to develop study skills, to read

about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own study due to the inadequate range and quality of library resources. There is little evidence of how information and communication technology and other resources are organised in the development of mathematics.

229. There is insufficient information in the previous report to make a judgement on progress since the last inspection.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

The teachers provide good support material for the students.  
Students have a positive approach to their studies.

### Areas for improvement

Equipment and accommodation are unsatisfactory.  
Work schemes need further development and amplification.  
The subject development plan is inadequate.

230. The school offers physics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course.
231. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were well below average but numbers taking the course were small. Taking into account the GCSE attainment of the students for these three years the results represent satisfactory achievement in 2000 and 2002 but unsatisfactory achievement in 2001. Standards observed during the inspection were at the national average with students showing good understanding of the fundamentals of the A-level and AS-levels and able to discuss their work with confidence. This represents satisfactory achievement.
232. At the time of the inspection the two teachers normally responsible for the teaching of physics were unable to do so because of rearrangements caused by illness in the department. However, the school was fortunate in being able to employ a qualified and highly experienced teacher to take over the work on a temporary basis.
233. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject specification. The objectives and lesson plans were clearly stated to the students. The regular use of question and answer technique kept all students involved in the learning process and some opportunities were given for extension work. Well-prepared handouts are used to support students' learning and worksheets were seen which included questions graduated in difficulty. Opportunities were taken to give students individual help when whole-class activities were in progress, either practical or theoretical. Students were very appreciative of this help and it ensured that no student fell behind with his or her work unnecessarily. At times, however, pace was slow and opportunities were missed to challenge the students. There was also a tendency to stick too rigidly to the demands of the subject specification when a broader approach would have increased interest, independence and understanding. For example, in a lesson on Newton's Laws reference was not made to topical matters such as space travel. In practical work the teacher tended to service the needs of the students rather than taking the time to ask probing and challenging questions. Students' learning was satisfactory and evidence was seen in their files of research, using additional source material from books and the Internet.

234. Students showed a good attitude towards their work. This produced a positive learning situation. Students felt they were well served by their teachers and these good relationships helped the students to learn in a supportive environment. The management of the department is satisfactory but work schemes and support material in physics need further development. The improvement plan for the sixth form is weak and does not include specific, timed or costed targets for improvement.
235. Accommodation is limited for advanced work and the main laboratory for physics can only adequately provide for up to eight or ten students: this causes unsatisfactory sharing during practical investigations and restricts learning opportunities. Resources are also very limited. Students have limited opportunities to develop study skills and to undertake their own study due to the inadequate range and quality of resources. The department has ensured that all AS-level and A-level students have an up-to-date textbook but there is very little electronic equipment in the department such as computers or oscilloscopes. Some of the standard equipment is also very old and in need of replacement. This lack prevents the students having the full range of learning opportunities on the course.
236. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress as results have been maintained.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus for the inspection was on design and technology.

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

### **Strengths**

The standards attained by students in textiles are very high because of the very good teaching they receive.

Effective use of assessment and monitoring helps to raise student attainment.

The attitudes and commitment of students are very positive.

The very good leadership of the subject results in teachers working together as a very effective team.

### **Areas for improvement**

There are limited opportunities for students to use computer-aided manufacturing.

237. The school offers courses at AS-level and A-level in textiles and graphic products. About 12 students study these subjects each year and it is rare for a student not to complete a course. These courses were not offered at the time of the last inspection.
238. Results in the 2001 examinations were well above average. Students gained better results in design and technology than they did in most other subjects they studied. Results in 2002 maintained the high standards of previous years and were amongst the best in the school.
239. The standards attained by students in Years 12 and 13 are above average and they are achieving well given their standards on starting the course. Students have a well-developed knowledge and understanding of materials and processes and use product analysis and effective research techniques to support their designing and making. Students have a clear appreciation of the implications of social, moral and cultural considerations on product design and understand the wider implications of design

decisions. Students' work is characterised by a thorough and detailed approach to all aspects of study, high level analysis and clear evaluative comment. Standards are very high in textiles. Students creatively respond to individual design briefs and demonstrate a high level knowledge and understanding of industrial and commercial techniques. Students use a variety of presentation styles in their work and ideas are clearly annotated against specified criteria. The use of general information and communication technology techniques is very good and leads to high levels of presentation, particularly in textiles where images are scanned into the computer and modified using design software. A particular strength is the way that information and communication technology is used in an integrated way within student portfolios, mixing high quality sketching and illustration with computer-generated text and graphical manipulation. There are limited opportunities for students to use computer-aided manufacturing systems.

240. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 12 and 13 is good. Lessons are characterised by thorough planning, brisk pace and a variety of teaching methods that promote student involvement. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and are able to respond to students' questions in great depth, drawing upon a wide range of examples to support learning. The quality of teacher-led discussions is good; they are characteristically focused and highly relevant. Teachers use assessment and monitoring procedures well. Work is assiduously marked against examination board criteria and targets are set for individuals; this is good practice and leads to high attainment.
241. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive. They are interested in their lessons, concentrate well and work hard. Behaviour throughout the department is excellent and students are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety.
242. The quality of leadership and management is very good. A great strength is the way the teachers who teach the courses work together and this has meant, for example, that there is clear continuity and progression from the Year 12 course into Year 13. The new A-level courses in product design for textiles and graphic products have been successfully introduced and the impressive examination results in both 2001 and 2002 confirm its position as one of the most successful subjects in the school.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus for the inspection was business studies.

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

### **Strengths**

Teachers have good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for their subject with their students.

Work is well marked and assessment is well used to monitor progress.

### **Areas for improvement**

The heads of department have insufficient time to regularly monitor teaching within the subject.

Teachers do not use a variety of teaching and learning strategies to challenge students appropriately and to best support independent learning.

243. The school currently offers courses at AS-level, A-level, the Vocational A-level (AVCE) and the intermediate GNVQ. Around 30 students take up the subject in Year 12 with half the students following an AVCE course and the others AS-level or GNVQ. It is rare for a student not to complete their course of study. Business studies is growing in popularity. However, both staff and students alike are disappointed that the Double Award (AVCE) is no longer being offered; this limits choice for students.
244. The A-level economics with business studies results have shown a steady improvement over the past three years. Results in 2001 were well below average but improved in 2002. Whilst almost half the students gained an A grade in 2001 a third of the students did not pass the course. In 2002, all the students gained A-E grades with half the students gaining the higher A and B grades. In relation to their GCSE results, however, both male and female students achieved well and did better than might have been expected. For the Double Award AVCE there were no students achieving at any of the higher grades although these students achieved well given their GCSE grades on entry to the course. Likewise, for the Single Award AVCE all students passed but again there were no higher grades. GNVQ results have remained at least in line with the national standards for the small number of students who have taken this course.
245. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly average. The standards reached by current students, as seen in their written work, are average for male and female students, those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups. When account is taken of students' GCSE grades, this represents satisfactory achievement. In Year 12, students are making progress in comprehension of the central ideas of the subject, including those relating to the economic environment in which business operates, but they are not so good at applying their knowledge. Year 13 students are beginning to express their understanding clearly and often in detail when answering spoken or written questions. In one very good Year 12 intermediate GNVQ lesson, students were proficiently preparing presentations on consumer protection. They used the prompt sheets provided by the teacher well, demonstrated efficient use of computers and identified particular consumer problems. Students displayed developing evaluative skills and worked effectively together to produce a consensus of opinion. They were all keen to contribute and were good at arguing their case in class discussion. Students showed initiative throughout and displayed good independent learning skills. This was because the task set enabled students to apply their knowledge and understanding to a real vocational context. However, work placements would allow all students to develop transferable key skills into real work situations. Currently there is no work experience for any business studies students in either Year 12 or 13.
246. The overall quality of teaching in business studies is satisfactory. Some teachers use their proficient subject knowledge well to underpin discussion and lend clarity to explanations provided. However, while lessons are always carefully planned, some teachers make insufficient use of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. There is a significant lack of consistency in the quality of teaching in the subject. There are a number of teachers teaching each of the courses and the job-share heads of department do not have adequate time to monitor the teaching on each of the courses. Whilst in the better lessons students work well and learn effectively, in other lessons students need to be challenged to develop sharper analytical skills and greater independent learning skills. In a good Year 12 AVCE lesson, where students were preparing group presentations with reference to their marketing assignments, the teacher was using a successful, local, commercial link well. However, not all teachers sufficiently develop industrial links to exemplify topics being covered in lessons. Nevertheless, all teachers organise and

use assessment well to assist students' learning. They make effective comments on students' written work so that all know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work further.

247. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the department. There are two job-share heads of department who work together well. However, they are limited in the amount of time that they have for organisation, preparation and moderation of teaching and learning as each has only one non-contact period per week. This limits the amount of monitoring that can take place on a regular basis. More careful evaluation is required in order to expand the teaching strategies which will develop students' analytical, study and independent learning skills.
248. There were no specific references to business studies in the previous report hence it is not possible to assess progress since the previous inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was information technology.

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

### Strengths

Good teaching is leading to students achieving well and attaining well above average standards.

The different courses meet the needs of students very well.

Marking on the AVCE course is excellent.

Standards have risen as a result of good leadership.

### Areas for improvement

Some teaching does not allow students to be sufficiently active.

Students' skills of evaluation, although average, are not as good as their practical skills.

249. The school offers courses at AS-level, A-level and AVCE level in information technology. The courses are popular with students and numbers are rising rapidly. Results at A-level in 2001 were average but improved very significantly in 2002; results at AS-level were similar to the A-level results in 2002. Results were similar to those in the other subjects that the students studied. Students will take the AVCE examination for the first time this year. It is very rare for a student to drop out of a course.
250. Standards on all three courses are well above average; students are achieving well given their above average standards on starting the course. All students have well above average practical skills. They are extremely confident in using a wide range of software applications and move between them with ease. Students who studied information and communication technology to GCSE level also reach well above average standards in the application of programming languages, but those who took business studies have more difficulties with developing procedures because their background knowledge is not as good. One area of relative weakness, although still broadly average, is students' ability to critically evaluate their end products; some fail to go into sufficient detail.
251. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. Teachers have an extensive knowledge of the subject and a deep understanding of the software that enables them to answer questions off the top of their head or use their experience of industry to



bring the subject to life. Some of the marking on the AVCE course is outstandingly good; teachers go into minute detail so that they can match the work produced by students to the requirements of the examination. In this way students get high quality feedback on their work and have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve. Lessons are prepared very well with high quality resources that motivate students and get them actively involved. However, in some lessons, the teacher adopts a more lecturing way of working, standing at the front of the class and talking for long periods. In these lessons students are too passive and the only response will be a mumbled short answer to a direct question.

252. The subject is led and managed well. Good leadership has driven up standards by ensuring that all teachers are working to the same good standards; the support for teachers new to the profession has been very good. New courses have been introduced to meet the differing needs of the different groups of students. Good progress has been made since the school was last inspected; standards have risen.

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

The focus for the inspection was music but art was also sampled. In 2001, the A-level results for art were average. One lesson of art was observed. In a Year 12 art class, students were developing their ideas towards a final piece of work on moods, atmospheres and emotions; students made very good progress because of the very good teaching.

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

### **Strengths**

Teaching is enthusiastic and inspirational with excellent subject knowledge.

There are very good relationships between staff and students.

Students are good performers because they get lots of opportunities to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular musical activities.

### **Area for improvement**

Planning is vague; students are not sure how much of the course they have covered or what remains.

253. The school offers courses in AS-level and A-level music and music technology. These are in addition to courses in performance studies. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were above average, and students gained results that were similar to their other subjects. Results in 2002 were similar but national averages are not yet available for comparison. All students completed the AS-level music course and continued with the subject into Year 13. It is very rare for a student not to complete a course. Only half the number of AS-level music technology students continued into Year 13.
254. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students achieve well and are doing better than expected considering their wide variation in musical standards when they start the course. Performance skills are greatly enhanced by the regular opportunities to take part in high quality ensembles and by expert tuition from the visiting instrumental teachers. This was demonstrated by two Year 13 flute players who expertly performed *Deux Papillons* by Kronke at an evening concert during the inspection week. Their performance displayed musical fluidity and dexterity and accomplished musical phrasing and tone of a standard beyond their years.

255. Students demonstrate very good computer skills in music because they get lots of opportunities to use machines with music software and there is much use of the Internet to research a variety of projects. Their numeracy skills are also well developed because the teacher makes imaginative links in lessons as was seen when students made comparisons of isorhythms and prime numbers within the quartet *The End of Time* by Messaien. Students also demonstrate a very good knowledge and use of technical language when they analyse the music they study; they accurately recognised the non-retrogradable rhythms and harmonic structure used within the piece. Students on the music technology course are proficient in using information and communication technology; they use sequencing software and midi files very well. For example in one lesson they in-putted music in real time and step time and were able to quantize to within a quaver beat; confidently using the software to enhance their complex pieces.
256. Students learn well because the teaching is good. Teaching is enthusiastic and inspirational, with excellent subject knowledge which is passed on to the students well. Lessons are full of brilliantly demonstrated musical points that leave the students in no doubt about the information provided. Careful questioning of the students leads to them thinking beyond the immediate situation and looking much deeper into the pieces they study. This expert knowledge is also evident when the teachers answer questions asked by the students. Students are trained well for the examination because the teachers are well aware of the course requirements. Teaching is geared to making students aware of, and progressively responsible for, their own learning. Lessons are always interesting and have a freedom of improvisation that captures the students' attention well. There are very good relationships between staff and students in all lessons, creating a very good atmosphere for learning. Teachers regularly take the opportunity to build in moments for reflection on some of the spiritual and moral issues that arise from the music studied. For example, the teacher carefully guided the students thinking towards the deeper meaning of *The End of Time* and the spiritual beliefs of the composer Messaien.
257. Leadership of the subject is good. The strengths are in the organisation of practical activities and the weaknesses are in the paperwork such as planning for lessons and ensuring that students understand the full requirements of the units of study within the course. Results are analysed well and data is used to ensure future success but planning is so vague students are not sure how much of the course they have covered or what remains. Improvement since the last inspection is not applicable as there were no separate judgements made about music in the sixth form.
258. The extra-curricular contribution of music to the enjoyment and achievement of students is very good and is a strength of the school. Students are encouraged to use their musical skills in many ways throughout the school and willingly undertake these roles.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus for the inspection was on psychology but history and geography were also sampled. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were below average in geography and average in history. In a Year 13 geography class, students were investigating different soil types; students made good progress because of the good teaching. In a Year 12 history class, students were discussing the impact of political and religious causes of the English civil war; students made very good progress because of the very good teaching.

## **Psychology**

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

### **Strengths**

Examination results are generally above the national average.

Lively teaching using a range of learning experiences results in students achieving well.

Students enjoy the subject and thoroughly prepare for examinations.

Well-planned materials help to ensure a firm course structure and regular monitoring of students' progress.

### **Areas for improvement**

There is no uniform approach to the use of teaching, monitoring and assessment structures to ensure equality of opportunity for students.

There is no resource base room exclusive to the subject.

259. Psychology is a well established subject in the school. The school offers courses at both AS-level and A-level; it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. Responsibility for the subject lies with two part-time teachers, one of whom is contracted only for the current year while the other has been leading the subject in this school and others locally for the last six years. There are now two groups in this subject in Year 12 and one in Year 13. The group size in both years is around 15.
260. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were above average and students almost without exception performed better than their GCSE results suggested. The unverified results for 2002, involving 14 candidates, show a further improvement on the previous year. Similar results to 2001 occurred in 2000, 1999 and 1998 with slightly fewer candidates but a higher proportion achieving at the higher grades.
261. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in both Years 12 and 13 are above average and this represents good achievement. The work of the best students is clearly written, uses an appropriate vocabulary and demonstrates knowledge, understanding, research and the ability to explore and develop ideas. Work is based on well-organised files aided by materials adapted and developed in the school. All students as a result can produce structured answers, mainly accurate in content, showing at least partial understanding and appreciation of topics. Examples of coursework indicate that students have grasped the methodology of psychological investigations and are able to set out and evaluate key studies and their own psychological experiments. Students are able to analyse critically and see further implications in investigations, for instance ethical considerations such as confidentiality or the problems of replication. Final coursework being completed indicates a good standard of achievement with fuller and more comprehensive writing skills being used. Less successful students omit important information or lack full understanding of the question. On a few occasions Year 12 work seen was incomplete or unmarked. There is a clear development in style and content between Years 12 and 13.
262. Teaching and learning are good, although there are differences in approach in the teaching of the subject to different groups which affect the clarity, pace, accuracy and reinforcement of learning that occurs. Students in Year 13 examined the issues of stress and stress management using a variety of stimuli including question and answer, reporting back on homework research on stress measurement scales, note making and note scanning, discussion of intervention techniques and data research using web sites. Students were also introduced to the use of skin galvanometers. Objectives were clear, a good pace was maintained without causing undue pressure,

rapport in the group was excellent and both skills and knowledge were improved. Students worked hard, kept to their tasks and responded to the teacher's lead. A Year 12 group looked at a number of theories about the functioning of the autonomic nervous system. Although students were lively and were able to demonstrate the application of previous knowledge to the task, some had yet to apply a mature attitude and appropriate study skills for advanced work and needed greater pace and challenge in the lesson to ensure that maximum learning took place.

263. Whilst there is regular and structured marking with generally helpful feedback, the system is not uniformly applied by both of the teachers and both occasionally omit specific guidance on how work can be improved. Students in Year 13 appreciate the opportunity for individual guidance on their work. Students generally enjoy the subject, an enjoyment which grows as they experience the way the subject is taught. They appreciate the frequency of marked work, tests and examination practice. They regard themselves as better prepared than in other subjects. By Year 13 they appreciate the encouragement to work independently. Their use of information and communication technology is limited, partly as a result of difficulties in organising access; they make very limited use of the book resource in the learning resource centre.
264. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject does not have departmental status. The two part-time teachers are directly line-managed by the headteacher. There is no formal opportunity for the teachers to jointly plan and review their work. Lessons for parallel groups do not coincide so there is no opportunity for team teaching or putting groups together for visits or other activities. The teacher currently on a 0.8 contract has worked hard to provide a structure for the course, materials for delivering it and methods for monitoring and assessment of student progress, including the regular use of surveys, which are used to stimulate changes in the way the course is taught. She has been well supported by the school in terms of staff development opportunities. The other teacher is independently undertaking further teacher training. The subject does not currently have a base room exclusively resourced for its use.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature and French.

### English literature

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

#### Strengths

Standards currently being achieved are above average.

Students achieve well because of the good teaching.

The subject is well led and managed and progress has been good since the previous inspection.

#### Area for improvement

Some students have not developed independent learning skills to the extent that might be expected.

265. In 2001, results were very high and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results have fluctuated over the past three years. In 1999 they were in line with the national average and in 2000 they were below it. The results

obtained in 2002 were better than those obtained in 1999 and 2000 but not as good as those obtained in 2001. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that attainment is currently above the national expectation. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, their achievement is good.

266. The subject is a popular choice at A-level and a high proportion of students who start the course finish it, whether to AS-level or A-level.
267. By the time they reach Year 13 most students enjoy studying literature and many of them read works outside the prescribed curriculum. This, in turn, has led to significant numbers applying for literature-based courses at universities. In lessons, students are articulate, accustomed to working in groups and willing to share their ideas with teachers and fellow students. They are also capable of challenging the ideas of others. This was seen in a Year 13 lesson, when students debated rigorously to decide just what 'effeminacy of style' might mean when applied to the poetry of Keats. In their discussions, students were able to draw upon a good range of the poems to support their views. Higher attainers were able to identify possible effeminacy in stylistic features, whilst lower attainers tended to confine themselves to content. The quality of students' written work is variable. Higher attainers display a good range of skills. They have sufficient historical understanding to explain how and why people's attitudes towards the First World War changed. They can also make detailed comparisons between how *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Birdsong* suggest that society can isolate individuals. Lower attainers show an interest in social and moral issues but find difficulty in expressing themselves in depth or providing independent judgements. Many students know how to improve the quality of their work by redrafting it and examples were seen of students being most fastidious in the way they set about this task. This was seen when the outline of an essay was submitted to the teacher in the form of bullet points, with the student inviting comments on the coherence of the arguments presented. Whilst higher attaining students are effective as independent learners, some middle and lower attainers have not developed such skills to the extent that might be expected. This means that they tend to accept rather passively the views of others on what they study rather than using their initiative and being able to present their own case.
268. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some of the teaching seen was very good. When teaching is most effective, teachers ensure that the lessons include variety, that the pace is brisk and that the students have good opportunities to make their own contributions. This means that students are actively involved in their own learning, concentrate well and learn quickly. They learn how to present their views and defend them, as was seen in a lively Year 12 lesson on the motives of the characters in two poems by Robert Browning. In many of the lessons seen, teachers possessed very good subject knowledge. An example of this was in a Year 13 lesson, in which the teacher drew upon her understanding of 19<sup>th</sup> century literature to lead students into seeing Keats in a new light. Teachers encourage students to look beyond the set curriculum and many have developed reading interests of their own. When it is appropriate, teachers will provide written models of answers. This helps students to better understand how to construct their own essays. The quality of marking is good and provides guidance on what students need to do to improve. However, some opportunities are missed to require students to use and further develop their independent learning skills.
269. The quality of leadership and management is good, which has resulted in good progress being made since the previous inspection. Standards have improved and the quality of teaching is better.

## French

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

### Strengths

Teaching and learning are very good and enable students to make very good progress through the course.

Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning.

Assessment information is used very effectively to inform students about their progress and to set appropriate targets for further improvement.

Leadership and management of the subject are very good, and have resulted in very good progress being made since the previous inspection.

### Area for improvement

There are not enough opportunities or support for students in Year 12 to use the language themselves, independently of the teacher.

270. The school offers French at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course.
271. There were no A-level examination results in 2001. The A-level results in 2002 suggest that they will be well above average in comparison with the 2001 national average. All students achieved very well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE. All students gained A-C grades. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades A and B was very high. The majority of students continued to A-level in French. The number of students on AS-level and A-level courses is small but the trend in standards attained is rising overall.
272. The standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average in both Year 12 and Year 13 and this represents very good achievement. Students' knowledge and understanding of grammar and the topics they have studied are very secure. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 are particularly skilful in their writing; they write accurately and at length for a variety of purposes, for example to present arguments on moral and contemporary issues and to write detailed accounts. They use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and structures and link their ideas very effectively using a wide range of adverbial and time phrases. Their ability to work independently is much more developed than in most A-level French groups. Their speaking and listening skills are very well developed; they respond promptly and appropriately to questions and express their ideas clearly and accurately. They rapidly gather information from taped extracts of speech and from authentic texts, make detailed notes and report back to others. By Year 13 students make excellent progress in refining these skills, deal with information from a variety of sources and speak with a high degree of fluency in simulated role-plays and in discussion.
273. Teaching and learning are very good overall and students make rapid progress as a result. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their enthusiasm for their subject is contagious. Students respond very positively to the high level of challenge and the brisk pace in lessons. Lessons are conducted very effectively and usually exclusively in French and students benefit from excellent role models to develop their speaking and listening skills. Excellent relationships are evident, activities conducted with humour and students are confident in contributing to oral work in class. Activities are well sequenced so that students increase their knowledge and understanding during lessons. Materials are used well to expand students' range of vocabulary and

structures and explore topics being studied and teachers give clear explanations of new language. However, on occasions opportunities are missed for students to work independently to gather information for themselves and report back to others. Similarly, on occasions, planning for increasing students' confidence and competence in using the language themselves is clouded by the topic being discussed and opportunities are missed to focus on and practise key structures in discussions. Teachers use a variety of resources and challenging activities to encourage students to participate. In an excellent Year 13 lesson students were given strict deadlines for skimming and scanning a range of tourist information in order to answer possible questions from their partner about a proposed visit to the Poitou Charentes region. This was very effective, not only in developing their ability to read and assimilate information rapidly but also in developing their skills of listening and responding spontaneously. Both students made excellent progress and were able to participate successfully and fluently in the detailed discussion that followed because of the close monitoring and sensitive guidance by the teacher. Their concentration in these activities was intense. Students are able to extend their learning through the use of the Internet and are given valuable guidance by their teachers about appropriate sources of information. Homework is used very effectively to consolidate and extend learning in lessons and students are encouraged to work through additional tasks, including listening activities at their own pace. Marking is very thorough, linked to examination criteria and gives clear guidance about how to improve.

274. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is very good. Monitoring of teaching and learning is very effective and the head of department is well informed about her department and the quality of teaching and learning within it. The department analyses its assessment data closely in order to track students' progress, set targets and establish where further improvements could be made. The department supports its students very well. Students have very positive views about their learning and the provision in French. They greatly appreciate the help and guidance they are given by their teachers and the opportunities they are given to attend courses and conferences at universities and intensive language days within the county. They also appreciate the help they are given in accessing information on the Internet and the willingness of teachers to give their time.
275. There has been very good progress in French since the time of the previous inspection. A-level results have improved. They are now well above average.