

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **WOOD GREEN HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE OF SPORT**

Sandwell

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 104007

Headteacher: Mrs Enid Bibby

Reporting inspector: Mr David Cox  
10297

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 250760

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wood Green High School College of Sport  
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West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Peter Hughes

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10297	D Cox	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements. How well are the students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
9087	R Watkins	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English	
4145	C Harrison	Team inspector	Science	
11933	D Driscoll	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
15320	A Penn	Team inspector	Art and design	
30973	G Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology	
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	
20124	J Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31705	J Mason	Team inspector	Music	
12986	S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
2597	C Jackson	Team inspector	Business studies. Health and social care	

14516	A Skelton	Team inspector	Religious education	
11720	P Winch	Team inspector	Drama. Special educational needs. Educational inclusion. English as an additional language.	

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London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Wood Green High School College of Sport is much bigger than most other secondary schools, and is a comprehensive school in Sandwell, educating students between the ages of 11 and 18. The number of students on roll is much higher than when the school was last inspected. There are now 1468 students on roll, 745 girls and 723 boys. There are 202 students in the sixth form, which is significantly more than at the time of the previous inspection. The school is popular with parents and is over-subscribed and attracts students from out of the Borough. The catchment area is the 7<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the country. Thirty-eight per cent of students are entitled to free school meals, which is very high. The overall social-economic circumstance of the students is well below average. The school has a higher than average proportion of students with English as an additional language, but the vast majority are completely fluent in English. There are no students at an early stage of language acquisition. The minority ethnic groups are mainly of Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani backgrounds. The attainment of students on entry is well below average. There are 364 students on the register of special educational needs; this is 28.75 per cent of the 11-16 school population, which is above the national average. There are 28 (2.2 per cent) students with statements of special educational need, which is broadly average. The school is a specialist Sports College and a Teacher Training Agency Promotion School. The school became a Beacon school in 2002.

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

This is an excellent school where students' achievements are remarkable. The school is improving rapidly as a result of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the leadership group. The school has an excellent teaching provision. Students leave with GCSE results that are now above average and are far better than would normally be expected given students' standards on entry to the school. Students in the sixth form do much better than expected and leave with results that are average. Overall, the school is providing very good value for money.

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

- Students achieve remarkably well because of the excellent teaching they receive.
- Students' attitudes are very good and there are excellent relationships between teachers and students.
- The leadership and management of the school are excellent.
- Pastoral systems are very good and students are very well cared for.
- Outstanding extra-curricular activities are provided for students.
- Provision for students' personal development is very good.
- Standards in information and communication technology are very high because of the outstanding teaching students receive.

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

- Students in Years 10 and 11 underachieve in religious education because they do not receive enough lessons.
- There are not enough resources in the learning resource centre and the centre is not used widely enough to support the work of the departments.

*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 excellent progress since it was last inspected in January 1997. Examination results at GCSE have shot up and results at post-16 have risen significantly. The quality of teaching has improved, although it was good at the time of the previous inspection. The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and the leadership team has brought about this fantastic rate of improvement. The school has addressed the key issues from the previous report very well although students still do not receive their entitlement to religious education in the sixth form and there is still room for improving marking.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                  C

below average          D

well below average     E

Standards at the end of Year 9 are average and students do much better than expected. Standards are well above average in information and communication technology and average in all other subjects except English, mathematics and music where standards are below average. Students' achievements are excellent in information and communication technology, very good in science and modern foreign languages and good in all other subjects with the exception of physical education where achievement is satisfactory.

Results in the 2001 national tests were below average in mathematics and science and well below average in English when compared with all schools. Results were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English when compared with similar schools. Results have improved at a similar rate to that seen nationally. The 2002 results show an increased proportion of students gaining the higher levels.

Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Standards are now very high in information and communication technology; well above average in modern foreign languages; above average in science, art and design, geography and music; average in mathematics, history and physical education; below average in religious education and English; and well below average in design and technology. Overall, students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 given their standards when they entered Year 10. Students' achievements are: excellent in information and communication technology; very good in science, geography and modern foreign languages; and good in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology and history where it is satisfactory and religious education where it is unsatisfactory.

Results at GCSE level were average in 2001 and students did much better than expected. Results have shot up since the previous inspection and this trend has continued in 2002 to the point where students are now doing far better than expected. In 2001, the proportions of students gaining five or passes at A\* to C and A\* to G were in the top five per cent of schools when compared with similar schools. Results in 2001 were very high in information and communication technology, well above average in business studies, general studies, French and German, above average in art and design and drama, and average in all other subjects with the exception of English language, design and technology and history where they were below average. Students in 2001 did well in art and design, business studies, information and communication technology, drama and French but not as well as expected in English language, English literature, history, mathematics and physical education.

Standards in Year 13 are average but students do very well compared to their standards when they start the course. Results at A-level were below average in 2001, but average when Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCE) courses are taken into account. Results have risen significantly since the previous inspection and results in 2002 indicate still further improvement. Results overall were above average at A-level for males. Examination results in 2001 were in the top five per cent nationally in business studies, mathematics and physics. Results were well above average in sociology, above average in chemistry and average in computer studies and geography. Results were below average in art and design, biology and general studies, and well below in drama, English literature and history. Results were very low in French. There were too few candidates in other subjects to make statistical comparisons valid. Results in the vocational courses were above average in art and design and well below average in health and social care. Overall students did well in



business studies, sociology, mathematics and physics but did not do as well expected in drama, English literature and French. Results in drama and French improved in 2002 but were similar in English literature.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are broadly average. The school's targets for its performance are challenging and the school is successful in meeting these targets. Although the school has met many of its targets as a Sports College, the GCSE pass rate in physical education has fallen well short of the target.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes are very good. The very good attitudes owe much to teachers' consistently upheld expectations that students should always give good attention to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Students' behaviour is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is very good. Students' relationships both with each other and with the adults in the school community are really outstanding,
Attendance	Attendance remains satisfactory, at a little above the national average.

Sixth form students show very good, responsible attitudes to learning and also to the wider opportunities offered by the school. They develop a high level of responsibility in the contribution that they make to provision for younger students in the main school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent overall. Much of the teaching is outstandingly good and students learn far more than is usually expected. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is excellent in information and communication technology; very good in science and modern foreign languages, and good in all other subjects with the exception of physical education where it is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is excellent in information and communication technology, very good in science, geography and modern foreign languages, and good in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology, history and religious education where it is satisfactory.

It is the consistency of the very good teaching that students receive that enables them to make very good progress in lessons. A significant strength of the teaching is the sheer volume of work that students are expected to do in lessons, and also outside of normal lesson times. Teachers set exceptionally demanding targets for students and the students respond by throwing themselves into the work. Teachers have excellent strategies to manage the behaviour of students and consequently relationships between staff and students are excellent. Most teachers play a very good part in developing students' skills in reading, writing and everyday mathematics. The marking of students' work is not always consistent with the school's marking policy.

Teaching is very good in the sixth form. Many of the characteristics found in the teaching in the main school are also evident in the sixth form although the marking of written work is generally very good. Students respond to the very good teaching by working hard. When teaching is less effective, it is for a variety of reasons. In some subjects, resources are unsatisfactory and, in German, teachers are not up to date with the requirements of the examination.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good curriculum for its students. It meets the needs of the diverse range of students very well. There is outstanding extra-curricular provision. There is an excellent choice of courses for sixth form students.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Provision for students with special educational needs is excellent.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	No special provision is made by the school although the curriculum meets the needs of students with English as an additional language very well overall.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and underpins the school's improvement.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good attention is paid to students' welfare and personal guidance.

The school's designation as a Sports College has brought vast improvements, from which students are benefiting, not least the promotion of students' self-esteem. In religious education, the curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory for the majority of students. The way that the school has developed courses in the sixth form to meet the needs of all students is excellent and ensures a very high degree of equality for students. However, the sixth form curriculum does not meet fully the requirements for religious education. There is very good provision for careers and vocational education throughout the school. The school has very good 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 excellent overall. The outstanding leadership and management provided by the headteacher and the leadership group have resulted in excellent progress being made.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors support the headteacher well. They have a good understanding of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. Excellent procedures for identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching have meant that the school has been able to improve the education it provides.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Excellent use has been made of funds from the Wednesbury Education Action Zone and the Excellence in Cities initiative. The principles of best value are applied exceedingly well.

The school has a very good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. There are just enough resources. The school has enough accommodation but there are many mobile classrooms that are constantly being vandalised by outsiders. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent.

## 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 results that students achieve.</li> <li>The good care that students receive.</li> <li>The way the school is managed.</li> <li>The extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents are not always kept well informed about progress.</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, although annual reports have improved in some important ways since the previous inspection, targets for improvement are not yet shown consistently.

## ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

## WOOD GREEN HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE OF SPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than that found in most schools. There are currently 104 female and 98 male 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 well below average but improving. The school provides a wide range of two-year courses leading to A-level or advanced vocational qualifications.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a very good standard of education for students and it is very cost effective. The quality of teaching is very good and leads to students achieving very well and attaining much 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 very well. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent.

#### Strengths

- Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive.
- In 2001, examination results in physics, mathematics and business studies were in the top five per cent of all schools nationally.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent and there has been a rapid rise in standards since the previous inspection.
- Students' attitudes are very good and there are excellent relationships between students and teachers.

#### What could be improved

- The quality of teaching in English, history and German, although satisfactory, is not as good as that seen in other subjects.
- The small number of reference books for sixth form students in the learning resource centre limits students in acquiring skills for independent learning.
- The sixth form curriculum does not meet fully the requirements for religious education.

*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>Very good.</b> Standards have been rising rapidly and are now well above average. Teaching is very good and students do much better than expected.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Business	<b>Excellent.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching is very good and students do much better than expected.

Information and communication technology	<b>Excellent.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching is excellent and students do exceedingly well.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Health and social care	<b>Good.</b> Standards are above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Art and design	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Drama	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are average. Teaching is very good and students do much better than expected.
History	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are average. Teaching is satisfactory and students do as well as expected.
English literature	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are well below average. Teaching is satisfactory and students do as well as expected.
German	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are below average. Teaching is satisfactory and students do as well as expected.

Students also do well in sociology and results are well above average.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support and guidance are very strong for sixth formers. A very good balance is achieved between systems for support on the one hand and encouragement for students to develop personal responsibility and initiative on the other.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Excellent. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. The academic and pastoral systems have been combined to get a very clear picture of a student's progress so that teaching can be targeted at specific weaknesses. Results are analysed very well and the sixth form uses the same systems as the main school for ensuring the quality of teaching. As a result standards are improving rapidly. The wide range of courses ensures excellent equality of opportunity.

#### 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>• The choice of courses.</li> <li>• The availability of teachers to help them.</li> <li>• They are taught well.</li> <li>• The range of enrichment activities available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are not well advised about future options.</li> <li>• They are not always treated as responsible young adults.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by students. However, inspectors found that students are well advised and they are treated as responsible young adults.

## **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 well below average standards and by the end of Year 11 standards are above average and students leave the school with far better GCSE results than would normally be expected.
2. In the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds, results were well below the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science when compared with all schools. Results were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English when compared with similar schools. Boys did better than girls in 2001 but this varies from year to year and there is no particular pattern. Results have broadly followed the national trend since 1997. The 2002 results show an increased proportion of students gaining the higher levels.
3. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average in information and communication technology and average in all subjects except English, mathematics and music where standards are below average. Standards in information and communication technology are well above average because of the outstanding teaching that students receive.
4. Overall, students make very good progress in Years 7 to 9 given their standards when they joined the school. Students' achievements are excellent in information and communication technology; very good in science and modern foreign languages and good in all other subjects with the exception of physical education where achievement is satisfactory.
5. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were average overall but were well above average when compared to similar schools. Of particular note is the fact that the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A\* to C was very high compared to similar schools and places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
6. There has been a vast improvement in the GCSE results since the previous inspection, which has been brought about by much better teaching and a real drive by the school's management team to provide the very best education for students. The trend in the school's results has been above the national trend. This impressive improvement has been even more dramatic in 2002 with 60 per cent of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C. It is not only the improvement in these figures that is impressive, it is the improvement in the average points score per student that is particularly pleasing. In 2002, this shot up because of the increasing number of students who are now attaining the very highest grades of A\* and A. There are differences in the performance of boys and girls. In 2002, the boys attained above average results whilst the girls made a significant leap to well above average. There is no significant difference in the results of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
7. In Year 11, standards are now very high in information and communication technology; well above average in modern foreign languages; above average in science, art and design, geography and music; average in mathematics, history and physical education; below average in religious education and English; and well below average in design and technology.
8. Overall, students make very good progress in Years 10 and 11 given their standards when they entered Year 10. Students' achievements are excellent in information and communication technology; very good in science, geography and modern foreign languages

and good in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology and history where they are satisfactory and religious education where it is unsatisfactory. In religious education the curricular arrangements in Year 10 mean that students receive specialist teaching for only short periods in the year, which makes secure factual learning and understanding virtually impossible.

9. The school has met and exceeded its overall targets for GCSE results this year and exceeded the target for the average points score per student by a large margin. Although the school has met many of its targets as a Sports College, the GCSE pass rate in physical education has fallen well short of the target set as part of the specialist Sports College bid.
10. Students with special educational needs enter the school with low, sometimes very low, levels of literacy and numeracy, and poor social skills. By the end of Year 11, GCSE results for five or more passes at grades A\* to G are well above the national average and very high when compared with similar schools and place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. For students with special educational needs, achievement from entry is excellent.
11. The achievement of gifted and talented students is excellent. For example, in 2002, for the first time, a group of higher attaining students in Year 10 was entered for GCSE English literature. The results they obtained are likely to be well above the national average.
12. Although students' standards of literacy are well below the national expectation when they enter the school, by the time they reach Year 9 their standards are broadly in line with the national expectation. Those whose skills do not enable them to access the work independently are provided with a very high quality of support, which ensures they fully benefit from lessons. Students are provided with exceptionally good opportunities to write in quantity. Students write in class, as required, but a significant proportion of the work is set as homework, at which students work hard. Most students know how to improve the quality of their work by redrafting it, and by the time they reach Years 10 and 11 they are conscientious in using their skills. Whilst higher attaining students produce accurate written work, the work of middle and lower attaining students is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Most students have a satisfactory understanding of what they read, though lower attainers tend to depend upon the gist of what they have read, which is sometimes explained by someone else.
13. Students' standard of numeracy is average and students have a satisfactory grasp of all the skills they need to complete everyday tasks.

### **Sixth form**

14. 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 well below the level usually seen in sixth forms. Students who have just started in Year 12 entered the sixth form with standards below the level usually seen. Very few students do not complete a course of study once they have started it.
15. Most students follow two-year courses leading to GCE A-level or AVCE advanced level vocational qualifications and do very well. Results in 2001 show that students left school with just below average A-level results overall although results were above average for males. When advanced level vocational courses are included, the school's overall results are average. Results improved again in 2002.



16. Examination results in 2001 were in the top five per cent nationally in business studies, mathematics and physics. Results were well above average in sociology, above average in chemistry and average in computer studies and geography. Results were below average in art and design, biology and general studies, and well below in drama, English literature and history. Results were very low in French. There were too few candidates in other subjects to make statistical comparisons valid. Results in the vocational courses were above average in art and design, below average in business and well below average in health and social care. Overall students did exceedingly well in business studies, sociology, mathematics and physics but did not do as well as they should have in drama, English literature and French. Results in drama improved considerably in 2002 but were similar in English literature and French.
17. Standards are now well above average in information and communication technology, mathematics and business studies; above average in health and social care; and average in all other subjects with the exception of German where they are below average and English literature where they are well below average. Achievement is excellent in information and communication technology; very good in business studies, geography and mathematics; and good in all other subjects with the exception of German, history and English literature where it is satisfactory.
18. The reasons for the different rates of progress made on the different courses are directly linked to the quality of teaching. So, for example, the teaching on the information and communication technology course is quite outstanding so progress is far better than expected, while in German both teaching and progress are satisfactory.
19. Students' skills in communication and use of number are broadly average and in information and communication technology they are above average.

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

20. Students' attitudes and personal development are very good. They are even better now than at the time of the previous inspection. Students' relationships both with each other and with the adults in the school community have also improved and are really outstanding, with a very high level of consideration and co-operation apparent all the time. Students' behaviour is still very good, as it was before. Attendance remains satisfactory, at a little above the national average.
21. The very good attitudes and behaviour owe much to teachers' consistently upheld expectations that students should always give good attention to their learning. Students respond very well to the way that any occasional small slips in behaviour are quickly corrected. Their attention is also helped considerably by the lively sequence of relevant activities that they usually meet in lessons. This is seen in the way that the new students in Year 7 respond well, even from quite early in the autumn term. They still need occasional reminders, for instance about putting their hands up when answering questions, but teachers are so adept that these young ones attend to their learning just as well as older students. The best attention to work is often seen when teaching is also at its best. For instance, in one Year 9 information and communication technology lesson, a group of students with special needs worked really hard and rapidly gained confidence in the use of a database, because the activity was so well structured and the teacher's prompts and questions left no room for their minds to wander. In one respect students are often less responsive. They try to answer questions put to them by the teacher but they often lack confidence to speak at length and give a reasoned explanation, even when they understand the topic. In other respects their attitudes and behaviour make an important contribution to their learning. Many students

show very good initiative; for instance they use the Internet to conduct research in their own time. Even in lessons that are rather less stimulating, high expectations about behaviour still apply and students mostly retain the same good willingness to work. Their response never becomes less than satisfactory. A few, more often older boys in lower ability groups, are less motivated but they still attend to their work because they understand so thoroughly what is expected of them. A few are forgetful about homework.

22. Students are very enthusiastic about and appreciative of the wide ranging extra-curricular activities. Many are regularly involved in one or more of the many sports activities, while others explore different aspects of culture through drama, music, and less usual opportunities such as the 'war hammer' club. Students also welcome the extra classes that teachers offer at important times, for instance to help them revise for their GCSE examinations. Away from organised activities, students are sensible, pleasant and sociable. They cope cheerfully with the crowded arrangements at lunchtime, though they wish dining facilities were better. The carelessness of those who drop litter around the site is usually the only flaw in their actions. A few show unacceptable behaviour from time to time, either in lessons or around the school, but they accept the sanctions that are designed to help them improve. Really poor behaviour occurs occasionally, resulting in a student being excluded from school, usually just for a few days. Both short-term and permanent exclusions are below the average for schools of a similar size.
23. Relationships are excellent, because of the teachers' firm but fair approach to managing the students and also because students appreciate that teachers want to help them make the best possible progress with their work. This creates an atmosphere where mutual respect flourishes not only between staff and students but also between the students themselves. Individuals readily work together and support each other irrespective of any differences in ethnic backgrounds. The strength of mutual respect and social understanding is very apparent in the contributions students make through the School Council to the functioning of their community. They are confident to put forward ideas, either in class discussions with their form representatives or in the Council itself, because they know whatever they say will be treated with respect and seriously considered. Students also volunteer readily for other responsibilities in the school and beyond. Helped by guidance from teachers, sensitivity to others' needs and feelings is widespread, so that bullying or other harassment is rare. Strong practical awareness of others' needs and rights spreads across ability levels; for instance, students with special educational needs on occasion make a significant contribution to each other's well-being. Others organise charity fund raising, as for instance when a tutor group runs coffee mornings in aid of different charities. Students find it hard, however, to consider important moral and spiritual concepts, such as why some people believe in a deity, because they do not get enough help, pitched at the right level, to equip them to explore such ideas.
24. Most students come to school regularly and never stay away without good reason. However, a few in every year group tend to be erratic in their attendance and this becomes more of a problem in Years 10 and 11. During the school year 2000-2001 attendance was a little higher than average but in the most recent year it fell slightly, to around 91.5 per cent. One factor in this was the way that around 16 students in Year 11, both boys and girls, caused concern by their very poor attendance. Much of this absence was due to serious medical conditions or unfavourable social circumstances. Despite the best efforts of the school the frequent absences of this small minority meant that the overall attendance of their year group fell below 90 per cent. Through their absences teachers continued as far as possible to support students' work so that the majority achieved some level of success in their GCSE examinations. A widespread viral infection and an increase in family holidays taken in term time also contributed to the increased absences in 2001-2002. The school is concerned about the increasing number of days lost through holidays. Previously these mostly involved Asian

students but now white students also miss an appreciable amount of school time for this reason, even though the school points out how this interrupts their learning.

### **Sixth form**

25. Sixth form students show very good, responsible attitudes to learning and also to the wider opportunities offered by the school. They are keen to benefit from the choice they have made to enter the sixth form, so they are willing and co-operative in lessons. They all readily mix and work together without regard to differences such as diverse ethnic backgrounds, and form a friendly and harmonious community. In addition, they develop a high level of responsibility in the contribution that they make to provision for younger students in the main school.
26. Students show a good or better response to learning in around four out of five lessons and in half of these their levels of interest and involvement become really notable. This is most often seen on the more successful and popular courses. For instance, the many students who study information and communication technology are usually very keen and work with great concentration so they learn at a great rate. When teaching is more mundane and there is less opportunity for students to be actively involved, enjoyment of learning is less evident. However, they never show any serious lapse in attention but continue to be courteous and orderly and to get on with learning. They readily help and support each other. There are times, for instance in physical education and on vocational courses, when they gain in confidence to volunteer ideas and talk about them, as well as to answer questions at length, but often some lack a willingness to engage in discussion. This is often the case even when students actually have a good grasp of the work in hand.
27. Students' capacity to work independently is often well developed but is hampered by the small number of reference books in the learning resource centre. It is evident in their use of study periods or time at home to complete homework, and in their initiative as they engage in research. However, this sense of initiative is occasionally lacking. For instance, in an English lesson, few could draw on experience of an independent visit to the theatre when discussing soliloquy.
28. Other aspects of personal development are very good in the sixth form, in response to the encouragement and the breadth of opportunities that are offered. As at the previous inspection, sixth form students make an important contribution to life of the whole school community through the responsibilities they accept. They show mature confidence and capable application of their skills in a range of duties. For instance, they often add to the breadth of experience of younger students, by helping in lessons or by organising various extra-curricular opportunities in areas such as sports and drama for them. In addition, physical education students help with the programme of early morning physical education activities that operates every day for students from feeder primary schools. They also reach out to help the wider community; for instance, they link with the local rotary club to raise thousands of pounds for disaster relief charities.
29. When appropriately prompted, students show much sensitivity to new feelings and ideas. For instance when a drama class gave a stark portrayal of feelings engendered by domestic violence, the performers and the students watching were all shaken by the emotions they experienced, even though several found that words to describe them did not come easily. They find more abstract concepts, such as the values that some associate with prayer, even harder to discuss because few opportunities are organised for them to get to grips with such topics.

30. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students know they should come regularly and most of them do, without any need for staff to remind them. The few who occasionally miss lessons without good reason are identified by a referral system, so that their tutor or the head of sixth form can intervene.

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

31. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent overall. In all years, teaching is very good and it is the consistency of the very good teaching that students receive that enables them to make very good progress in lessons and achieve exceedingly well during their time at the school. It is not just what goes on in lessons that makes the teaching so good. A significant strength of the teaching is the sheer volume of work that students are expected to do in lessons, and also outside of normal lesson times. The scrutiny of students' work indicated that a huge amount of work is expected to be done out of lesson times. Teachers are always available to help students. Students speak highly of their teachers and are thankful for the additional time that teachers spend with them when problems arise.
32. The quality of teaching was pretty good at the time of the previous inspection. However, much of the school's in-service training in recent years has been about improving teaching and learning and the effects of this are now being seen in the classroom. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
33. Much of the teaching is outstandingly good and students learn far more than is usually expected. Teachers set exceptionally demanding targets for students to complete in one hour and the students respond by throwing themselves into the work. Even students with special educational needs who have difficulty concentrating work really hard for the full length of the lesson.
34. The planning of lessons is very good. Most lessons start with an activity that has students working as soon as they enter the room. Homework is set at the most appropriate time in the lesson, rather than waiting for the end, so all students have it noted down. Those who are absent from a lesson must make up the work in extra lessons over the lunchtime. Teachers have built a super environment for learning, in that the students are so confident in their own abilities that they will show initiative in trying to overcome their own problems, leaving time for the teacher to spend with those that really need help.
35. Teachers have excellent strategies to manage the behaviour of students and consequently relationships between staff and students are excellent. It is rare for a teacher to have to reprimand a student; a stare or a pointed finger is usually enough to bring them back to order. Newer staff take great care to establish their rules of the classroom, following up assiduously any misdemeanours such as late arrival or failure to bring equipment. Teachers have very high expectations about the presentation of written work. Teachers ensure that students make careful notes about what they have learnt in a lesson and students are expected to refer to them later. This is especially effective in ensuring that students can do their homework and revise well for any tests and has helped to raise attainment. During lessons students also frequently remind themselves about work they have done before by looking it up in their exercise books and some students are developing the ability to check and redraft their work carefully, although this is more often done by the higher attaining students.
36. Most teachers play a very good part in developing students' skills in reading, writing and everyday mathematics. The way that teachers use information and communication technology has a very significant impact on the progress that students make in improving their writing. Students have excellent skills in using

computers and are adept at using spell and grammar checkers. Many teachers make use of these skills and students' enthusiasm for using computers, to encourage students to write at length and to improve their writing through drafting and redrafting their work. So, while the whole school approach to improving literacy is still in its infancy, the emphasis placed by teachers on improving students' basic skills is good and students make better progress in this area as a result. The drawback of this approach is that teachers in subjects such as history do not have such ready access to computers and so are not able to use the same techniques.

37. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are very good. Visiting teachers from the education authority who give one-to-one lessons make a valuable contribution to students' learning. Most teachers in the school have very good knowledge of the strategies which help students improve. For example, they break down the work into small segments and vary activities, so that students remain interested. As a result, students' attitudes to their work are very good and behaviour is often exemplary.
38. There is one area of teaching where, although good, could be easily made a lot better: the marking of students' work. Students' work is generally assessed well, so students get a good idea of what they have done well or not well enough. It also ensures that teachers have a good idea of the students' strengths and weaknesses. However, in several subjects, whilst work is marked, comments do not always help students to understand what they need to do to improve. Even in information and communication technology where teaching is quite outstanding, not all teachers pay close enough attention to the correction of spelling and punctuation.
39. In religious education much of the teaching is done by non-specialists who have to rely mainly on the provision of materials which are not suitable for a teacher without a background in the subject. Consequently the responses evoked from students are superficial and achievement is unsatisfactory.

## **Sixth form**

40. Teaching is very good in the sixth form and students make very good progress as a result. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
41. Teachers manage students exceedingly well. This leads to trust and a mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers provide their students with a supportive framework but with a good degree of independence as to how they will work within this framework. However, teachers are always ready to intervene if a student starts to struggle.
42. The high expectations that teachers have of their students are exemplified in business studies by the way that questioning is used. Teachers rarely give answers to their own questions; instead, they ask more detailed questions to tease answers from the students themselves. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and so are able to talk about topics that are not part of the planned lesson. The marking of written work is generally very good; errors are signalled and suggestions are made to students about how they might improve content. Students respond to the very good teaching by working hard; their notes are detailed and their files well organised, providing a valuable basis for further study and revision. Teachers prepare students well for examinations and, even in the early stages of Year 12, students are required to judge the quality of various possible examination answers in order to extend their understanding of precisely what the questions require.
43. When teaching is less effective, it is for a variety of reasons. In some lessons, resources are unsatisfactory and teachers do not make use of the learning resource centre because there are not enough reference books available. For example, the poor provision of ceramic resources is affecting the standards of the Year 12 AVCE course in art and design. The lack of provision prevents students developing advanced level skills and knowledge of ceramic processes. This has been a considerable inconvenience to all and has adversely affected standards. In German, teachers are not up to date with the requirements of the examination.

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

44. The school provides a very good curriculum for its students. It meets the needs of the diverse range of students very well. The school's designation as a Sports College has brought vast improvements, from which students are benefiting, not least the promotion of students' self-esteem.
45. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9. An important priority of the school is to keep the curriculum as flexible as possible so that students are provided with as much choice as possible. One significant strength is the inclusion of drama for all students as an important part of the strategy for improving students' oral skills. The arrangements for grouping students according to their ability are working very well and objective tests along with teacher assessments and recommendations for the basis for revision of the teaching groups. In design and technology, the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not fully ensure sufficient progression between the units; this leads to a lack of challenge for higher attaining students in some of the material areas. The curriculum meets the needs of students with English as an additional language well.
46. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good in that its flexibility meets the needs of the students very well. There are many positive features of the curriculum. The school has introduced a number of imaginative schemes in Years 10 and 11 resulting in a very flexible and wide curriculum. For example, the school has introduced new information and

communication technology courses, which are helping to drive up standards. New courses such as vocational courses in health and social care have added breadth to the curriculum and provided greater choice for students. All students completing Year 11 receive a recognised qualification in physical education. A significant number of students are appropriately disappplied from parts of the curriculum to allow them to follow more relevant courses. For example, a large number of students do not follow a course in design and technology so that they can focus more on sporting activities. The curriculum meets the needs of students with English as an additional language very well. In religious education, the curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory for the majority of students due to lack of lessons and the design of the course leading to falling standards.

47. The school provides very good provision for gifted and talented students. For example, in 2002, for the first time, a group of higher attaining students in Year 10 was entered for GCSE English literature. The results they obtained are likely to be well above the national average. Other students qualify as coaches of gymnastics and snowboarding and there are many opportunities for students' talents to shine through.
48. Provision for students with special educational needs is excellent. Learning difficulties are addressed through numerous strategies, including a commercial computer program. Learning support assistants play a major part in students' achievements. They liaise closely with subject teachers so can plan resources before the lesson, as in a Year 7 religious education class where flashcards produced by the assistant helped students understand the work. The linking of assistants to specific departments makes it easier for them to discuss the lesson with the subject teacher. The identification of a teacher in each department to link with special needs is raising awareness across the school of problems faced by students with learning difficulties.
49. The strategy for the teaching of literacy is good. At the time of the inspection, the school had very recently introduced a programme for literacy, which was being taught as part of a key skills programme. The evidence of the lessons seen was that the teaching was of a high quality and that the lessons were effective in raising standards. However, the full impact of the initiative can only be assessed at a later stage. Besides providing lessons specifically on literacy, many other subjects contribute to improving students' standards.
50. The cumulative effect of the work set by the different subjects, both as classwork and homework, is that students do a great deal of writing. In lessons where students use information and communication technology, they know how to use electronic checks on the accuracy of what they have written. Some subjects provide good opportunities for students to read. In geography, students are given opportunities to read and find out about a number of topics. Most subjects ensure students recognise and use subject specific vocabulary. However, overall, there are less opportunities for wider reading than might be expected.
51. There is good provision for teaching of numeracy skills. While individual subjects have not all yet got to the stage where they have their own policy on numeracy, many subjects already reinforce such skills in their day-to-day lessons. The co-ordinator for numeracy is working with link teachers from subjects.
52. The arrangements for teaching personal and social development are very good. The work that is planned includes all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness and these plans provide a good experience for the students. The school gives the course a high priority in recognition of the need to improve students' self-esteem. Careers education is of a very good quality. The personal and social education programme has relevant content starting in Year 7. Guidance is more intensive from Year 9 onwards, so that

all students follow a well-structured programme and in addition each one is provided with helpful individual advice and support, matched to his or her needs.

- 53. This is a school that is working hard to change the perception of the local community towards education, and it is being very successful in this respect. The school has forged very good links with the local community at all levels; the school enhances the involvement of the wider community in sport and in particular it promotes the enjoyment of sport and physical recreation. For example, parents are encouraged to attend evening classes and work alongside their children. Links with external agencies and other organisations provide valuable experiences for students.
- 54. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. There is outstanding provision for sports and after-school clubs and a high proportion of students use the school's facilities outside normal school hours. Many of these additional opportunities have a direct impact on students' attainment, either through extra GCSEs or through subjects such as drama where they get to practise what they have learnt in school. The school provides very good study support outside school hours to counter the lack of facilities or support that some students receive at home. The school has excellent links with other schools and colleges. It has very good pastoral links with the local primary schools and links between subjects are developing well. There are very good links with post-16 institutions and training organisations that provide very good information when students are making choices about their future pathways.
- 55. The curriculum is now broader and more relevant than at the time of the previous inspection and very progress has been made.

### **Sixth form**

- 56. The sixth form curriculum is very good although it does not meet fully the requirements for religious education. The curriculum is broad, very relevant and recruits students from a much broader ability range and different backgrounds than usually seen. The excellent range of AS and A-level courses, together with Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCE) meet the needs of students particularly very well and provides them with the choice of a vocational or more academic pathway. Each route to accreditation also provides options within it, so that for example the very highest attainers may study four subjects to A-level while others complete their studies at the end of Year 12. By providing these different routes to accreditation, the school is meeting the needs and aspirations of the students exceedingly well.
- 57. The school works exceedingly hard to ensure that the courses available meet the needs of individual students, while taking full account of other opportunities available locally to continue their studies. Small groups, for example, are allowed to run if they are complementary to other studies so that students can study the combination of subjects most appropriate for them. This combination of subjects is an important feature as it allows students great flexibility. An extremely flexible sixth form curriculum allows students to choose a range of courses, which fully matches their academic and social needs. There are excellent links with the Wednesbury Consortium of schools to extend the flexibility of the curriculum.
- 58. Students receive very good quality careers advice in the sixth form, which builds exceptionally well on the extensive work carried out in the lower school. Careers education is integrated very well into the work of subjects and combined with the good provision that the school makes for work experience. Much thought is given to preparing Year 11 students for



post-16 education and an excellent advice programme has been established which extends into the summer period after the publication of GCSE results. Much care is taken to ensure that students entering the sixth form are recruited onto appropriate courses, but also that students do not take courses where they will have little chance of success. The school makes good use of its links with businesses in the local community in this respect.

59. The curriculum also makes excellent provision for enrichment activities. Students involve themselves in many school and community-based projects, which are successful in helping students 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. The School Council includes students from the sixth form and these students have a significant input into the work of the school.
60. The curriculum has undergone significant changes since the previous inspection. The introduction of the new system of AS and A-levels has been managed very well and there is a much broader range of subjects now on offer so a much broader range of students are staying on at school. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

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

61. The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and underpins the school's improvement. Despite some lack of formal planning for it, virtually every area of the school's life makes an effective contribution.
62. The provision for spiritual development is good with the school focusing on the way in which it develops in students a sense of identity, self-worth, meaning and purpose. Students' self-esteem is seen as the engine-room of achievement. The school's mission statement, which stresses care for every member of the school community and positive attitudes, results in students believing in their own worth and treating others as persons of value, worthy of respect. Teachers spend much time in praise and encouragement and students respond by aiming for excellence. When this is achieved, such as in high quality performance in music, their experience transcends the actual reading of notes. Some assemblies challenge students to reflect on their own values and beliefs, and the emphasis in religious education on the meaning as distinct from the external features of faith makes students aware of their spiritual dimension. There are opportunities for students to experience and express awe and wonder as they consider the power of the natural world in geography and enjoy unfamiliar surroundings in outdoor pursuits. One student who lives close to a very busy motorway was heard to exclaim while climbing Snowdon, "Just listen to the silence everybody". Areas for further improvement include better provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and more specific opportunities for students to engage in prayer in assemblies.
63. The provision for moral development is very good. Consistently high expectations of good and considerate behaviour result in a very pleasant civilised atmosphere in the school. The school's understanding of what is right and wrong feature highly in the school's induction procedure for new students and by the end of Year 7 students have learned the standards and expectations of Wood Green. The reason for rules is explained to students and their co-operation requested. Subjects such as science, design and technology, geography and religious education explore the significance of moral issues connected with personal life and the care of the environment and the school's well-designed programme of personal, social and health education assists students develop positive attitudes to health, drug and alcohol abuse and the essentials of an ordered society. In drama, students are able to explore moral dilemmas and in all sporting activities fair play and good conduct are emphasised. Staff

supervision around the school is unobtrusive but effective giving opportunity for students to develop self-discipline. Rewards and praise are much more apparent than sanctions.

64. The provision for social development is very good. Members of the school staff provide excellent examples of mutual respect and positive relationships and this affects very positively the manner in which students treat each other. Good work by year leaders and form teachers develops a sense of community in which individuals matter. Co-operation between individuals is further developed through opportunities for collaborative work in most subjects, by an emphasis on teamwork in all the Sports College activities and by regular residential experiences. Although the school has accommodation problems it has worked hard to make the building and the school grounds as pleasant as possible to encourage students' social development. There are numerous opportunities for students of all ages to exercise initiative and develop responsibility. These include reception duty and a day personally assisting the headteacher. Students play a major role in the organisation of public functions such as parents' evenings, open nights and inducting students new to the school. A well-developed system of form and year consultation feeds into an effective School Council. Physical education enables students to captain teams and the Sports College provides training for Junior Sports Leaders. Students have a choice of over a hundred extra-curricular activities. Personal research and study are limited by the provision in the learning resource centre, which is inadequate for the number of students. Provision for the teaching of citizenship is well planned and the school's leading role in the community and its Sports College status mean that students are made aware of the opportunities available in their local area and their responsibilities to the community. There are good links with local industry. All students take part in work experience and members of the business community come into school to conduct simulated employment interviews. Students and staff raise large amounts of money for local and international charities and to support individual students who are experiencing special problems. The school is a leading member of a number of local initiatives such as the Black Country Creative Partnership.
65. The provision for students' cultural development is very good. Experience of excellence is provided by aspects of art, music and drama. There are visits to local theatres and visits to the school by writers and artists in residence. The school has hosted a summer arts school for local students and is currently developing a theatre club in co-operation with a neighbouring school. There are opportunities for gifted and talented students to participate in theatre workshops alongside professional performers and an annual music and drama production. Dance for both boys and girls forms part of physical education. Year 9 students have worked on a gallery based project on Ruskin's work, which has been shared with students in local primary schools through the Intranet. During the inspection, very impressive work by students in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form was featured in the local art gallery. Examples of good quality art and textile work are skilfully displayed in the school, improving the visual environment and providing stimulus for future developments.
66. Cultures represented in the school and local area are not well represented in the learning resource centre stock and in the schemes of work of some subjects such as art and design. However, the ethos of the school helps students of all cultures to work well together, and specific teaching in religious education informs them about specific features of religious faiths and their associated cultures. This leads to the school being an outstanding example of a successful multi-cultural community. The staff of the school offer a very good model, representing a range of cultural backgrounds. Currently there is a teacher from China working in school and helping to prepare students and staff for their forthcoming visit to Beijing where they are to twin with a Sports College. There have also been recent visits to North Africa and to Europe.

## **Sixth form**

67. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and makes a positive contribution to preparing them for adult life in higher education, employment and the community.
68. It builds on their earlier experiences. They continue to take part in a programme of personal, social and health education and over half study philosophy, culture and ethics as part of their general studies course. Both of these make a good contribution to their moral development. Moral issues and their resolution form an important part of the vocational business studies and health and social care courses. However, the provision for students' spiritual development is not adequate because of the absence of religious education for all and of a spiritual element in assemblies.
69. The importance of building positive and productive relationships is emphasised in a sixth form induction course involving the development of initiative and team building. Social facilities for students are limited by the available accommodation but those that do exist are responsibly used. Opportunities are provided for students to take responsibility through the Sports College Community Sports Leader scheme, which enables them to take a leading part in the school's outreach programme with local primary school students. Students also lead an extra-curricular drama group for younger students and fill the posts of chair and secretary of the School Council. There is a sixth form committee responsible for the common room and for social events. Through strong links with the local Rotary Club and other local organisations, students take part in service to the local community. Students worked alongside Wednesbury Art Gallery staff to mount their current exhibition and drama students have performed with a professional company at Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Vocational courses give an excellent introduction to the caring services and to important social issues. They also investigate in depth the relationship between cultures and life-styles.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

70. Very good attention is paid to students' welfare and personal guidance. There are also very good arrangements for assessing and recording students' academic achievements, with very good use of this information to plan for their further progress with learning. The overall high quality of care has been maintained from the previous inspection and the use made of assessment data is much better than before.
71. Very good attention is paid to helping Year 7 students settle in during their first weeks in the school. This is seen in all sorts of ways. The extensive liaison with all the main feeder primary schools means that teachers are well informed about students' previous achievements and their individual needs and they take this information into account. Teachers and older students are understanding and kind to any who need help to find the right classroom. In lessons teachers make sure these new students quickly learn the classroom routines and adopt the close attention to learning that are expected by 'The Wood Green Way'. Very effectively, but without unnecessary fuss, they correct any behaviour that falls below the school's high expectations.
72. In the same way very good support, well matched at every stage to each student's needs, is in place for all the older ones. They feel very secure, because they know that there is always someone they can ask for help, whether it is with work they find hard or something that affects their personal well-being. They are sure of getting a sympathetic and effective response. Teachers also use very good formal systems that underpin both educational and personal support. Students are helped to understand how they are doing with their work and

how to do better. For instance in addition to systems for reviewing progress with their tutors, and a careers interview, every Year 11 student has a mentoring session with an assistant headteacher to receive well-focused individual advice and encouragement. Mentoring is also established for any Year 8 and Year 9 students whose progress has slipped to a marked extent during the previous school year. The learning mentors responsible set up an individual programme for each student, matching the level of support to each one's needs. The school knows from its systematic evaluation that, in many cases, this initiative helps the targeted students to do better, and is currently extending it into Year 7. Other individual needs are also catered for successfully. For instance, Asian girls speak appreciatively of the group where they can meet and discuss common interests and concerns.

73. Management of behaviour is extremely successful because the well-thought out procedures are used so consistently. Students therefore understand very well that they must behave sensibly. Support is very good for the few who find it hard to conform; for instance, they may have to report regularly to the headteacher or to another member of staff to discuss how they are getting on in lessons. Reasonable use is made of exclusion, usually for just a few days, in response to any serious breakdown in behaviour. When the student returns to school a support programme is agreed to help prevent further problems. There is a very firm response to the few incidents of bullying or harassment that arise.
74. Monitoring and promotion of attendance are also very good. Good attendance is given a high profile through the use of incentives and awards. Staff make an immediate phone call home if any student fails to arrive without an explanation being supplied. Continuing and often successful efforts are made to follow up any student whose attendance still goes downhill. The school has given much attention to ensuring an effective partnership with the education welfare service over such matters. Where genuine reasons such as serious medical conditions prevent students from returning to school, support still continues because teachers send work for them to do at home. Similarly teachers help students to catch up with work when they return after any shorter absence.
75. Students' other needs also receive very good attention, for instance the school counsellor and trained first aiders are readily available to look after any who become unwell. Staff are well aware of the difficult social circumstances experienced by a number of students in each year group and are alert to give support when it is needed. Very good procedures are followed to respond to the child protection concerns that arise from time to time. Arrangements regarding health and safety are satisfactory. Very thorough procedures have been developed, for instance for risk assessment. For the most part these are applied successfully but occasionally something is overlooked, as in physical education where routines for clearing playing fields of rubbish are occasionally neglected, and in ceramics, where an untidy accumulation of rubbish is a hazard.
76. Students with special educational needs receive considerable personal support from staff. The special needs room is open at breaks and lunchtimes so students needing help can receive it. Students support one another very well. For example, a Year 11 girl on the special needs register keeps a watching brief on three students. In particular, she has given very good support to another Year 11 student who was badly burned.
77. The assessment of students' performance is very good. It is well established and uses an effective system, which provides information about each student's standard of attainment and potential for future development. 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. Information is used to place students into classes based on their potential attainment. As students progress

through the school, further data is collected centrally which informs the heads of department and the class tutor about the progress of individuals. Any individuals who are not progressing as would be expected or who are doing better than would be expected are identified and appropriate action is taken. The information is also used in the Progress Review Days that happen once a year, enabling parents to see how their child is doing and to be involved in setting targets for the future. This is especially useful during Year 9 when National Curriculum assessments and other test results are used well to assess each student's potential and to provide information about subject choices for Year 10.

78. During Years 10 and 11, heads of department monitor students' progress well against the standards achieved 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 information and communication technology, science and modern foreign languages, analyse GCSE results comprehensively to provide detailed feedback on the performance of students and the trends in the subject itself. For example, in modern foreign languages the results are closely monitored to ensure that particular groups of students are performing as well as they should be so that teaching can be adapted if necessary. This has led to a significant rise in the performance of boys. Monitoring of students' performance is less good in physical education where the systems have only just been put in place.
79. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment to inform planning are excellent for students with special educational needs. Individual education plans have clear, realisable targets, which are closely monitored and used by teachers in their planning. Hence, work is well matched to students' needs.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

80. 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 health and social care and mathematics, students are closely involved in reviewing their own progress.
81. The use made of information from assessments in order to plan the curriculum is very 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 business studies and science there is a systematic recording of students' progress and consistent monitoring of standards. In information and communication 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***

82. Support and guidance are very strong for sixth formers. A very good balance is achieved between systems for support on the one hand and encouragement for students to develop personal responsibility and initiative on the other. Teachers are there to help when students need it but at the same time they are prompted to take increasing responsibility for their own work and to raise their aspirations for their further studies and careers.
83. Advice starts before students first join the sixth form. They are encouraged to consider the opportunities it offers but are also able to think about the full range of post-16 routes open to them. Induction is also good for those joining from other schools; all join together in an intensive two-day off-site programme that introduces them to the new responsibilities and challenges of sixth form studies. Expectations are explained to parents, who are expected to give their support to the contract between the school and their son or daughter. Throughout their studies students are very well supported by the regular reviews of their progress. This well-focused process helps students to gain a very good understanding of their own capabilities and progress, and motivates their efforts. In addition, students receive very good support and guidance, both personal and academic, during the regular tutor periods and through the personal, social and health education programme. The same firm expectations about behaviour are in place as in the main school but students seldom need reminding of them. Good monitoring systems are in place to pick up any lack of attention to work or any unjustified gaps in attendance. Teachers are always ready to help if students encounter difficulties with their work. Parents are told about any serious problems, for instance with missed coursework.
84. Sixth form students benefit from the same systems as seen in the main school with regard to health and safety and their personal welfare. Some make a very positive contribution to this aspect, by gaining first aid qualifications themselves and contributing to the training of younger students. Careers' guidance has a high profile. All kinds of steps are taken, for instance through the organisation of university visits, to help students recognise the breadth of opportunities opening up to them. As a result, increasing numbers are applying for university courses and over 90 per cent of the most recent cohort have been successful in obtaining places.

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

85. Parents are very happy with the work of the school. They were supportive at the previous inspection and they now have even more confidence than before in many aspects of the school's work. They know the school has high expectations and are very pleased with the great strides in learning that teachers help their children to make. Sixth form students similarly appreciate the efforts of their teachers. Together with parents, they value the tremendous range of extra-curricular activities that develop diverse interests. Parents' confidence in the school's leadership and in the results it achieves is seen in the way increasing numbers choose to send their children there. Staff make many good efforts to inform parents and to involve them in their children's learning and are generally very successful.
86. Information for parents and for sixth form students is good. The prospectus gives parents much helpful detail before their children join Year 7; for instance, it describes homework expectations. This good flow of information continues as children progress through the school, especially at key times such as when students choose their options for GCSE courses. An informative brochure and an open evening ensure that students considering entry to the sixth form, together with their parents, know all about the opportunities available and the commitment required. A very well presented newsletter highlights students' successes in Sports' College activities.

87. Teachers continually work to build links with the parents of each student. For instance, they ensure that homework planners are used consistently to record the work that is given, and tutors check to see that parents sign them regularly. Since the previous inspection a crèche has been introduced at parents' evenings, to make it easier for parents to come. Attendance at evening consultations still remains disappointing, with parents of only around half the students in the older age groups attending. However, in another initiative, parents were invited last year to come with their child to a day-time review meeting with the tutor. This had a very encouraging response, with at least four out of five students in Years 7 and 8 being accompanied to their review by a parent. Many more parents of older students than usually seen came as well. Questionnaires show that a minority of parents, around one in six, are not satisfied with the information they get about their child's progress. They are justified to some extent because although annual reports have improved in some important ways since the previous inspection, there is still room to make them better. At present they are satisfactory overall. Those for the sixth form are very good. They show how students are doing in comparison to the examination grades they are capable of achieving, and also the next steps they can take to improve. Targets for improvement are not yet shown so consistently in reports for other age groups, although the school has plans to include them and subsequently to add an evaluation of progress towards those previously set. Reports for Years 10 and 11 do not mention the religious education modules that the students follow.
88. Arrangements to involve the parents of students who have special educational needs are outstanding. They are informed at every stage in the process of identifying and providing for the student's needs. Ways that they can help are shown on each individual education plan. Parents are consulted when these plans are set up and are always given copies of them. Other efforts to inform and involve them include sessions run at the local library by the special educational needs co-ordinator, about how to help their children. However, the governors' annual report does not do justice to the excellent special educational needs' provision, since it does not include an evaluation of it. Neither does it give the required details of how the school caters for those with disabilities.
89. The school is keen to consider parents' views and to increase ways that they are involved. Several parents make an important contribution to the breadth of sports options after school, through their skills as coaches. A small but enthusiastic group regularly gives very good support through the Parents Association. They raise funds for extra resources and a recent project was to supply new outdoor benches, which were then sited in places decided by students.
90. Sixth form students enjoy studying at the school and are very happy with most aspects of its provision. They feel they are well informed before they join and that they are enabled to settle down well. They find their chosen courses are a close match to their abilities and requirements and like the way that support is matched to their needs. Students appreciate the way that teachers respond readily to any requests for extra help with work, as in the main school. As in other sixth forms, a number feel insufficiently informed about their future options but this appears to relate to their growing appreciation of the breadth of opportunities available, rather than to any lack of information. Although students are generally pleased with the way their ideas are considered, for instance through the School Council, a minority show a degree of discontent about how the school responds to their views. This discontent links to the length of the time-scale for replacing the crowded sixth form area with more generous accommodation and the lack of enough reference resources.

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

91. The quality of leadership and management of the school is excellent overall. Since the previous inspection report, the outstanding leadership and management provided by the headteacher have resulted in excellent progress being made. The headteacher is single-minded in her determination to provide the very best education possible for students. She has a highly visible presence around the school, is approachable to students and teachers and manages the school extremely well. Through her untiring work, very clear vision and real commitment to students, she has galvanised the school and undoubtedly contributed to the excellent atmosphere for learning and the consequent improvement in attainment. 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 continuous improvement through self-evaluation and to ensuring that all students achieve success. The result of this approach can be seen in the significant improvement in examination results, the excellent teaching provision, the super ethos that pervades and the very positive attitudes of students.
92. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is fully supported by the excellent leadership group. All members of the leadership group are well informed and all have considerable expertise in each of their own specialist fields. Together they form a formidable team that is helping to steer the school through a period of rapid change. A strong and genuine shared commitment to succeed has been created and is aided by the very good communication between the leadership team and staff. Since the previous inspection, the role of the leadership group has been redesigned in order to create discrete leadership areas for the school's strategic development and also to create a robust programme of school improvement. This fundamental change of focus has created an effective self-review team, each of whom now takes line management responsibility for subject areas. This realignment of roles and responsibilities is working exceedingly well and has resulted in excellent monitoring procedures being established. The school is a Beacon school for leadership and management.
93. The school's mission statement 'To value all members of the school community and to foster the pursuit of quality and excellence in all that we do' embodies much that is happening in the school. There are very good, effective systems in place, which ensure that the large school campus operates smoothly and efficiently.
94. The leadership and management provided by many middle managers are good. However, there is a wide variation in the quality of leadership and management at this level from excellent through to unsatisfactory. For example, the subject leader for information and communication technology is providing excellent leadership and management, which has resulted in many innovative schemes being introduced and very high results at GCSE being attained. However, in religious education and design and technology, whilst the day-to-day management is satisfactory, leadership lacks a clear vision of how to meet the needs of the school's mission statement.
95. The leadership and management of special educational needs are excellent. The co-ordinator has created an impressive team spirit amongst the 13 support assistants, five of whom are new to the school. Daily briefings enable important information about students to be shared and this identifies those who need urgent support. The very good deployment of support assistants promotes very good learning and ensures the statutory requirements of statements are met. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent. GCSE results at A\* to G are significantly higher. Individual education plans are much more widely used. As a result, work now matches students' needs and achievement is excellent.



96. The governors have a good understanding of the school's work and they have identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory duties well, although the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students is not fulfilled and students in the sixth form do not receive their full entitlement to religious education.
97. 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 an excellent quality, focuses on raising achievement and sets a clear agenda for improvement. All areas of the plan are linked to raising standards and the school's quest for excellence. Subject development plans are linked to the school improvement plan. The school's priorities are exceedingly appropriate and the school is fully aware of the areas for development noted in this report.
98. The school applies the principles of best value extremely well. The headteacher, the leadership group and the governors have set very challenging targets for improvement and the school is successful in meeting these targets. The school compares its performance with similar attaining schools in the local education authority and with national benchmarks. An outstanding feature of the school is the way in which it seeks the views of parents. For example, after a parents' evening, parents are provided with a questionnaire and asked for their comments on the evening. This information is used to improve the organisation of future meetings and to give parents the opportunity to comment on the school.
99. The school makes very good use of new technology. The provision of laptop computers for all teachers was a particularly successful initiative introduced two years ago. Students are very confident users of the Internet. Excellent use has been made of specific grants. For example, funds from the specialist Sports College initiative have been used to support community projects, which are helping to forge closer links with the local and wider communities.
100. The financial planning in the school is now excellent. Three years ago the school found itself with a significant deficit. However, one of the first appointments that the new headteacher made was that of a business manager. Three years on and the school now has an appropriate surplus of funds and financial systems are very secure. The school has clearly defined systems for tendering and ordering. The last auditor's report highlighted a few areas for improvement and the school has responded positively to the report's recommendations. The school receives a basic budget that is above the national average. The school is providing very good value for money and the sixth form is very cost effective.

### ***Staffing***

101. The school has a very good match of teachers and other support staff to meet its curricular needs. In most subjects throughout the school, teachers are very well qualified to teach their specialist subjects. In science, for example, teachers are well qualified and have a good range of expertise across the different strands of the subject. This facilitates flexibility in the deployment of teachers and leads to students achieving very well in the subject. The staffing of religious education in Year 10 and Year 11, however, is unsatisfactory because some teaching in the modular course is by non-specialists and students do not consistently make sufficient progress in their studies. The availability and use of educational support staff to meet students' needs are very good. Support staff are placed in curricular areas and this enables them to provide regular support to students with special educational needs. Achievement is closely monitored and leads to students making very good progress.

102. The school has established very good practice to support teachers in maintaining and developing their professional skills. The school has the Investors in People award. There are very good systems to match the training needs of staff and the departments' improvement plans to the courses they attend. The way the school identifies the strengths and areas for improvement of individual teachers is excellent, so that teachers can be used as trainers in the school where appropriate and outside help is used to supplement this approach. In special educational needs, for example, the leadership provided by the co-ordinator is outstanding as a beacon of good practice. This practice is spread throughout the school and results in the very high levels of achievement of students with special educational needs and in the remarkably high standards reached in subjects such as information and communication technology.
103. The way that the school supports and monitors staff new to the school is excellent. There are regular and wide-ranging programmes that introduce teachers to the school's systems and expectations of excellence. The quality of teaching is closely monitored and supported and helps them to reach the same high standards that are apparent in the school. Planning is well advanced to similarly support the administrative staff in the school. They are encouraged to improve their skills and several have successfully completed courses such as health and safety and finance. Through its Beacon school status, the school provides courses and training for other schools.

### ***Accommodation***

104. The school has enough accommodation. However, there has been minimal improvement in the accommodation since the last inspection. At that time, numbers on roll were increasing and the accommodation was tight. The college now has a ten-form intake, is oversubscribed and the accommodation is even tighter. The mobile classrooms have increased to 21, and the urgent need for new permanent accommodation, reported in the last inspection, remains. Nonetheless, despite the poor working conditions presented by the mobiles and the lack of resources in them, standards of attainment are rising steadily. In the majority of subject areas, teachers are overcoming the problems, and making the most of difficult circumstances. In music, soundproofing is poor and this inhibits learning when, for example, music making from younger classes resounds during GCSE or A-level listening appraisal work in the neighbouring room. Although there are four practice rooms, these are often taken by visiting instrumental teachers, constraining practical work when younger classes are in the two main teaching rooms. Excellent displays reflect the many and varied activities promoted by the Sports College.

### ***Learning resources***

105. Resources are just satisfactory although the learning resource centre is not adequate to support the work of the departments or to increase the opportunities for independent learning. Since the previous inspection, computer resources have been substantially and very effectively updated, although the student to computer ratio has fallen to 8:1, a little lower than the national level. However, in subjects such as English, geography, history and modern foreign languages there are few opportunities to use information and communication technology for research or as a learning tool, and in history there are few visits to historical sites in order to develop the students' observational and research skills.

### ***Sixth form***

106. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is excellent overall. The post-16 manager ensures that all students are treated equally and that the school's aim of providing

the best possible education for students is continually striven for. The post-16 manager is exceptionally well-informed about the students' academic and personal development because he has forged a team of highly effective tutors who know their charges very well. There is a shared commitment to improvement and an excellent capacity to succeed. The introduction of the new curriculum in the sixth form has been managed very well and has resulted in a rapid rise in standards so that this year's results are among the best in the school's history.

107. The same excellent systems are used for monitoring and supporting teaching as exist in the main school and they are equally effective. The post-16 manager is aware of the areas where high quality teaching is guaranteed and those very few areas where teaching is not yet reaching the same high standards. The results are observed in the improvement in the quality of teaching in the sixth form since the school was last inspected.
108. The school's aims and the values that underpin the work of the sixth form are relevant to the needs of the students and are embedded exceedingly well in all aspects of the school's work. There is a very good relationship between the sixth form and the main school.
109. The leadership and management provided by many subject leaders are good. For example, the subject leader for business studies provides excellent leadership and management, which has resulted in very high examination results being attained.
110. The governors view the sixth form as equally important as the rest of the school and take their role here equally as seriously. The governors have a good understanding of the work of the sixth form.
111. The school improvement plan includes areas specific to the sixth form and is of excellent quality. The school applies the principles of best value extremely well. The headteacher and the post-16 manager have set challenging targets for improvement and have been successful in meeting these. The strategic use of resources is very good although there is a need for the further development of research facilities such as the learning resource centre. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is very good. The sixth form is very cost effective not only in its subject provision but also through the enrichment opportunities that students enjoy.

### ***Resources***

112. Resources for learning are satisfactory. The stock of books, materials and equipment is adequate or good in most subject areas. The small number of reference books for sixth form students in the learning resource centre limits students in acquiring skills for independent learning. However, computer resources are good and sixth formers have access to the learning resource centre at all times.
113. There is a very good match of teachers to the curricular needs of the students in the sixth form in most subject areas, but there are deficiencies in the specialist teaching in religious education. The school's systems for training teachers in the sixth form, although good, are not quite up to the same high standards as those in the main school. More support could be provided for those who are relatively new to A-level teaching, as is the case in German. The induction of staff new to the sixth form is excellent.
114. The school has enough accommodation for sixth form students but it is dispersed all over the site.

## **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 Years 10 and 11 by providing sufficient lessons in religious education.

Paragraphs 8, 46, 221, 223 and 224.

When funds become available, improve the quality and use of resources in the learning resource centre.

Paragraphs 105, 125, 155, 157, 174, 181, 183 and 205.

### **Sixth form**

Improve the quality of teaching in English, German and history by sharing the excellent practice that already exists in the school.

Paragraphs 17, 303, 310 and 318.

### ***Minor weaknesses***

Improve the leadership of religious education and design and technology.

Provide religious education for all students in the sixth form.

Improve the quality of marking by ensuring all teachers follow the school's marking policy consistently.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	172
	Sixth form	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		87

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	10	57	61	44	0	0	0
Percentage	6	33	35	26	0	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	6	18	25	26	0	0	0
Percentage	8	24	33	35	0	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1266	202
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	559	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	28	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	364	9

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	274

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	127	123	250

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	80	77
	Girls	70	75	66
	Total	155	155	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52(66)	62(58)	57(47)
	National	64(63)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	15(34)	31(33)	23(19)
	National	31(28)	43(42)	34(30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	73	74	75
	Girls	93	73	70
	Total	166	147	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67(63)	59(59)	58(56)
	National	65(64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25(18)	18(25)	25(23)
	National	31(31)	42(39)	33(29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	130	119	249

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	56	124	127
	Girls	65	114	115
	Total	121	238	242
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49(43)	96(92)	97(96)
	National	48(47)	91(91)	96(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.7
	National	39.0

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	35	51	86
	Average point score per candidate	17.6	11.9	14.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	28	42	70	14	17	31
	Average point score per candidate	16.4	11.9	13.7	11.1	6.4	8.5
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 pupils***

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1109	37	1
White – Irish	0		
White – any other White background	30		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0		
Mixed – White and Black African	0		
Mixed – White and Asian	0		
Mixed – any other mixed background	0		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	183		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	28	1	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	70		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	20	1	
Black or Black British – African	0		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	0		
Any other ethnic group	27	2	
No ethnic group recorded	0		

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

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

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	85.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2

#### **Education support staff: Y7-Y11**

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	746

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.1
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.6
Key Stage 4	22

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	4359819
Total expenditure	4294096
Expenditure per pupil	2926
Balance brought forward from previous year	38920
Balance carried forward to next year	104643



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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	28
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
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)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1468
Number of questionnaires returned	1222

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	57	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	4	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	48	5	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	53	9	1	2
The teaching is good.	39	52	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	47	14	3	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	45	7	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	33	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	51	12	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	42	48	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	49	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	38	3	1	5

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Outstanding teaching, learning and attitudes led to a set of gifted and talented students in Year 10 obtaining results in GCSE English literature in 2002 that are likely to be well above average.
- Results obtained by Year 11 students in GCSE English literature in 2002 were of a high standard.
- Teaching and learning is good throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Students are very co-operative and well behaved and so contribute well to their own progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- Resources in some lessons are inadequate, and this restricts students' progress.
- Some of the teaching is of limited effectiveness and this leads to relatively slow learning.
- More extensive use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning could contribute to raising standards further.

116. In the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds, results were well below the national average for all schools but above average for similar schools. Teacher assessments rated students' performance to be better than the results they obtained in the tests. The performance of students by gender varies from year to year so there is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Results have fluctuated considerably from year to year. In 2001, results in English were below the levels obtained in mathematics and science. Results in 2002 were better than those obtained in 2001.
117. In 2001, the GCSE results in English language were below the national average and in English literature they were average. However, only a sixth less of the cohort was entered for English literature than English language. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Performance in both subjects was below the school's average for all subjects. Results were similar to what they have been in recent years. Results obtained in English language in 2002 were a little better than those in 2001. In English literature they were substantially better.
118. In 2002, for the first time, a group of higher attaining students in Year 10 was entered for GCSE English literature. The results they obtained are likely to be well above the national average.
119. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards of attainment in Year 9 are below average. This is better than the level attained in the 2001 national tests and is a consequence of more effective teaching approaches, based in some part upon methods suggested in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy. Attainment by Year 11 is below average in English language and average in English literature. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, achievement for students in Years 7 to 11, including students with special educational needs, is good. Gifted and talented students in Years 10 and 11 make excellent progress as a result of outstanding teaching, learning and attitudes.
120. In Years 7 to 11 students behave well and sensibly in lessons involving speaking and listening. They are willing to work in pairs or groups, to make their contribution to discussions and to listen attentively to the views of others. Higher attainers can speak at length, can use appropriate technical terms and can elaborate their ideas in response to

questioning. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson in which students negotiated together as to which were the most important connectives linking together a series of cartoons from *Roy of the Rovers*. It was also seen in a Year 10 lesson on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, when students could explain the meaning of irony and quote instances of it from the text. However, such students are in a minority. Most students are middle or lower attainers and they tend to express themselves briefly and are cautious in what they say – few experiment with new words, for example. Whilst lower attaining students communicate satisfactorily within a group of other students, many do not project their voices when addressing the whole class and so are barely audible.

121. By Year 9 students read novels, poems and other material that is suitable for their age. Higher attainers read with good expression and understanding. Middle attainers read with fluency and limited expression, whilst lower attainers are often dependent on teachers to help them understand what they read. Few opportunities were seen for students to read aloud and this may account for their lack of confidence on the occasions when they do so. By Year 11 students go on to read more complex literature. Gifted and talented students in Year 10 are able to make detailed comparisons of the attitudes of Oscar Wilde and JB Priestley towards punishment and responsibility, with reference to selected texts. Middle attainers show insight into some of the social issues presented in literature. Lower attainers tend to grasp the gist of what they read, then relate the ideas to their own experience. This was seen, for example, when such a group read Carol Ann Duffy's *Valentine*.
122. By Year 9 students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narratives, play scripts and summaries. Ample opportunities are given for extended writing and well-structured work was seen on such topics as Wednesbury's history as a centre for cock fighting. By Year 11 students go on to extend the scope of their writing. Gifted and talented students can write with clarity on demanding analytic topics such as how the choice of words, structure and style in writing enables writers to appeal to particular audiences. Most middle and lower attaining students produce a sound range of writing, though the work of many students is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Lower attaining students tend to write in simple sentences and with sparse vocabulary.
123. Students' use of information and communication technology is satisfactory. However, further use of technology in some lessons could well result in standards being raised to a higher level.
124. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good. Some excellent and very good teaching was also seen. None of the teaching was less than satisfactory. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. When teachers possess excellent subject knowledge, are enthusiastic and have a very good understanding of the requirements of the course, they inspire their students and excellent learning takes place. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson on demonstrative pronouns. The teacher explained in a very clear, brisk manner the relevant grammatical points, using the appropriate terminology. This built upon what students already knew and added to their knowledge. Students listened intently, asked questions to ensure they understood and were confident in applying their new knowledge. They clearly enjoyed developing new skills and were prepared to work hard. When teachers use good, stimulating resources the interest of students is engaged and they enter wholeheartedly into the lesson. This was seen in a Year 9 on the career of footballer Paolo di Canio. A video, extracts from his autobiography, and comments by managers and others all helped to make students keen to pull ideas together and write their own assessment of the player. Lower attaining students in Year 10 also enjoyed finding out about the social and historical background to the Sherlock Holmes stories when they were able to do so by using the Internet. Learning is good when the work takes into account the prior attainment of students,

there is variety and when students have the opportunity to actively participate in lessons. Teachers manage their classes well and so there is a secure environment in which learning can take place. Students behave very well in class and are co-operative with each other and their teachers. Such attitudes help them to learn all the better.

125. When teaching is less effective, the pace of lessons is slow and the work is not sufficiently challenging. In one lesson seen the resources were inadequate. A high attaining group in Year 10 was reading a novel for GCSE. However, students had to share copies of the book and it was collected in at the end of the lesson; this was because the school is awaiting the delivery of books from the publishers. This imposed limitations on students, particularly those who were keen to read ahead. Though most of the marking is good, there is some inconsistency. When it is most effective, it is thorough and students are provided with guidance on what they need to do to improve. This leads students to take a pride in their work. When it is least effective, a number of errors are overlooked and clear guidance is not provided. This leads to students not knowing what high standards are. In some instances the teacher marks the work well and sets good targets. However, closer monitoring of students' work is still needed because the errors keep recurring. Relatively few opportunities are provided for students to read aloud and to receive guidance from teachers on the quality of their reading.
126. Leadership and management of the department are good. The recently appointed head of department has drawn up an action plan which is a good basis for raising standards further. As part of that process, consideration might be given to ensuring that all classes have the necessary resources and that teaching and marking practice be raised to the level of the best.
127. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Standards by the end of Year 9 are similar to what they were and at GCSE level they have improved. Standards in English literature have improved considerably. Additional opportunities have been provided for gifted and talented students, resulting in the very good results in English literature for Year 10 students. The quality of teaching has improved.

### **Literacy across the school**

128. Although students' standards of literacy are well below the national expectation when they enter the school, by the time they reach Year 9 their standards are broadly in line with the national expectation. This means that the majority of students have access to the National Curriculum. Those whose skills do not enable them to access the work independently are provided with a very high quality of support, which ensures they benefit fully from lessons.
129. Students are provided with exceptionally good opportunities to write in quantity. Students write in class, as required, but a significant proportion of the work is set as homework, at which students work hard. In many subjects, students produce extended writing in which they present quantities of information clearly. Most students know how to improve the quality of their work by redrafting it, and by the time they reach Years 10 and 11 they are conscientious in using their skills. The way that teachers use information and communication technology has a very significant impact on the progress that students make in improving their writing. Students have excellent skills in using computers and are adept at using spell and grammar checkers. Many teachers make use of these skills and students' enthusiasm for using computers, to encourage students to write at length and to improve their writing through drafting and redrafting their work. Whilst higher attaining students produce accurate written work, the work of middle and lower attaining students is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

130. Most students have a satisfactory understanding of what they read, though lower attainers tend to depend upon the gist of what they have read, which is sometimes explained by someone else.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- There is consistently good teaching in all years that leads to students achieving well in all years and by the end of Year 11 students achieve very well.
- Results in the GCSE examinations are improving.
- Teachers manage students very well and students' behaviour in lessons is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Some marking is cursory.
- The quality of resources in the learning resource centre is insufficient to extend students' understanding and enjoyment of mathematics.

131. Results in the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds were below the national average for all schools but well above average for similar schools. Boys did better than the girls in the 2001 national tests, but this fluctuates from year to year. Results in mathematics were broadly in line with those in science but were better than those in English. Over the last six years the trend in results has been above than the national trend. The results in the 2002 tests were similar to those in 2001.
132. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were broadly in line with the national average and these students did better than expected from their average results at the end of Year 9. Students' results in mathematics were not as good as in most other subjects they studied. The results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were better than those of the previous year and the proportions of students who achieved A\* to C grades increased significantly. There has been an improving trend at a rate greater than the national trend.
133. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average and this represents a good 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 achievement. Students' number skills are below average, but higher attaining students demonstrate sound algebraic skills. For example, when they are working out the  $n^{\text{th}}$  term of a linear sequence, they recognise that the common difference gives them the coefficient of  $x$  and use this to write down the formula for the  $n^{\text{th}}$  term. Middle attaining students can change percentages to fractions and they calculate simple percentages of amounts when the percentages are whole numbers. However, they have difficulty when the percentages contain fractions. Low attaining students learned very quickly the properties of rotational symmetry of shapes. They can identify and describe the reflection and rotation symmetries of two-dimensional shapes. Higher attaining students are developing good skills in using trigonometrical ratios. They use the ratios accurately to solve problems involving right-angled triangles. Students' understanding and application of data handling are sound. Higher attaining students create probability grids and progress to drawing tree diagrams to calculate the probabilities of compound events. Other students can create bar charts but have difficulties in representing data using pie charts. They have difficulty in calculating the proportions in each category.
134. Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. However, there is a cumulative effect of consistently good achievement and this standard

of attainment represents a very good level of achievement for all students given their attainment on entry to the school. In their coursework, students are developing good skills in investigations. The higher attaining students apply effectively the mathematics they have learnt previously. For example, when investigating 'Beyond Pythagoras', they not only use the formulae well but also there is good use of algebra. The middle attaining students explain the results well, but this does not extend to explaining why their solution works. Numeracy skills are average and are improving. Low attaining students can carry out the method of calculating percentages of amounts, but do not fully understand how to change percentages into decimals. High attaining students can factorise quadratic expressions and use this knowledge to solve quadratic functions. They have a good understanding of inequalities. Students complete challenging work on cyclic quadrilaterals, demonstrating good understanding of characteristics of angles in a circle and tangents to the circle. Low attaining students carry out speed, distance and time calculations accurately but do not always read the questions carefully enough to extract the information they need. Middle attaining students use their numeracy skills well when calculating averages from grouped data. They understand that they need to calculate the mid-point of the group data by considering the frequency and use correct notation to calculate the mean of the data.

135. Students have the opportunity to study GCSE statistics in Years 10 and 11. There is one group in each year and the standards that students attain are well above the level expected nationally. Students can generate random sampling for modelling when studying football results. They recognise that from this they can change aspects, for example introducing draws, so that they reflect changes in real life. When analysing discrete data, students present graphs well, selecting the most appropriate graph, and they interpret them well when comparing and analysing data. In their coursework about a traffic survey, students give good detailed descriptions of the purpose of the survey and there are very clear conclusions, which explain the results well. They progress to commenting on how the survey could be improved.
136. Standards of numeracy and literacy are generally average. However, there are errors in spellings, particularly when writing mathematical terms and these are not always corrected. Students generally contribute well in class discussions. They confidently explain the methods they use to work out answers while the rest of the class listen attentively. When given the opportunity, students work well together, discussing their work with each other usefully. Students use information and communications technology well. A particular example was in a Year 10 lesson when the gifted and talented students were using spreadsheets effectively so that information could be processed quickly when investigating an optimisation problem.
137. Students with special educational needs generally make very good progress in line with the rest of the students. They are placed in small classes and learning support assistants work very well with teachers to ensure that students are integrated in the lessons, stay on task and have help in understanding difficult concepts.
138. The quality of teaching is good in all years and this cumulative effect of consistently good teaching results in very good learning overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics and, in the better lessons, there is an enthusiasm for the subject that motivates students to want to learn. Students respond well to the good level of questioning of their teachers by answering questions clearly and this enhances their learning. Teachers plan their lessons very well. They identify clear objectives and effective use is made of the three-part lesson. The balance between different types of activities generally keeps students interested and motivated. This was demonstrated in a lesson where the teacher made sure students understood one concept by asking them to practise examples before progressing to more difficult work. Occasionally, teachers' exposition or individual work by students is too long and there is a lack of variety of tasks. In these lessons, students do not sustain concentration

and stray off task. Students are generally involved well 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 allows the teacher to assess their understanding. Teachers' explanations are clear so students start their work quickly. In the majority of lessons, students are encouraged to explain how they arrived at their answers and this promotes better learning.

139. The management of students is generally very good in all years and the students respond accordingly; behaviour is very good and students work well with each other. Praise and support are effective in raising confidence. This leads to an atmosphere of respect and a good understanding of the needs of students. For example in a lesson which extended students' understanding of symmetry, the teacher quickly recognised the good practice that a student showed in counting squares to the mirror line, praised the student and used this as a teaching point. Students are generally very attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in mathematics. Teachers plan homework very well; it is set regularly and supports the work that students do in class. Standards of presentation of the 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 students do not know where they have gone wrong.
140. The department is led and managed very well, and there is a clear emphasis on improving standards. The national test results at the end of Year 9 are improving. The school provides students with a wide range of opportunities to extend their mathematics. In Years 7 to 11, the National Numeracy Strategy is used to raise standards and there are breakfast and after-school clubs so that students can gain extra support in preparation for national tests. There are very strong links with the primary schools that ensure a smooth induction for Year 7 students. The department has introduced GCSE statistics as an option in Year 10. Higher attainers are entered for GCSE a year early so that they can begin their AS study in Year 11 in order to raise standards further. Students' performance is monitored very well with regular tests and the results are linked very well to standards found in lessons. The information from assessments is analysed and used effectively to place students in groups so that the work set is at an appropriately challenging level for all students. The quality of resources in the learning resource centre is insufficient to extend students' understanding and enjoyment of mathematics.
141. Progress since the last inspection has been very good. There have been significant improvements in 2002 in the results of national tests. The quality of teaching has improved significantly.

### **Numeracy across the school**

142. Although students' standards of numeracy are well below the national expectation when they enter the school, by the time they reach Year 9 their standards are broadly in line with the national expectation. The contribution that other subjects make to develop students' skills in understanding and using number is generally good. All teachers have had training on the National Numeracy Strategy, but the whole school numeracy policy is still in the developmental stage and not all departments have developed their own policies. However, students' skills in creating and using the information from tables, statistics and graphs are used effectively in other subjects. In geography, students create bar graphs and scale data. It is in information and communication technology where students carry out lots of statistical research and are very proficient in using graphs and charts. Science contributes well to the development of students' competence and skills in numeracy. They consolidate their skills in



graph drawing and create very good graphs. Students are using their measuring skills well in design and technology coursework. They take great care over their work and use very precise measurements so that they produce accurate traditional furniture. In information and communication technology, students practise numbers skills frequently. There is a very high level of work recorded when using spreadsheets and databases. There is regular use of counting in physical education, in passing, scoring etc.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results matched the national average in 2001 and improved in 2002.
- Teaching is very good overall, ensuring that students learn very quickly and eventually gain examination results that are very much better than might be expected from their test results when they enter the school.
- Students particularly enjoy practical work and their skills in scientific investigation are better than expected for their age.

### Area for improvement

- In the occasional lessons that are satisfactory rather than good or very good, the pace of activities is slightly slow; students lack a sense of urgency and then do not learn as quickly as they do in other lessons in the department.

143. In the 2001 national tests for 14 year olds, results were below the national average but well above the average for similar schools. Students' results in science were similar to those in mathematics and better than those in English. Boys did better than girls in 2001 but this varies from year to year and there is no particular pattern. Results have broadly followed the national trend since 1997. The 2002 results show an increased proportion of students gaining the higher levels.
144. The 2001 GCSE examination results in double award science were close to the national average. However, the proportion of students gaining grades A\* to C was very high compared with similar schools. Both boys and girls achieved results in science that were similar to the results they obtained in most other subjects. Results in science have improved significantly over the last few years. Science results for 2002 were better than those for 2001 with a higher proportion of students gaining grades A\* to C.
145. Students' overall achievement in science is very good by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. They enter the school with test results that are well below national average. At the age of 16 they gain GCSE results that are, for 2002, likely to be above the national average. Hence students do very much better than might be expected from their attainment when they arrive at the school.
146. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are average in Year 9 and above average in Year 11. This broadly matches the standards indicated by the 2002 test and examination results. Although there is a wide variation in the standards in the different teaching groups, most students have at least satisfactory basic understanding of the topics they are studying. Higher attainers sometimes achieve standards that are much better than expected for their age. For example, many Year 11 students show very good understanding of the structure of the atom, know about

the existence of isotopes and can balance straightforward chemical equations. In Year 9 some students give good explanations of the function of stomata in leaves.

147. In middle and lower attaining groups, students often have difficulty in choosing exactly the right words to use when answering unfamiliar examination questions. The department works hard to prepare students for examinations, both in lessons and in extra revision classes. Teachers make good use of students marking some of their own or their friends' answers so that they become more aware of what is required. Nevertheless, difficulties in writing relevant and precise answers remain a stumbling block for many students. Most students are successful with straightforward calculations and they often draw good graphs but they do not always use the correct units for their answers or on graph axes.
148. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall in all year groups. Teachers enjoy sharing their enthusiasm for science with their students. The emphasis throughout is on ensuring that students learn efficiently. With this in mind, teachers provide a wide variety of activities all geared to holding students' concentration and reinforcing their understanding. The opportunities for learning are extended and enhanced by very good use of homework and a strong emphasis on study skills. A Year 9 group were required to produce evidence of having revised their work on metals, making sure that they had not simply been glancing through their notes. The same group spent the following homework researching the meaning of the 'key words' for their next topic, preparing them well for the work on inheritance that lay ahead.
149. The teaching of investigation skills is a particular strength in the department. Students enjoy practical and investigative work and their skills are better than expected for their age. A Year 9 group, for example, investigating the speed of a toy car down a slope, discussed some possible sources of error in the experiment and explained the advantage of repeating each set of readings. Students are often given much independence in tackling their projects and respond by working sensibly and enthusiastically. This approach has particular benefits for higher attaining and gifted and talented students, allowing them to think things out for themselves. However, lower attainers and those with special educational needs receive equally skilful support and encouragement from their teachers and learning support assistants. A Year 11 lower attaining group were led very carefully and sensitively through each stage of drawing the tables and graphs from an investigation into fermentation. They concentrated throughout, gained much satisfaction from their very good graphs and used the graphs to draw appropriate conclusions.
150. When teaching is very good, teachers expect a great deal from students in terms of behaviour, effort and standards of work. Their expectations are almost always fully achieved. In Year 7, students were hugely impressed at being asked to use burettes. They carried these fragile items with due reverence and anticipation, unlikely to forget their first encounter with neutralisation experiments. In Year 10, a lower attaining group responded enthusiastically as the teacher covered much work on food chains very quickly. They were keen to show what they could do as the teacher questioned them, demanded the use of specialist terms and led them on to calculating percentage change. They hurtled through the different activities, with not a moment to spare, and rapidly improved their understanding.
151. There are occasional lessons where teaching, although satisfactory, is not as good as it is elsewhere in the department. In such lessons the most common weakness is a slightly slow pace. In these circumstances students become rather relaxed and, although they maintain satisfactory behaviour and work steadily, they do not learn as quickly as they might.

152. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The systems for monitoring and supporting teaching are very effective and, as a result, students usually experience teaching in science that is good or very good. Students' work shows that this consistency in teaching has been maintained through various changes in staffing and even at times when temporary non-specialist teachers have been employed. Teachers, technicians and learning support assistants work happily and very effectively together as a team, thoroughly committed to raising students' achievement. In particular, meticulous organisation, together with much hard work, especially from the technicians, enables the department to overcome the difficulties posed by having laboratories at opposite ends of the school's extensive site.
153. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection and all the weaknesses identified in that report have been overcome. Teaching is better than it was at that time and GCSE examination results have improved significantly.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching ensures that GCSE standards are improving.
- Achievement overall is good and all students thrive in a positive and inclusive environment.
- Assessment of students' art is a strength across the department.

Areas for improvement

- Students' knowledge and understanding of artists' work need improving through the study of a wider range of cultures.
- Students' ability to evaluate their work and the work of others requires further development.
- Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 need review to improve opportunities for challenge, inspiration and collaboration.

154. Examination results in art and design show a rising trend of improvement. GCSE results increased in 2001 to above the national average with higher attaining students achieving well above national averages in the top grades. The attainment of girls was significantly higher than boys. In 2002, results indicate another rise in standards. The previous wide gap between boys' and girls' attainment has now narrowed to the national average. All students, particularly girls, do well in art and design compared to other subjects in the school.
155. Standards of students' art and design are average by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement in relation their standards when they entered Year 7. Higher attaining students reach above average standards and a breadth of work that includes batik, drawing and painting. Through consistent and sensitive support, students with special educational needs also make good progress. Sketchbooks show that students have studied the work of artists such as Gris and students' artwork has been appropriately influenced by this study. A Year 9 class successfully used the Internet as a resource for research on the work of painters. Students were able to locate a site confidently and look at details of Cubist painting. However, students lack strategies for evaluating artists' work and need frameworks and more planned opportunities to develop these skills. Students do make simple ceramic bowls in Year 7 but are restricted in further development, as ceramic provision is weak. Books in the learning resource centre and other resources are limited and this narrowness constrains the development of students' knowledge and understanding of other cultures beyond Europe. While many students reach good standards of individual achievement there is further scope for collaborative, larger scale works in Years 7 to 9.
156. Standards in Year 11 are above average, which represents good achievement and significant progress from Year 9. Higher attaining students enjoy success in GCSE art and design, consistently achieving very good quality work in examinations. The gap between boys' and girls' standards has narrowed and from work seen in the studios boys are now doing well. Students with special educational needs receive warm encouragement and can achieve quality work by Year 11. There is particularly good development of craft skills in cardboard construction. These skills and techniques are used creatively to build model houses and temples that often contain minute and delicate detail. There are other three-dimensional models that are too dependent on pure craft skill and therefore limited in their imaginative potential. Students show skill in block printmaking with colour and bright, batik banner design, supporting the Sports College ethos. A special drawing project last year produced very high quality work. Students worked from observation and were successfully taught to apply different media in layers of rich colour and tone. Year 10 students were studying carburettors and accurately recorded their complex forms. This level of challenging teaching has enabled students to achieve high standards. While some students are taught to be fluent in their work other students were seen to be very tight and restricted in the range of their drawing. Students have a sound knowledge of artists but due to insufficient resources and a narrow range of cultural context this aspect of their work is undeveloped. Evaluative skills that enable students' understanding of art are low.
157. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the majority of lessons teachers have clear objectives which are well communicated to their class. Overall the assessment of students' progress is very good and a strength of the department. Teachers identify those students with

the potential for high attainment and ensure they are stretched. The warmth of relationships and positive atmosphere in studios are a tribute to the teachers' good management of students. Behaviour is excellent and students display respect for staff and act responsibly at all times. Teachers have appropriate expectations and ensure that students work diligently at a good pace, and stay on task throughout their lessons. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables students to develop craft skills in some media areas, particularly cardboard construction, printmaking and drawing in Years 10 and 11. Most studios are well managed and art is carefully displayed in a visually exciting way. The ceramic studio is poor and this prevents the effective teaching of ceramics higher up the school. In Years 7 to 9 drawing skills are not being adequately developed in some units of work where narrow and dull subject matter fails to inspire and challenge students. Resources are limited and dominantly western, and teaching across the department reflects this narrow range. Teachers should plan more opportunities for their classes to engage with the ideas in an artist's work in order to improve students' evaluative skills.

158. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject distinguishes itself with involvement in the surrounding community. In particular the head of department's excellent liaison with a local gallery has led to the mounting of a splendid exhibition of students' work. While the monitoring of teaching is good in relation to performance management, there are specific aspects of teaching across the department that require increased monitoring and staff development, such as the improvement of strategies to support students' evaluative skills when studying artists' work. The weaknesses in schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 will need to be addressed by the whole department to improve the level of challenge and inspiration in students' learning.
159. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection. GCSE results have improved and teaching quality has improved overall. The pace of lessons is now good. The study of artists' work has improved but resources for this remain too narrow and students' evaluative skills require further development.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of making, particularly in resistant materials, is of a high standard.
- The department has benefited greatly from the introduction of specialist Sports College status and additional funding that has resulted in very good resources, particularly those of information and communication technology.
- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 leads to students achieving well.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve the leadership to ensure a more co-ordinated approach and strategic direction for the whole department.
- Provide greater challenge for higher attaining students.
- Develop more effective design, analysis and evaluative skills.
- Improve the presentation of students' coursework in Years 10 and 11.

160. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average. Students' results in design and technology were similar to those they obtained in most of their other subjects. However, only 20 per cent of students studied design and technology. GCSE results in 2001

were in line with the previous year but fell sharply in 2002. Very few girls take a design and technology based subject. However, results in home economics based subjects were average.

161. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment in Year 9 are average and this represents a good level of achievement. Opportunities for the use of information and communication technology and computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are evident. A good example of this is the Year 8 desk toy project where students are given the opportunity to use a computer-aided cutter to produce a card template. In general, design skills, evaluation and analysis are less well developed than making skills. This is evident in all material areas. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students.
162. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment in Year 11 are well below those expected for students of the same age nationally. Very few students study design and technology in Years 10 and 11, and for those who do, achievement is satisfactory. As with attainment at the end of Year 9, practical skills are well developed. Students show confidence in using materials and processes and work with accuracy and precision. The quality of making, particularly in resistant materials, is of a high standard. However, the concentration upon making within Years 10 and 11 results in the design skills of analysis and evaluation being subjective and lacking the rigour needed to achieve high levels of attainment. Design specifications and subsequent analysis are not being consistently used as the basis for performance criteria within projects; this is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects and often leads to superficial design activity. Both low attaining and high attaining students follow this pattern but the impact upon attainment is greater for higher attaining students as it precludes them from achieving the highest GCSE grades. The quality of students' presentation of work varies considerably and students are not given sufficient guidance or support on how to improve the standard of their work. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students.
163. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 7 to 9 is good. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are always well planned, and the pace of lessons is usually 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 which matches those of other students. Teaching is particularly good in food technology where high expectations and challenging activities are the norm. However, overall work is not always matched to the needs of the students and higher attaining students are not consistently extended or fully challenged. The department has planned extension activities in Years 7 to 9 and is beginning to use product analysis as the basis for developing knowledge and understanding. Good examples of this are in the Year 9 disk holder project and Year 8 letter rack where students are challenged to apply their existing knowledge to develop an understanding of how commercial products use technology. This represents good practice and should be established across the whole department. The introduction of CAD/CAM in resistant materials in Years 7 to 9 is a positive development and is beginning to impact positively upon standards.
164. The carousel system used to deliver the National Curriculum programmes of study in Years 7 to 9 does not fully ensure sufficient planned progression to take into account prior learning between the units; this leads to a lack of challenge for higher attaining students in some of the material areas. The good practice established in the development of the new schemes of work should be embedded across the whole department. The department has an established assessment policy. However, all teachers are not consistently applying it. In particular, assessment is not being used effectively to provide constructive feedback or set targets for future improvement.

165. The quality of teaching and the learning in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory. There is some very good teaching for example in food and nutrition, where students are actively engaged in activities, the pace of lessons is brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. However, too often lesson activities are not sufficiently challenging. Students routinely copy from textbooks and are not rigorously tested or expected to apply this knowledge. The lack of exercise books in Years 10 and 11 leads to poorly presented work on individual pieces of paper that are loosely organised and hence are of limited value to the development of students' learning. The standard of marking is satisfactory although evidence from the scrutiny of students' work shows that teachers apply it inconsistently across the department. Where assessment is effective, realistic grades and targets for improvement are shared with students on a regular basis. Where it is least effective, it does not set targets or provide feedback on how to improve. Students show little awareness of their own learning. There is an inconsistent approach to the monitoring of student performance, particularly in GCSE coursework. Where it is used effectively, clear targets for improvement are set and guidance is given to support students in raising attainment.
166. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They are generally interested in their lessons and work co-operatively. This is particularly evident in resistant materials where students work hard and concentrate for long periods. Behaviour throughout the department is excellent and students are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety.
167. The department makes a good contribution to the development of students' literacy skills by concentration on the use of technical vocabulary. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it through wall displays in classrooms.
168. The management of design and technology is good; however, the leadership is unsatisfactory and is not ensuring a clear direction and a vision for education in the subject. The contributory subjects are too disparate. Food and textiles work largely independently from resistant materials and graphics even to the extent where they have separate action plans for future development. In consequence, students' experiences and expectations in design and technology are variable and learning opportunities developed in one area are not reinforced in the other. Design and technology has a serious image problem. Very few students opt to take the subject in Years 10 and 11. Resistant materials and graphics are taught almost exclusively to boys and the more able students choose not to follow the subject.
169. The department has experienced serious staffing and recruitment problems since the last inspection and this has militated against the continuity of teaching and the development of the subject as a whole. However, the department now has a full complement of qualified teachers and this is reflected in the attainment and good progress in Years 7 to 9. The department has benefited greatly from the introduction of specialist Sports College status and additional funding that has resulted in very good resources, particularly those of information and communication technology.
170. Overall, the department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Attainment at GCSE is now well below the national average and has fallen still further in 2002. The weaknesses identified in designing are still evident. Assessment is still inconsistently applied and the demands for greater curricular cohesion across the whole department through clear leadership are still a key issue.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching in Year 10 and Year 11 leads to students achieving above average standards.
- The very good assessment of students' progress leads to them achieving well.
- Students' knowledge of places is extended through fieldwork opportunities throughout the school.
- Students with special educational make very good progress because of the support they receive.

#### Areas for improvement

- Day-to-day marking is inconsistent and does not always inform about grammatical errors or how to improve.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology in lessons.

171. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were average and they improved in 2002. The results have risen in recent years to the present position, and students achieved similar standards as they did in the other subjects that they studied. Girls attained higher than boys but both were equal to their respective national average.
172. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement given students' standards when they join the school. Students have a satisfactory level of map and graphical skills and have knowledge of a broad range of topics such as modern developments in Egypt. Knowledge of places is good, particularly such as Shrewsbury where visits have been undertaken. Students are competent in the use of number. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, students gave numerical values to factors influencing the location of an iron and steel plant in South Wales and used the number ranking to make valid judgements about change in industrial location. Many students, however, show weakness in oral work and writing is too generalised. Many students do not use information and communication technology enough to research their work, and drawing skills are not well developed.
173. The standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average. This represents very good achievement given their standards at the end of Year 9. Students have very good skills in organising and representing information in different forms. In GCSE coursework, for example, students collected data to draw graphs to show the effects of the Merryhill shopping centre on nearby retail centres such as Dudley since 1986 and used the information well to write reasoned answers. The minority of students, however, do not give enough detail in answers. Students understand about weather patterns over the British Isles and know a range of the relevant terms. They can describe the weather changes with the passage of a depression and higher attainers explain answers very well, but others write in general terms without making full use of evidence. Students study different parts of the world. They know about the differences in development of countries and why people migrate from places like Mexico to the USA.
174. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and leads to students learning well. The teachers are experienced and manage their classes very well. As a result students listen to what is explained and make good progress in learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully and regularly take the opportunity to reinforce work covered earlier and this enables teachers to monitor how well students understand the topics. There is a clear marking policy and this is well understood by students. The results of assessments are shared with students so they know how well they are doing, but the day-to-day marking is inconsistent and does not always inform about grammatical errors or how to improve. Students with special educational need make very good progress in lessons when additional adult support is available, but on other occasions teachers do not meet such individual need and progress is slower. Many students



lack confidence in oral work and are not always encouraged enough to explain themselves fully. Consequently progress in developing their speaking skills is slower than expected. Students are provided with many opportunities for independent work, entailing research and working with others. They respond well to such learning and frequently produce high quality work. High attaining students in Year 7 and Year 8, for example, produced exemplary work in projects about volcanoes and on Australia. The students' high level of commitment, combined with encouragement and guidance, resulted in them achieving exceptionally high standards. The researching of topics through books, however, is hindered by the poor quality of the learning resource centre.

175. Teaching is very good in Year 10 and Year 11 and this leads to students attaining above average standards. Teachers have very good understanding of the examination requirements and place appropriate emphasis on aspects that enable students to achieve above average grades. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, the teacher carefully evaluated the students' written responses to a GCSE question and gave class and individual guidance. This improved students' confidence and the quality of writing. The methods chosen to promote learning in lessons are very good and stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for study. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, students were challenged to design a 'life system' for a self-contained community. They were helped to identify needs and the importance of re-cycling systems for an ecosystem. They worked well in teams, and learned new terms such as 'nutrients' and how life systems are balanced and self-perpetuating. As a result, the students, including those with special educational needs, made excellent progress. In other lessons, however, teachers do not expect enough of students in oral work or their use of computers for research into topics.
176. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has made significant progress in recent years to improve the standards that students attain. The curriculum provision is very good and well enhanced by fieldwork that improves students' knowledge of places. The schemes of work have been revised and very good schemes exist to support students with special educational needs. These inform teachers well, except for the arrangements to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experience because they are not explicitly identified in planning. The quality of staffing is excellent; teachers are well supported and their morale is high. Their enthusiasm for teaching is reflected in the very good attitudes that students have for learning and the progress they make. Arrangements to assess and monitor progress are very good, and this enables students to know how well they are doing.
177. Since the last inspection excellent progress has been made. The GCSE standards have risen from well below average to above average and the standards at the end of Year 9 have risen from below average to average. The quality of teaching has improved and is now good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Year 10 and Year 11.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Very good relationships and student management provide a secure working environment.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is an integral part of the course and enables good monitoring of students' progress.
- The attractive subject base with suited rooms supports the exchange of ideas and development of teaching.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students have too few opportunities for independent learning and extended writing and do not have a personal textbook to encourage reading and individual study.
- Students have few opportunities for first-hand experience of historical sites.
- The learning resource centre is an underdeveloped resource for history and is not used to develop research skills.

178. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations in history were below the national average. Results in 2002 are lower than 2001, although the proportion of students gaining grades A\*/A was higher. Girls are achieving higher grades than the boys, and are in line with the national average for girls. Students did not achieve as well in history in comparison with their results in most other subjects.
179. Standards in Year 9 are broadly average; this represents good achievement given the students' standards on entry to the school. By Year 9 students have a secure overview of the period studied and higher attaining students are beginning to develop their skills of analysis. Students recognise links between events such as the assassination at Sarajevo and the outbreak of World War I. They understand the effect of the pre-war depression on the attitudes of Germans towards their Jews, and to Hitler. Higher attaining students recognise that attitudes are affected by personal circumstances and that there may be several valid viewpoints. Most students, however, note the different views as directed, but do not analyse the reasons. A sensitive account of reactions to the treatment of the Jews indicates that some students in the top sets are able to empathise with these attitudes, and with the feelings of the Jews themselves. Students use textbook sources to select and extract relevant information, but they do not generally evaluate the reliability of the sources used or interpret the text used. The good progress of the students is supported by their positive attitudes and very good behaviour. Students with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the measured teaching and the very good additional support they receive.
180. Standards in Year 11 are broadly average; this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Students have a secure understanding of the main events of the Agrarian Revolution and the link with the growth of population. They recognise that different factors contributed to the economic growth of England, but most do not readily make links between these factors or evaluate the parts they played. Students identify the different views of the time; for example, they recognise that not everyone welcomed the enclosure movement or the Corn Laws. Higher attaining students can suggest motives behind these views. Students have a good grasp of the attempts to alleviate poverty and can make straightforward comparisons between them. There are few opportunities to write at length, however, and the predominance of short answer questions is limiting the development of their reasoning and analytical skills.
181. In Years 10 and 11, students are making satisfactory progress and are acquiring a secure body of information about the period studied; however, there are limited opportunities for analysis. The lack of textbooks for personal use restricts opportunities for students to review previous work or to prepare for following lessons. As a result their recall of earlier work is weak. Students with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress, supported by the clearly structured lessons and the positive support of the teachers.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and use it to enrich their lessons and capture the attention of their students. Lessons are carefully planned and good use is made of introductory questioning to enable students to recall earlier work and so build on prior learning. A concluding recap brings the lesson to an orderly close and focuses students' attention on what has been learned. The good relationship between teachers and students

encourages them to participate and they have confidence that their contributions will be well received. In the best lessons, good use of open questions and encouragement enables students with lower literacy skills to develop their responses and attain higher levels of understanding. Teachers encourage the development of their students' vocabulary and there are good opportunities for reading and comprehension within the lessons. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and a good working environment develops. This enables teachers to involve students actively in their work. When they have the opportunity, they enjoy working independently; however, where teaching becomes too teacher dominated, students become passive and compliant. Lesson aims do not always focus on what should be understood, rather on the topic to be studied. As a result the understanding of the facts can become less important than the facts themselves.

183. The department is well managed and the suited, attractive teaching rooms provide a stimulating environment and promote an easy exchange of ideas between staff. Teachers manage students well and as a result activities are varied and students have some good opportunities to work in pairs and groups, learning to share information and to learn from each other. Resources are just satisfactory although the learning resource centre is not used to support the work of the department or to increase the opportunities for independent learning. There are few opportunities to use information and communication technology for research or as a learning tool, and few visits to historical sites in order to develop the students' observational and research skills. The department has correctly identified this as an area for development. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. There is now a clear system of assessment for Years 7 to 9, which enables teachers to monitor the progress of students in the course of their work. Monitoring of teaching has improved and the development plan is now clear and is evaluated.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Excellent teaching leads to students leaving school with results that are very high.
- Outstanding leadership has moved the subject from one of the least effective subjects to the best in the school.
- The progress made by students, both in individual lessons and during their time at the school, is excellent.
- Students throughout the school are incredibly confident users of information and communication technology.

### Area for improvement

- Some students on the certificate course are capable of being entered for a higher level examination.

184. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were very high, with the proportion of students gaining the highest grades of A\* and A almost five times the national average. The results were the best in the school and students did far better in this subject than they did in the other subjects they studied. Results in 2002 were equally as impressive. The number of students studying the subject has risen significantly since the last inspection and the proportion gaining grades A\* to C has steadily improved from a very good 68 per cent to around 94 per cent in each of the last two years.

185. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average and the level of achievement is outstanding. Students are extremely confident users of computers and their practical skills are

far above average. All students are able to work with a wide variety of applications with great ease and at great speed. Their efficiency in working with software is helped considerably by their remarkable knowledge of hot keys and short cuts so they fairly whiz through procedures such as opening multiple files. They show a great attention to detail in their work, matching it extremely well to the requirements of particular audiences. They have a very good knowledge of the topics they have studied and have a very good understanding of how to use information and communication technology in their everyday lives. This last aspect shows itself in students' reasons for their enjoyment of lessons and why they continue to study the subject to examination level; many say that they see the skills they learn as an important part of their future careers.

186. Standards by the end of Year 11 are very high and achievement is excellent. The coursework is quite stunning; it is incredibly detailed and every aspect is explained and supported with annotated screenshots, which are vital for the higher grades at GCSE. Students produce these as a matter of course and, because they know the shortcuts so well, it only takes them a few key strikes to do so. Their practical work combines a vast range of work from different applications. A slide presentation, for example, will include data from spreadsheets, links to websites and video clips that are perfectly timed to match up with the arrival of text on the animated slides. Students with special educational needs make outstanding progress. All produce work that is well above average and the quality is such that it would do well at GCSE, let alone the CLAIT course for which they are already entered.
187. Students make good use of computers in other subjects. In particular, teachers of mathematics and science make much more use of computers in their day-to-day lessons than is usually seen. In these subjects the students are helped to make more progress because their computer skills are so good that they can concentrate on the scientific or mathematical elements rather than struggling with the computers. Using the computers also has a significant impact on students' standards of presentation and they are much prouder of work produced on the computer than work produced by hand.
188. The teaching is outstandingly good and students learn far more than is usually expected. The most influential aspect of the teaching is the huge amount of work that students are expected to cover every lesson. Teachers set exceptionally demanding targets for students to complete in one hour and the students respond by throwing themselves into the work. Even students with special educational needs who have difficulty concentrating in other lessons work really hard for the full length of the lesson. Students are made very aware of the standards that are expected of them and they stick to those standards because the control of classes is so good, but also because they really enjoy their lessons. They produce a tremendous amount of written work, but they do not consider it writing because they are using the computer. In this way, and in the way that students are expected to read for research and to analyse their own and others' work, the teachers play a very significant part in improving students' skills in reading and writing. The planning of lessons is excellent. All lessons start with an activity that has students working as soon as they enter the room. Homework is set at the most appropriate time in the lesson, rather than waiting for the end, so all students have it noted down. Those who are absent from a lesson must make up the work in extra lessons over the lunchtime. Teachers have built the perfect environment for learning, in that the students are so confident in their own abilities that they will show initiative in trying to overcome their own problems, leaving time for the teacher to spend with those that really need help.
189. The teaching on the examination courses is really effective because of the way that teachers use the examination criteria. All students have a copy of these criteria that are also used to keep a check on how they are doing and what still needs to be done, so both student and teacher have an excellent idea of how to improve the work to the highest possible level. The

success of this approach is seen in the proportion of students reaching A or A\* at GCSE. Demonstrations are very good because the teachers make such effective use of the technology available, especially the interactive whiteboards, to make sure that all students quickly grasp new ideas and techniques. Much of the marking is very detailed and most, but not all, teachers pay close attention to correct spelling and punctuation.

190. Leadership and management are of the very highest quality. Teachers work as a real team and the sharing of ideas is quite outstanding. Anything new that is tried is immediately placed on the school's network so that all teachers can benefit from it. The prioritisation of areas to be improved has been perfect, with efforts concentrated on improving standards in the main school before moving on to the sixth form. Two lessons are observed every week by the head of department and these observations have come to be regarded by teachers in a very positive light and just another way in which they can provide a better education for the students.
191. Improvement since the last inspection has been outstanding. The subject has moved from being a key issue for improvement to being one that is now the best performing subject in the school. Teaching and achievement were both satisfactory; they are both now excellent.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching and management of behaviour.
- Students with special educational needs make very good progress in their reading and writing as a result of the careful attention that teachers pay to them.
- Teachers make students keep their work neatly so that they can refer to it later; this has had a significant impact on boys' achievement.

### Areas for improvement

- There are not enough opportunities for students to listen to tapes or videos.
- Not enough use is made of information and communication technology in lessons.

192. In the GCSE in 2002 students attained very well in French and German. In 2001 students also gained results which were well above the national average in French and German. Results have risen significantly over the past three years but the number of students has dropped. Fewer students take French than would be expected nationally but the number taking German has risen considerably and is now in line with national figures. Boys attained standards that were well above what would be expected in both languages. There was no difference in the achievement of other groups of students; all achieved equally well. In the short course GCSE, students attained standards that were below average but the number of students involved was very small.
193. Standards attained by students in Year 9 are around the level expected of students of the same age nationally in both languages. This represents very good achievement; students enter the school with some weaknesses in their literacy skills, especially in their ability to make notes on what they have learnt. Through the attention that teachers pay to this, students make very good progress and, in particular, this has had a significant impact on boys' achievement. Most writing is good by the end of Year 9. Students have made particularly good progress in this area; their writing is often accurate and very well presented. Higher attainers also make very good progress in writing and enjoy showing what they know through interesting tasks such as writing about an imaginary robot that can do all their work for them. During Year 9, all students improve their speaking and reading skills in both languages and understand a

range of topics such as household chores and talking about the area where they live. Students are able to hold short conversations but pronunciation is sometimes weak. Students are less good at understanding tapes of French or German spoken at a normal speed but this is often because they have insufficient practice in lessons. Students from ethnic groups perform as well as their peers.

194. Students are attaining well above the standard expected nationally for French and German by the end of Year 11. This represents a very good level of achievement for both languages. Students can speak and write on a range of topics such as descriptions of themselves and members of their family. The higher attaining students do so at great length although they prefer to keep to a restricted range of expressions. Speaking skills are good for all students because they are carefully prepared for the demands of the examination and they are taught to work from memory. This particularly benefits the lower attaining students who are able to learn their speeches and perform them well; one student took the opportunity to describe his family with much humour and originality. Higher attaining students are not always good at working spontaneously and find it difficult to answer unprepared questions but perform well within a tightly structured framework. Pronunciation is very variable; in some classes it is good: the quality is almost always linked to how much French or German the teacher uses and how much attention is paid to correcting spoken work. Students with special educational needs make very good progress in writing because they are given support with the tasks and because they are allowed to refer to well set out help sheets and to notes they have made themselves. In writing, the teachers provide tasks which carefully support the least able and allow the most able to show what they can do; the standards in their written coursework are therefore good. The area in which students feel least confident is listening; teachers do not often allow students to listen to tapes and watch videos, especially outside lesson time. In the short course where there are very few students, progress is less good as there is insufficient time to cover the requirements of the examination.
195. The quality of the teaching is very good in all year groups and this brings about very good learning. Teachers plan lessons very well; they have especially good strategies to manage the behaviour of students and consequently relationships between staff and students are excellent. It is rare for a teacher to have to reprimand a student; a stare or a pointed finger is usually enough to bring them back to order. Newer staff take great care to establish their rules of the classroom, following up assiduously any misdemeanours such as late arrival or failure to bring equipment. Lessons are well organised; students know what they are going to be doing and that they will be expected to prove they have learnt something by the end of the lesson. Teachers have very high expectations about the presentation of written work; they ensure that students make careful notes on the language they have learnt in a lesson and they are expected to refer to it later. This is especially effective in ensuring that students can do their homework and revise well for any tests, and has helped boys in particular to raise their achievement. During lessons students also frequently remind themselves about work they have done before by looking it up in their exercise books and some students are developing the ability to check and redraft their work carefully, although this is more often done by the higher attaining students. Most students do some redrafting of their work to improve accuracy or presentation when they use information and communication technology. Currently very little information and communication technology is used in lessons, as access to computer rooms is difficult.
196. Teachers know their students extremely well; they know what students will find difficult and so can avoid potential pitfalls. Lessons are also very well planned to be interesting; lively games and activities feature strongly. The pace of lessons is very good; teachers move swiftly between activities so that no time is wasted and expect students to complete a lot of work. Instructions are always clear; students know exactly what they have to do and they start

willingly on the work as soon as they are told to do so. They are often encouraged to work against the clock; one group even had a deadline to produce a poster about after-school activities in 20 minutes. After a flurry of activity the work was ready on time and was shown to the deputy headteacher who allowed it to be displayed in the foyer.

197. When instructions are given in French or German students make every effort to understand and develop better listening skills than in those lessons where a lot of English is used. Although teachers use a range of well-designed materials they are sometimes reluctant to use tapes often enough and students consequently find it difficult to understand the language spoken at speed. Marking in books is good and is accompanied by verbal suggestions about how the work could have been improved. Students are given very helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons.
198. Students with special educational needs are given some very effective help to improve their speaking. For example, a lesson in German on environmentally friendly products allowed them time to put their ideas together about what sort of language they might need to use before being given some simple ways to express this.
199. The department is very well led and managed and the department has made good progress since the last inspection. The heads of both German and French have worked hard to refine teaching techniques; staff regularly observe each other teaching and share ideas. Schemes of work and resources are constantly updated and there is much consistency in approach across all members of staff. Another strength is the assessment of students' performance, which enables teachers to keep a very close check on how students are progressing. This has benefited the students with special educational needs in particular, who are given extra support should they need it. GCSE results are closely monitored to ensure that particular groups of students are performing as well as they should be and this has led to a significant rise in the performance of boys. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and there are plans to increase the opportunities to use information and communication technology and the range of listening materials available.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Students make good progress throughout the school.
- Students work very well both collaboratively and individually.
- Teaching is structured and methodical, encouraging students to work efficiently and neatly.
- There is rapid development of good practice supporting the curriculum through information and communication technology applications.
- Extra-curricular opportunities in music are very good and wide ranging.

### Areas for improvement

- Revise the structure of lessons to give more time to practical work in Years 7 to 9 and to ensure greater structure to the students' acquisition and application of essential musical concepts
- Improve the quality of pianos, tuned percussion and reference texts.
- Improve the standard of soundproofing.

200. In 2002, in GCSE music results were average. Despite small group sizes, aggregated GCSE results over a four-year period indicate attainment in music of students aged 16 to be well in line with the national average. The results in 2002 concur. The standards shown in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 are well below the national average, consistent with

earlier years and lower than other subjects in the school. Assessment evidence for 2002 suggests that that Year 9 was exceptionally successful. There is no significant difference between the standards attained by boys or by girls at GCSE, but in Year 9 boys do not achieve standards comparable to those achieved by girls. This, however, reflects the situation nationally.

201. In Year 9, standards in work seen during the inspection are below average. Because most students enter the school with well below national expectations in music, students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 7 to 9 students develop group compositions and improvisations using a range of instruments and in response to a variety of different starting points. In group work they work very well collaboratively. They listen attentively and critically to the performances of their peers, communicating with increasing assurance their emotional responses to pieces of music. Their social skills develop in parallel with their musical skills. They use exercise books well in both preparation for and evaluation of compositions. Work is neatly presented and standards of written work are good. Their technical vocabulary is not developed sufficiently to enable analytical responses at the expected level. This also impacts upon the quality of their practical work. They also sing regularly, although this was not observed in the inspection.
202. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 11 are above average. Their achievement is good. Students in Years 10 and 11 work very methodically and develop individual compositions modelled in part on pieces which they enjoy playing on their instruments and which are related to specific study areas. Consequently, their compositions are well suited to the instruments for which they write. All Year 11 students write their composed melodies in manuscript form, usually using correct key and time signatures. They also have a good grasp of simple diatonic harmony and are able to extend and refine their compositions. Many include accompaniments or compose ensembles for several instruments with effective musical form. They are well rehearsed in the processes of planning and developing their compositions and, to this end, use music programs on computers very proficiently. They have a secure knowledge base for musical appraisal. Many are very competent performers and gain ensemble training through their participation in school bands and orchestras.
203. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Clear lesson structure and detailing of homework, linked to expectations that students behave and show respect at all times, ensure good management of lessons and create a climate conducive to good learning. Teachers are very good at asking questions, which motivate and encourage students to think for themselves. Teachers use minidisk recording well to capture students' performances for class evaluation and for assessment and marking. In GCSE classes computers are effectively used both for refining musical composition and for commentaries. Research homeworks using the Internet lack pointers as to where appropriate material can be found. Teachers insist on careful listening and students are encouraged to use a limited amount of gesture to articulate musical experience. The full potential of using gesture is, however, not fully thought through. For example, while Year 10 students were able to identify the device of sequence by showing their hands, specific detail as to the direction and length of the sequential units was not encouraged in the students' gestures.
204. Although marking is regular and comments do much to challenge and motivate students, details of spelling, grammar, content and musical notation are sometimes overlooked. Key word posters are not clearly visible and this slows down the progress students make towards understanding and retaining essential concepts. In many lessons not enough time is devoted to practical activity. Consequently, upper ability students in Years 7 to 9 in particular are unable to make the most of the exercises set by the teacher. Teachers carefully tailor their



expectations to meet the demands of students with special educational needs. All students, especially those designated 'talented', have the opportunity to extend their performance skills through individual and group tuition available through the Sandwell Youth Music teachers who visit the school. Very occasionally teachers impart errors of fact in music appraisal classes from Year 10 upwards. These lessons do not allow for enough participation by the students. However, teachers are musically skilled enough to respond constructively to spontaneous comments from students, as when a Year 7 student improbably suggested an unknown composition sounded like 'The Addams Family'. Here the teacher instantly recognised the child's inference, involved the whole class in the well-known melody, and used this melody to clarify the structure of the original piece for appraisal. Teachers and students show mutual respect for one another, respecting each others' musical heritage and tastes.

205. The department is well led and managed. The skills and interests of the full-time teachers complement each other very well; students with special educational needs benefit from a musically trained support assistant; new staff are well supported. The schemes of work are well organised, balanced and thorough, allowing flexibility to adapt teaching to different ability groups in Years 7 to 9. The order of some of the units of work, however, does not support the best progress of the higher ability students. The literacy policy excludes speaking skills, but these were well taught in lessons. Numeracy development through music is only superficially covered. Clear statements on the spiritual and moral goals within the units are also lacking. Assessment is regular and informs regular reviews of the music curriculum. Students receive good guidance about choosing instrumental lessons, and GCSE and post-16 courses. The development of an excellent departmental CD-ROM for GCSE not only gives information about the course, but has much useful content information and multi-media interactive exercises for the students. At present it is no substitute for the lack of textbooks, especially necessary for reference for stylistic trends in music, but it is intended, too, to take on this role. Dilapidated tuned percussion instruments and the lack of an acceptable acoustic piano limit opportunity. Otherwise the department is well resourced. The book stock in the learning resource centre is dated and unsatisfactory. However, audio files are readily available from websites through the resource centre's computers.
206. Soundproofing is poor and this inhibits learning when, for example, ambient music making from younger classes resounds during GCSE or A-level listening appraisal work in the neighbouring room. Although there are four practice rooms, these are often taken by visiting instrumental teachers, constraining practical work when younger classes are in the two main teaching rooms. Sandwell Youth Music offers instrumental and singing lessons to about 100 students (national average). Retention rates are good and some 25 students work at higher levels. Relations between the visiting teachers and both the students and the full-time music teachers are very good. The school develops brass band music and handbell ringing systematically and to a high level in extra-curricular time. There are also many more music clubs, including choirs, orchestra and jazz. There are plenty of opportunities for these groups to celebrate their achievements. Participation in the Wednesbury Festival cultivates relations with the feeder primary schools.
207. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Good results at GCSE are more consistent and teaching is better planned and delivered; the curriculum is enriched through the inclusion of world music units and good use of information and communication technology; singing has taken a higher profile in the schemes of work.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

#### Strengths

- The Sports College ethos has had a very positive effect on students' self-esteem.
- Outstanding provision for extra-curricular sport has led to improved standards of attainment in physical activities.
- Low attaining students achieve well in physical education.
- Innovative curriculum planning is leading towards better continuity and progression in students' learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Sports College GCSE targets were not met.
- The teaching and learning of theoretical examination work are hindered by the lack of a designated, resourced classroom for the subject.
- Assessment data is not yet used, effectively, to set targets for GCSE students.
- The marking of students' theoretical GCSE coursework is not good enough.

208. The 2001 GCSE results were close to average, but students did not do as well as they did in most of their other subjects. In 2002, results declined further, although all students gained a grade. Early indications are that these results fall well short of the target set as part of the specialist Sports College bid. GCSE dance was taken for the first time in 2002, and it is probable that these results are about average, as are those of the students taking the GCSE short course in games.
209. Since the school's successful bid to become a specialist Sports College in 1998, there has been a commitment to improving standards of attainment in physical education in local primary schools. This has been enhanced by the college's involvement in the new School Sports' Co-ordinator initiative. The success of this work is reflected in the improved standards of attainment achieved by the majority of students by the time they enter the college. The current Year 7 students enter with average standards of attainment in practical work.
210. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are average, and this represents satisfactory achievement given students' prior attainment. The majority of students, of all levels of ability, have average knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics, in team games. Boys and girls make sound progress in football, developing the skills of the game, effectively, through strategic play. High attaining students devise their own practices to keep possession of the ball, playing at speed with good control and precision. Low attainers have sound ball control and perform well without opposition. Although most students understand the concept of moving into a space after passing the ball, they find it difficult to put this into practice during play. Standards in individual games, such as badminton and table tennis, are also average, but there are a significant number of students who are achieving at a higher level. In table tennis, for example, many students take advantage of the high quality opportunities and coaching within the extra-curricular programme. The same can be said about gymnastics. The college has an enviable reputation for the high quality of its gymnastics, with three students currently in the British gymnastics squad. Year 9 boys and girls of lower gymnastics ability, including several with special educational needs, attain below average standards, but take pride in performing simple movements well. They show quality in presentation, particularly in trampolining.
211. Most students are competent at warming up before exercise, understand why they need to do it and are equipped to take responsibility for doing this independently. Less emphasis is placed on the cool down at the end of lessons. Students' literacy and numeracy skills develop through the use of key words in the specialist language of the subject and opportunities to

discuss their work, seen often in gymnastics and trampolining, but less frequently in games. Students' skills of observation, evaluation and improvement of their own and others' work develop well in gymnastics and trampolining, alongside planning and performance. However, in a few games lessons, the teacher closely directed learning, and opportunities for students to evaluate for themselves were scarce. Students with special educational needs are very well integrated into the physical education curriculum and prosper. Students with specific co-ordination difficulties also achieve well in their own designated lesson.

212. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 did not have the benefit of the school's present input into primary schools, and their starting point on entering the school was below average. Standards in Year 11 are average, overall, and this represents a good level of achievement given their low attainment on entry. A strong feature of students' work in Years 10 and 11 is the amount of responsibility they take for their own learning. In a Year 10 football class, students planned and performed, effectively, a warm-up exercise that demanded good teamwork from the group. High attainers took a leading role in organising this and were able to explain the purpose of the practices clearly. All groups of students achieved well in this lesson, as they developed an increasing tactical awareness of the importance of width and depth in team play. Students make good progress from Year 10 to Year 11. In netball, Year 11 girls are given the responsibility to plan, manage and run their own scheme of work, as part of the sport education programme. Highly motivated, the students are successful in meeting the tight targets set by the teacher. They demonstrate a good warm-up and show sufficient knowledge of netball to plan and perform an attacking team strategy from a back-line pass. Initially, play is hesitant, but there is discernible improvement through practice, and students evaluate their work, perceptively, using digital video replay. The work of high attaining students in hockey is well illustrated by the Under 16 girls' team which won the Sandwell Schools' Hockey League and Championships. Standards in the practical aspects of the GCSE course are above average, but students' theoretical coursework does not reach these high standards. In a Year 11 GCSE lesson, too many students, researching the social and cultural factors affecting participation in sport, were slow to complete the tasks set. They were easily distracted, wasted time and failed to present the results of their investigation, satisfactorily, by the end of the lesson. High attaining students were insufficiently challenged.
213. The standards attained in the school's extensive extra-curricular programme are outstanding. Students of all levels of ability, particularly the gifted and talented, make very good progress in their choice of 30 sports throughout Years 7 to 13. Individual students regularly gain representative honours at district, county and regional level, while national honours have been gained in gymnastics, trampolining, athletics and table tennis. School teams achieve no less success. The Under 14 boys' football team reached the finals of the West Midlands Regional Football Championships, and three Wood Green teams qualified to compete in the 2002 National Schools' Trampoline Championships, where the Under 19 girls' team became the National Champions.
214. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, with some examples of very good teaching. Teachers have good specialist knowledge; most plan well and share the lesson's objectives with students, so that they know exactly what they are going to learn. They also indicate how the students will know whether they have achieved the learning objectives. Giving students opportunities to take some responsibility for their own learning is a feature of all lessons. Younger students successfully organise and plan their own warm-up activities. In Years 10 and 11 students are motivated by taking a significant share of responsibility through the sport education programme. This is designed to enable students to plan, manage and run their own scheme of work in a chosen sport. In netball, students assume the leadership roles of captain, coach and fitness instructor, as well as players. The students take the work very seriously, show loyalty to their group and meet

the teacher's tight deadlines. Characteristics of this very good teaching include superb organisation and preparation, a demanding pace and very good use of information and communication technology to enable the students to evaluate their work.

215. The relationship between teachers and students is very good. Students respect the high standards that teachers expect of them. This, combined with the teachers' good student management, contributes to their prompt arrival, good behaviour, standards of dress and very high levels of participation in lessons. Students are well motivated and have very good attitudes to the subject, reflected in the good physical effort they put into lessons, and their very good support for extra-curricular activities. There is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching. On occasions, opportunities are missed during the warm-up to monitor whether students are doing it correctly, and also to extend their depth of learning about the effects of exercise on the body. Similarly, opportunities for students to review their work are missed, when the teacher does the evaluation for them and the students become passive learners.
216. Excellent displays and 'word walls' enhance the physical education area, and give a good introduction to the specialist language of the subject. However, the development of literacy and numeracy in lessons is variable. The marking of GCSE theoretical coursework is regular and encouraging. However, students do not receive sufficient information to know what progress they are making, or how to improve their work. Appeals to students to complete unfinished work go unheeded. There is no evidence of the use of target setting in students' written work.
217. The department is well led and managed, ably supported by a strong, committed staff team. This has enabled the department to embrace change positively and participate in innovative curriculum development that places assessment firmly in the centre of the students' learning experience. A successful, fully inclusive programme is provided, enhanced by the school's development as a Sports College, and as a leader in the Sandwell School Sports' Co-ordinator Scheme. The accompanying strength of the department's links with primary schools, and the sporting community, provides excellent opportunities for students of all abilities to attain high standards in sport and to adopt an active lifestyle. This has been recognised by the school gaining the Sport England Sportsmark Gold Award. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are well established, and a departmental teaching policy is in place. These need to be taken further to ensure the best practice in all lessons. In the early years of having Sports College status, the focus was on improving standards of attainment in physical activities, and the success of this strategy is evident. However, a focus on improving the teaching and learning of the theoretical aspects of the subject is now required, to improve standards at GCSE, to meet the Sports College's target and bring physical education up to the standard of the rest of the school.
218. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good. The school's designation as a Sports College has brought vast improvements, from which students are benefiting, not least the promotion of students' self-esteem. Standards of attainment in practical work have risen with a significant number of students achieving very high levels of performance. GCSE results, however, have declined. The quality of teaching has improved, and teaching is now good, and often very good.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths
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- Teachers are well qualified, committed and hard working, and have a very good relationship with students.
- In Years 7 to 9 the overall quality of teaching is good and students of all attainments make good progress.
- Younger students are given opportunities to consider their own beliefs and to begin developing their own set of values.
- Class management is very good resulting in very good behaviour and a positive response to teaching.

#### Areas for improvement

- The curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory, leading to standards falling and students underachieving.
- Inadequate leadership has resulted in a lack of significant improvement in standards with long-standing weaknesses continuing, such as the variation in the quality of teaching.
- The lack of suited accommodation exacerbates difficulties in communication between teachers and the inefficient use of available resources.

219. In 2001 GCSE results in both the full and short courses were average. Girls performed better than boys. There is no observable trend over recent years due to variations in the number of candidates. The results were below the average for the school but the number of candidates was relatively small. The most recent results show a decline in standards.

220. For students in Year 9 the standard of work seen is average, reaching the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in both attainment targets. They understand some of the beliefs and practices of the religions they have studied and can correctly identify key features of Christian teaching, beliefs and festivals. A strength is their ability to express their own beliefs and understanding of a religious point of view about such issues as the purpose of life and stewardship of the environment. This results in some thoughtful and perceptive writing in both prose and verse. They are developing their own sets of values and beliefs and can express these well, especially in oral work. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. When students enter the school the standard of their knowledge and understanding varies considerably but is generally below average. Students therefore achieve good progress during this key stage. The highest attainers are challenged through open-ended tasks, and lower attainers and those with special educational needs make good progress because of sympathetic support from teachers, well-matched materials and methods and excellent co-operation between teachers and support staff. Students with English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers and in many cases contribute significantly to other students' understanding of faiths and cultures.

221. For students in Year 11 who are following the GCSE course the standard of work seen is average. They can use their knowledge of Christianity to explain what the Christian view is on a range of moral issues such as war and conflict and the care of the environment. Coursework seen is well constructed and exhibits a satisfactory level of knowledge, understanding and evaluation. Students are making satisfactory progress. The standard attained by the majority of students is below average and they make unsatisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11. The curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory for the majority of students due to lack of lessons and the design of the course, leading to standards falling. They study a range of topics such as the nature of God, medical ethics and ultimate questions

about life and death. In some lessons they gain insights into what peace can mean to different people in different situations but their written responses are brief and superficial and much of the work is uncompleted. They are failing to make gains in their knowledge and understanding from the level achieved in Year 9. Students of all attainments make similar progress.

222. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good. Virtually all lessons are taught by well-qualified and experienced specialists who plan lessons meticulously, using a range of visual and audio inputs. Relevant homework is regularly set. However, where lessons are less effective it is because these plans have not been followed and the planned pace of learning has not been maintained. In all lessons class management is very good, creating an environment in which students respect each other's views and beliefs and in which they feel safe in expressing their hopes and fears. Expectations and the demands made on students vary considerably. In general, good thought-provoking questions like "Why are we here?" evoke equally thoughtful answers but there is little challenge for students to use textbooks and other resources to research information, with most stemming from teachers or provided through relatively simple home-produced materials. A strength of the teaching is the use of quiet periods of thought sometimes enhanced by the use of music from sources such as the Taizé community. As a result of these, students gain genuine insights into their own beliefs and values. Because of this approach teaching makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, in one lesson a student said, "I felt all my worries and troubles draining away". Some classes have the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and understanding through visits to a local church and by meeting local clergy, but these opportunities are not matched by similar links with other faith communities. Occasionally ambitious and well-organised events such as simulated wedding and baptismal ceremonies add colour to teaching and are well remembered by students. Displays in the classrooms are excellent, portraying the rich diversity of religious practices. One room is extremely well equipped with information and communication technology, video and audio equipment, which the teacher uses to enhance learning but these resources are not matched in other classrooms and teachers have to use a much narrower range of teaching strategies. The marking of books is regular but most fails to offer help to students about ways in which they can improve their work.
223. For the majority of students not taking the GCSE course, standards are lower in Year 11 than they were in Year 9. The quality of teaching of these students is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Much of the teaching is done by non-specialists who have to rely mainly on the provision of learning materials which are not suitable for a teacher without a background in the subject. Consequently the responses evoked from students are superficial. The arrangements in Year 10, which mean that students receive specialist teaching for only short periods in the year, make secure factual learning and understanding virtually impossible. Plans for a GCSE course are in the early stages of development and therefore students do not see the subject as important or relevant. Despite these weaknesses occasional lessons provided by specialist teachers give students opportunities for spiritual development. In one they were offered the facility of leaving a personal prayer on a 'prayer tree', an opportunity which had been used by some. Class management is very good, resulting in very good behaviour and a co-operative attitude in most students. Marking is virtually non-existent and the end of module assessments require only brief answers. The quality of teaching experienced by students following the GCSE course is good. The course is taught by a specialist teacher who uses a wide variety of teaching styles and resources to help students of all attainments gain a secure factual knowledge and

understanding of the subject. Where groups include students of lower attainment and those with special educational needs, good support and individual attention enable them to make satisfactory progress.

224. The standard of provision for the subject is adversely affected by the quality of leadership. Whilst the systems for record keeping and formal communication are satisfactory, good teachers are being left without adequate guidance as to course content and the educational priorities for improvement in standards are not clear to them. Resources available in the department are not always efficiently and equably deployed, contributing to variations in the experience of students taught by different teachers. Whilst there is some attempt to maintain standards across the subject this rarely involves in-class observation by the subject leader. Plans for curriculum development take too long to come to fruition; for example, the review of the Key Stage 4 curriculum mentioned in the previous report has not yet resulted in satisfactory provision. These problems are not helped by the accommodation for the subject, which is widely scattered across the school.
225. Improvement in the subject provision has been unsatisfactory since the last report. The variations in the quality of teaching and standards of marking are still present. Examination results have recently declined and the number of students choosing to study the subject at GCSE level is also declining. Standards have not improved in line with those in the rest of the school.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

### *GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100	62	100	15	5.0	1.5
Chemistry	2	0	43	0	5	0	0.8
Sociology	6	17	63	0	7	0.2	1.2

### *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	15	100	87	67	43	8.4	5.8
Chemistry	12	92	90	50	43	6.7	5.9
Biology	9	78	88	0	34	3.6	5.2
Physics	9	100	88	78	40	8.9	5.7
Business studies	5	100	92	60	32	8.4	5.5
Business vocational	12	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	8.5	10.4
Computing	17	88	86	18	23	4.2	4.6
Sports studies	4	50	92	0	25	1.0	5.1
Leisure and tourism	3	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	0	10.0
Health and social care	10	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	4.8	10.8
Art and design	10	100	96	30	46	5.6	6.6
Art and design vocational	7	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	14.6	12.2
Music	1	100	93	100	35	10.0	5.7
Drama	6	100	99	0	38	4.3	6.6
Geography	6	100	92	17	38	5.7	5.7
History	15	87	88	0	35	3.5	5.5
Sociology	6	83	86	67	35	7.0	5.3



Other social studies	1	0	87	0	34	0	5.3
English literature	24	83	95	17	37	4.3	5.9
French	7	83	95	17	37	4.3	5.9
German	3	100	91	0	40	3.3	5.8
Other languages	1	100	93	0	56	6.0	6.8
General studies	26	92	85	8	30	4.0	4.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and physics but biology was also sampled. In biology, in 2001, A-level results were below average and students performed as well as they did in other subjects that they studied. One lesson was observed and teaching was good and students were achieving well. The teacher had a good knowledge of the subject and set up an interesting investigation into the correlation between the size of a holly leaf and how many prickles it has.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- The very good teaching leads to students achieving very well and gaining very good A-level results.
- The department is very well led and managed and this has ensured that standards are improving over time.
- 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.

##### Area for improvement

- The opportunities for students to develop their study skills are limited due to the inadequate range and quality of resources in the learning resource centre.

226. 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 46 students study the subject in the sixth form of whom 16 students are studying it at A-level. The school offers AS and A-level in the four areas of pure mathematics, mechanics, discrete mathematics and statistics. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have the opportunity to study further mathematics. The school also gives students the opportunity to resit their GCSE and there are currently 24 students following that course.
227. In the 2001, results were very high. Results were slightly lower in 2002, but over the last five years results are improving at a rate greater than the national trend.
228. Standards in Year 13 are well above average and this represents a very good level of achievement. The very good attitudes of students contribute well to their level of commitment in lessons. In a pure mathematics lesson, they successfully applied the skills they had learnt in calculus and they were able to progress quickly to understanding how to differentiate composite functions using the chain rule. Students worked together to compare methods and outcomes so that they learnt from each other. Very good work was seen in mechanics when students were finding moments about a point. In statistics, students can apply their understanding of the application of the normal distribution and they used it as a model for the binomial distribution to solve problems.
229. The standards of work seen in Year 12 are well above average and this represents a good 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 discrete mathematics and extend the work on statistics that they were introduced to on their GCSE mathematics course. In the methods module of the course, students have developed a good understanding of quadratic functions and they

factorise the quadratic function by completing the square. They then quickly progress to finding the roots of an equation using graphical methods.

230. Students have developed good skills in mathematics and can transfer these skills to other subjects they study. For example, in geography, students use Spearman Rank Correlation appropriately when analysing house prices. When explaining modelling in physics, students demonstrate very good understanding of statistical research techniques and this supports their understanding of radio-active decay very well. In an information and communication technology lesson on representation of numbers, the students' good understanding of number contributes well to the very good understanding and application of the binary system.
231. Teaching is very good overall and students from all ethnic backgrounds learn very well as a result. One of the best features of the teaching is the very good knowledge and understanding of teachers. These are used effectively when questioning the students, but are even more evident when the teacher answers questions asked by the students. In the better lessons, students are demanding in their quest for knowledge and explanation, and the teachers' understanding of the subject is such that they can explain principles clearly. The explanations are explicit, so that only one explanation is ever needed. This also promotes the students' confidence in and respect for their teachers. Teachers plan their lessons very well and lessons always have clear objectives. In the better lessons, teachers structure the lessons well and keep up a very brisk pace. As a result in those lessons students are highly motivated and prepared to think for themselves; they showed this when studying the properties of determinants in  $3 \times 3$  matrices. The students used information and communication technology effectively to investigate the effects of editing rows or columns.
232. Students generally 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 all are well motivated. Consequently they put in a high level of intellectual effort and acquire new knowledge expeditiously. Students are very attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in the subject. In the better lessons, the teachers conduct lessons at a stimulating pace, resulting in very rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Students are alert throughout the lesson and a very high level of concentration is maintained. In the better lessons, students generally participate very well in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteer suggestions 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, partly because there are insufficient textbooks in the library.
233. Very good use is made of homework to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. This homework is often used as a starting point for the following lesson, and students are encouraged to prepare for the next topic or section of work. 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 to those experiencing difficulties.
234. The very good teaching and learning are the results of the subject having a high quality of leadership and management with a very good perception of what is needed for students to succeed at a high level in mathematics, regardless of their background. There is a strong commitment by the whole team to improving 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. The systems for monitoring and evaluation are effective in ensuring very good teaching. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. Although the level of resources is good,

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 resources in the learning resource centre.

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

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- A-level results were above the national average in 2001 and similar in 2002.
- Teaching is lively and imaginative so that students enjoy their lessons and learn quickly.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' evaluations of their findings are not as precise and detailed as other aspects of their investigative coursework.
- The small stock of chemistry books in the learning resource centre is not sufficient to meet the needs of the large numbers of students now taking the subject.

236. The department offers courses in AS and A-level chemistry. There are 23 students taking the subject in Year 12, making chemistry one of the more popular AS subjects in the school. Almost all those who begin the AS course continue to the end of the year and take the examination. Most of these students continue with the subject in Year 13.
237. GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were above the national average. Half of the students gained the higher grades A and B and all except one gained pass grades. Overall, students gained similar results in chemistry to their results across their other subjects. Male students gained results that were well above their national average. There were only four female students so statistical analysis of their results is unreliable but these four did better in chemistry than they did on average in their other subjects. Results have improved significantly since 1999 when they were below average; there were only two candidates in 2000, too few for statistical analysis to be meaningful. Five students took A-level chemistry in 2002 and the overall results were similar to those for 2001. One student gained grade A and the others all gained C grades. In relation to their GCSE grades, students achieved well in both 2001 and 2002 and did better than might be expected.
238. Standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly in line with the national average in Year 13. These standards are not as high as those indicated by recent A-level results but still represent good achievement because this group of students entered the course with GCSE grades that were below average for students starting such a course. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics they have studied earlier in the course are secure. Their investigative skills broadly match their attainment in other aspects of their work. Students' practical skills are generally better than expected for students following this course. For example, students worked quickly and efficiently when producing and testing for aldehydes. However, students are not as skilful in writing evaluations of their findings as they are in the more practical aspects of investigative coursework.
239. Students in Year 12 are only in the first few weeks of their AS course and the standards they are achieving are broadly average for students at this stage. A few are finding it difficult to adjust to the level of work required and their recall of earlier topics is not always secure.

Nevertheless, they are learning well and making good progress in, for example, developing their understanding of the mass spectrometer and its use in finding the abundance of an isotope.

240. Teaching is good and students learn quickly as a result. Lesson planning is imaginative and activities are varied so that students are always concentrating, working hard and genuinely learning. Teachers make very good use of 'starter' activities to ensure that students are thinking hard from the beginning of the lesson. It is challenging, for example, to arrive at the lesson and immediately be asked to draw the structure of three alcohols. Both teachers expect students to be well organised and to work hard. Both encourage students to learn for themselves rather than merely to absorb information. Students appreciate the consistency of this demanding but also very supportive approach. There are few weaknesses in the lessons but occasionally there is not quite enough emphasis on the important points so that the teacher has to repeat the explanation for some students. Similarly, a valuable activity, gathering information on aldehydes, ketones and carboxylic acid, lost pace when some students spent longer than necessary on presenting their findings. Students concentrate well in lessons and have positive attitudes towards the subject. They answer questions in class but do not pose many questions of their own in order to extend their understanding.
241. Both teachers know individual students well, partly as a result of the arrangements in Years 10 and 11 where teachers teach all students at some stage in the science course. The department is very aware of students' needs and opinions. A Year 13 student mentioned a need for more tests as part of the AS course. In fact the department has already acknowledged this need and set a suitably demanding test for Year 12 at an early stage in the course. Homework is very well used to extend students' learning; teachers make particularly good use of examination questions from earlier years and projects, for example on the development of atomic theory. However, the small stock of chemistry books in the learning resource centre is not sufficient to meet the needs of the large numbers of students now taking the subject in the sixth form.
242. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of chemistry has held the post for less than a year and the other teacher only joined the A-level chemistry team this term. The teachers work well together and have a shared and innovative approach to teaching the subject. This is already a team providing teaching of consistently good quality but it has considerable potential for further improvement as the team becomes more established.
243. There were no judgements relating specifically to A-level chemistry in the previous inspection report. Therefore it is not possible to judge the progress that has been made in the subject since that time.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Students do well in the subject because the teaching is good.
- Students are very good at using mathematical and computer skills in their work.
- The subject is popular with students and numbers are rising as a result of the good leadership provided by the head of department.

### Areas for improvement

- Students are not learning their work well enough because there are not enough homework activities where this aspect is the focus.
- Not enough attention is given to detail when correcting work.

244. The school offers courses at AS and A2 level. About nine students study the subject each year, but there has been a considerable rise in numbers in the current Year 12. It is very rare for a student not to complete a course.
245. Results in the 2001 GCE A-level examinations were very high and placed the school's results in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Students gained much better results in physics than they did in the other subjects they studied. Results were not as good in 2002, although they were still above average; nevertheless students did as well as they did in their other subjects.
246. The standards of work of students currently in Years 12 and 13 are average and students are achieving well given their standards on starting the course. Students have a solid knowledge of the topics that they have studied, but frequently have difficulty in discussing their work without reference to their notes. In a lesson where students presented their research on instruments, for example, students were able to describe microscopes and cameras but did not really understand how they worked because they were not learning their work. Students' skills in mathematics and using computers are very good and these skills are used well in their work so they are able to carry out calculations very quickly and present their coursework beautifully. However, there are weaknesses in notes and some coursework in terms of attention to detail, such as missing out units or labels on graphs.
247. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and are able to respond to students' questions in great depth without having to consult textbooks. Lessons contain a good variety of activities that both interest students and allow the teacher time to provide individual support for students. Students spend a lot of time working on computers on a highly structured and well-organised course that allows them to progress at their own rate, while receiving guidance from either the software or the teacher. One slight drawback of this approach is that much of the assessment of the work is carried out by checking results on the screen. This means that students do not spend as much time on written answers in their notes so are not getting enough practice in laying out calculations or showing their working. Teachers use homework well in terms of, for example, providing practice for their coursework, but students need more encouragement to really learn their work properly.
248. The department is led and managed well. A great strength is the way that the two teachers work so well together and this has meant, for example, that the newly introduced CD-ROM based course has been introduced smoothly and successfully.
249. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. A new style of course has been introduced which, together with the impressive examination results in 2001, has led to increased popularity of the subject.

## BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies.

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

Strengths

- A-level results were very high in 2001.
- Students achieved some of their best grades as a result of the very good quality of teaching they receive.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for their subject with their students.
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent, which has led to a rise in standards.

Areas for improvement

- None.

250. The school currently offers courses at AS-level, A-level and AVCE at both advanced level and the double award. Around 40 students take up the subject in Year 12 with half the students following an AS-level course and the others AVCE. Business studies is one of the most popular subjects in the school. It is very rare for a student not to complete a course.
251. The A-level results in 2001 were very high compared with the national average and placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally; they were equally as good in 2002. In both years, all students gained pass grades. All students gained A to C grades in 2001 and the majority also in 2002. Even in relation to their good GCSE results, students, both males and females, achieved very well and did much better than might be expected. Students following the A-level course did better in business studies than they did in most of their other subjects.
252. The standard of work seen during the inspection is well above average in both Year 12 and Year 13 and students are achieving very well. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics they have studied earlier are very secure. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 have very good oracy and literacy skills and express their understanding clearly and in detail when answering spoken or written questions.
253. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very quickly as a result. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. An excellent atmosphere for learning is well established. Teachers thoroughly prepare their work. However, this does not prevent the effective use of unanticipated but productive opportunities that arise in lessons. Teachers' enthusiasm and commitment inspire students, who respond well to the challenges set for them. Teachers demonstrate authority and expertise in their subject. Over a period of time, lesson plans and students' work demonstrate that the range of methods used is varied and students are able to develop different ways of working. Assessment is very well organised. Teachers make effective comments on students' written work so that they know how well they are doing and how to further improve their work. Teaching promotes independent research, good working relationships, and the productive use of students' time.
254. There are examples of excellent teaching in both Years 12 and 13. Year 12 students actually had fun accurately balancing off the accounts at the end of a trading period. Students were keen to enter into whiteboard demonstrations of double entry book keeping. The teacher's skilful leadership of the lesson inspired the students and gave them the confidence to try without a fear of failure. In a Year 13 lesson, students were developing an e-business idea that was both innovative and creative. They were expertly led by a teacher who supported and challenged appropriately. Two groups completed their business plans and cash flow forecasts as part of a national business competition. One group were developing trainers with a vibrating inner sole to massage aches and pains away; and the other an 'AutoWriter' which used infra-red voice recognition to read writing back to you on the computer even though you are a distance away from your keyboard. Both groups had already been successful at Stage

One of the competition and were within 24 hours of submitting their plans for Stage Two with the incentive of a holiday in San Francisco if either group should win!

255. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. All staff share a common purpose of putting the students and their achievements first. The aims and values of the school are clear and equality of opportunity is emphasised strongly. Staff are well informed and committed to the school's aims. Students' achievements are evaluated regularly. Information on students' progress and achievements is accurate, accessible to all, and used effectively to improve performance. New schemes of work have been put in place for all courses. All students receive a weekly scheme of work outlining subject content and homework, which also maps the key skills for them. Assessment records are now completed every half term, showing attendance, effort, progress and attainment marks. These are always discussed with the student. Past examination questions are used throughout the course, together with mark schemes, examiners' comments and model answers. Departmental certificates are used to reward success. The focus of the department is upon achievement at the highest possible level.
256. 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 was on information and communication technology.

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

### Strengths

- Students make outstanding progress as a result of excellent teaching.
- Students gain much better results at A-level than they do in their other subjects.
- Students' practical skills are excellent.
- Standards are improving rapidly as a result of the outstanding leadership provided by the head of department.

### Areas for improvement

- None.

257. The school offers courses at AS and A-level. The courses are among the most popular in the school; there are, for example, 34 students studying in Year 12, and very few do not finish their course.
258. Results in the 2001 GCE A-level examinations were average and students performed as well as they did in their other subjects. Results in 2002 shot up, with students gaining results that were much better than in the other subjects that they studied.
259. The standards of work of students currently in Year 12 are above average and those of students in Year 13 are well above average. Students make excellent progress given their standards on entry to the sixth form. Students have a very good knowledge of the topics they have studied. In their work on programming, for example, they understand the importance of accuracy and use their knowledge to find mistakes in fairly complex programs. Their practical skills are excellent, reflecting the very high degree of confidence they have in their own abilities. Much of the coursework demonstrates a very close attention to detail, but the



analyses of both problems and solutions lack this depth. Students have a very good level of mathematical skills that are a considerable help to them in their work.

260. Teaching and learning are excellent. There are several features of teaching that are quite outstanding. A huge amount of work is frequently covered in lessons and this is helped by the way that much of the teaching is carried out on interactive whiteboards. This means that all of the teachers' notes and slides are available on the school's network for students to access so they do not have to spend time making copious notes of their own. Instead they can download the teachers' notes and edit them for their own purposes in their own time, making maximum use of the time with the teacher. This is also a good example of the approach that teachers take to their students; they provide them with a supportive framework but with a good degree of independence as to how they will work within this framework. However, teachers are always ready to intervene if a student starts to struggle. The marking, for example, is very detailed and picks up on the smallest errors made, while also pointing out where students simply are not working hard enough in their own time. The very high expectations that teachers have of their students are exemplified by the way that questioning is used in lessons. Teachers never give answers to their own questions; instead, they ask more detailed questions to tease answers from the students themselves.
261. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The amount of sharing of work that goes on between teachers is very good. Every time that a teacher produces a new lesson plan or has a new idea, the details are made available to all other teachers. The head of department has an outstanding knack of pinpointing exactly those factors that will improve the students' achievements, such as planning to make best use of the first five minutes of every lesson while students are coming from different parts of the large site.
262. The improvement in the subject has been quite phenomenal since the last inspection. This is a department that is being driven forward, where even the very best practice is questioned to see how it can be improved.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education but travel and tourism was also sampled. In 2001, only three candidates were entered and therefore it is not statistically valid to make comparisons with national averages. In the one lesson that was observed the teaching was good and students made good progress.

### Physical education

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

#### Strengths

- Standards of practical work are high.
- Low attaining students achieve well.
- Good teaching and learning enable students to make good progress.
- The Sports College ethos has had a very positive effect on students' self-esteem.

#### Area for improvement

- The analysis and use of assessment data for target setting and monitoring students' progress could be more effective.

263. The school offers courses in sport and physical education at AS and A-levels. The subject attracts a good number of students and the retention rate is generally satisfactory.

264. In the last two years, the number of students taking the examination has been too small to make valid statistical comparisons. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were low, but, in 2002, the three students who entered the examination all gained a grade, thus halting a declining trend.
265. The work seen during the inspection shows that the students currently in Year 13 are producing work of an average standard. This represents good achievement in relation to their attainment on entering the sixth form.
266. Students in Year 12 are only three weeks into the course, but are already working well. Students studying the socio-cultural and historical effects of participation in sport show a sound knowledge of the development of popular recreation. Challenged by an investigative task into sport in 19<sup>th</sup> century public schools, low attaining students struggle to understand how the rationalisation of sport occurred. High attainers confidently express their views and define the terms 'athleticism' and 'muscular Christianity'. Students' speaking and listening skills develop, satisfactorily, through opportunities to discuss their work, and making oral presentations. In an analysis of factors which improve performance, students discover for themselves the principles underlying the three lever systems involved in human movement. Although some students demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how coaches can use muscle identification to improve performance, some low attainers are slow to grasp the relationship of levers to effective performance. Most students are proficient in using information and communication technology and use these skills, effectively, in recording their personal fitness projects.
267. In Year 13, students continue to achieve well. The majority of students understand the term 'self-concept' and its relationship to an individual's self-esteem. In a lesson on the role of the media in the development of sport, students' responses to the teacher's questions showed a developing understanding of the pros and cons of the media's impact on sport and elite performance. They can distinguish between different styles of reporting, and work, effectively, with others in small groups to write an article in the style of the tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. The quality of written coursework varies, reflecting the different levels of attainment. Students make appropriate use of information and communication technology in their coursework.
268. It was not possible to observe any practical work during the inspection, but all indications are that standards are high. This is well illustrated by the girls' Under 19 trampolining team which recently won the National Schools' Trampoline Championships, and the boys' Under 19 football team, which is currently the holder of the Walsall Schools' Cup. Individual students regularly gain district and county representative honours in a range of sports.
269. The quality of teaching is good, and all groups of students learn well as a result. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, and the students respond well to good-humoured encouragement. They are well motivated, reflected in their very good behaviour and attitudes, attendance and promptness to lessons. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, and effective teaching promotes good learning through lively, well-paced and demanding lessons. The teachers' enthusiasm stimulates students to extend the depth and breadth of their learning through reflection, formulating new ideas and presenting convincing arguments to support their views. This was well illustrated in a lesson focused on the media's use of sensationalism in sport, where searching questioning challenged students' thinking. Although tentative in putting forward their ideas in front of their peers, students respond positively, consolidating their learning and applying what they had already learned to new work. Skilful questioning is used well in all lessons, but the teachers need to be more

demanding in raising expectations of the quality of students' oral responses and the appropriate use of the specialist language of the subject. Planning is very good, and a wide range of teaching strategies ensures that students become fully engaged in active learning. Teachers set a brisk pace, but when students are allowed to set their own pace, both pace and progress slows. In the best lessons, teachers use clearly defined targets to ensure a demanding pace of learning throughout.

270. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Raising standards of attainment and achievement in the academic courses has been identified as a priority in the department's improvement plan. Monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are already in place and beginning to have an impact, as seen in the good, and often very good, quality of teaching. More emphasis is required on the analysis and use of assessment data to set individual targets and to monitor students' progress. This is particularly important because students enter the sixth form with lower attainment than is often the case. Physical education also adds to the enrichment of the sixth form curriculum through the opportunity to study for the Community Sports' Leadership Award. Many take advantage of the extensive opportunities available to play an active leadership role in sport in local primary schools and community activities. Students also help in some lessons, such as helping younger students with special educational needs and co-ordination difficulties to improve their ball skills and work as a team.
271. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Although there are no A-level results to compare with at the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment in practical work have risen significantly through the opportunities offered by the Sports College. The quality of teaching has improved, and is now consistently good.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on health and social care.

### Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for health and social care with their students.
- Planning to meet individual needs is effective.
- Students work hard; their notes are detailed and their files well organised; this provides a secure base for further study and revision.
- There is very good development of attitudes and skills to best prepare students for further study or the world of work.

#### Areas for improvement

- Increase the resources in the department, particularly for the AVCE optional units.
- Encourage more boys to take health and social care.
- Continue to monitor and thereby improve retention rates in the subject.

272. The department offers courses in health and social care in Years 10 and 11 as well as in the sixth form. In Years 12 and 13, there are 25 students currently following a double award advanced vocational certificate of education. There are no male students in Year 13 and only one in Year 12.
273. The advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) results in 2001 were well below the national standards overall. However, over the past three years the course has always had students achieving at the highest level, that is, distinction. In 2000, the majority achieved distinctions, less so in 2001 but all achieved well in relation to their GCSE results. Retention rates are variable; the economic necessity to find full-time employment means that health and social care students often leave before completing all the necessary units. However, no students who complete the course fail to achieve at least a pass certificate. All students are successful in achieving their higher education or employment goals.
274. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Years 12 and 13 and students are achieving well. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics currently being studied are secure. Students in Year 12 are only in the first few weeks of their course but already their standard of work is slightly above average. Year 13 students have secure subject knowledge and demonstrated advanced speaking and listening skills, whilst Year 12 students are beginning to express themselves clearly when evaluating their findings. Students could talk in a confident and knowledgeable manner about the evidence in their files.
275. Teaching is good and students learn quickly as a result. Teachers have good subject knowledge and genuine enthusiasm. Students value the good teaching they receive and enjoy the different styles of their teachers. Teachers make particularly good use of questioning as the lesson goes along to ensure that students fully understand what they have been taught so far. Students' work is marked in detail so that they know how their answers could be improved. Students respond by working hard; their notes are detailed and their files well organised, providing a valuable basis for further study and revision. Teachers prepare students well for examinations and, even in the early stages of Year 12, students are required

to judge the quality of various possible examination answers in order to extend their understanding of precisely what the questions require.

276. There are occasional examples of very good teaching. In a Year 13 lesson, students had to debate cohabitation as part of Unit 14 'The family and social trends'. The teacher shrewdly chose to put the students into characters that would best stimulate discussion. Characters chosen all ensured that students had to fully identify with, and think about, a particular role. Equally, they had to be able to argue their debate in a coherent and persuasive manner. Skilful leadership of the lesson ensured that all students fully participated although no scripts were allowed! The ensuing debate was lively, informative and well thought out, and students were able to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a motivating and challenging manner. Year 13 students also organise and oversee the 'Virtual Baby' scheme for Year 10 students to introduce them to the responsibilities of parenthood.
277. The leadership and management of the department are good. The relatively new head of department is already providing effective support and guidance to both staff and students alike. She has undertaken a complete revision and reorganisation of departmental documentation and procedures. Schemes of work have been revised and differentiated; a monitoring policy and a new system of tracking and recording students' results have been introduced.
278. There were no specific references to health and social care in the previous report hence it is not possible to assess progress since the previous inspection.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design and drama but music was also sampled. In 2001, only one candidate was entered for music and he gained the very highest grade. In the two lessons that were observed the teaching was satisfactory and students made satisfactory progress.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- Students' progress is underpinned by good quality assessment.
- Project briefs are thoughtfully formulated and teachers carefully plan for the vocational elements of AVCE work.
- Students can make fluent, high quality abstract paintings.

#### Areas for improvement

- The poor ceramic provision prevents students developing advanced level skills and knowledge of ceramic processes.
- Students' ability to analyse, interpret, and evaluate art needs further development.
- The lack of cultural reference materials in the learning and resource centre means that students are not sufficiently aware of the cultural and contextual meaning of the art they study.

279. The school offers AS, A-level and both double and single award AVCE courses in art and design and the number of students on these courses is growing each year. Students rarely drop out of these courses and most students make good progress on to higher education. The double award AVCE has been successful in helping some students gain a direct entry to a college degree course.

280. Results at A-level were below average in 2001. Students have not normally attained high grades in A-level art until this year when a good proportion of students reached top grades. Students' achievement in AS and A-level generally matches their previous attainment at GCSE, indicating at least satisfactory progress through the course. Over recent years GNVQ results were average but standards in this vocational area have improved. AVCE results in 2001 were above average.
281. The standard of work seen during the inspection was average overall with a wide range of attainment from students working at distinction and A grade level to others who required considerable support. Students achieve well overall. Standards of analysis and investigation of colour, form and pattern in A-level groups are good in Year 12. Students research independently with enthusiasm and when they are able to access digital media they use cameras and software with confidence. One student produced information and communication technology based art that made a delicate and high quality exhibit in the school's exhibition at a local gallery. The art department's fragmentation on two sites constrains access to information and communication technology as two rooms on one site have no provision. This particularly affects one large AVCE group. Students make good use of photocopies of objects and their own work to develop their ideas. Students at A-level last year were able to express their visual ideas fluently and impressively in the form of beautifully painted large-scale abstract works.
282. Drawing skills are emphasised strongly in A-level groups and a variety of styles and techniques were being explored successfully in Year 12. Students are developing a sound vocational dimension to their AVCE courses and they have a satisfactory understanding of professional practice and the way it relates to their work. The poor provision of ceramic resources is affecting the standards of the Year 12 AVCE course. This unit is well devised and students' knowledge of ceramic industrial processes is blended successfully with an opportunity to create ceramic form. However, the ceramic studio is in a hazardous state and is poorly managed. The lack of provision prevents students developing advanced level skills and knowledge of ceramic processes. Students' knowledge of artists' work is sound but their ability to analyse, interpret, and evaluate art forms is weak. A lot of time is spent on copying the form of artworks but students are not sufficiently aware of the cultural and contextual meaning of the art they study. This is the case across both A-level and AVCE courses, but in certain units in vocational courses, students' research does not include consideration of the cultural context of their design ideas. This lack of cultural reference materials in the learning and resource centre resulted in one group of students relying on their memory alone, resulting in predictable design ideas.
283. Teaching and learning are good overall with particular strengths in the assessment of students' learning. Teachers assess students accurately, in line with course requirements, and give them good, helpful feedback in lessons. Good planning ensures that individual needs are met. Teachers work hard to provide all students with a good level of guidance and support for their work. Staff track students' marks and examination results and use this information to improve standards. Project briefs are thoughtfully formulated and teachers carefully plan for the vocational elements of AVCE. Teachers' demonstrations are clear. Relationships are warm and the studio ethos is relaxed and generally productive. Pace in some lessons is very good but in others, particularly in the Year 13 AVCE group, students' productivity is too low and staff should challenge students' thinking more rigorously. Teachers should plan to provide more opportunities to develop students' evaluative skills and challenge them to consider meaning, ideas and the significance of imagery. This lack of interpretative and reflective skill in the sixth form is a direct result of this aspect of learning being underdeveloped in preceding years.

284. The subject led and managed well. The head of department promotes the post-16 aspect of the department successfully and numbers are growing; standards are rising in vocational studies and at A-level they are improving this year. Sixth form students' understanding of professional practice benefits from the excellent relationship between the school and the local art gallery. Several students played a leading role in setting up the school's very good exhibition at the gallery. Analysis of data and development planning has satisfactorily supported the department's growth in recent years. Course management is strong and responsive to staffing and student needs. The management of four staff teaching separate AVCE units is working well but needs to be monitored to maintain coherence of approach. Resource provision and its effective use must be urgently improved to support the increasing numbers of students working at advanced level.
285. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

## Drama

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good and the teacher's comprehensive knowledge of the subject enables him to help students improve their performance.
- Students' attitudes to work are very good: they try hard in practical sessions and learn rapidly.
- Numbers opting for A-level drama are increasing and this widens the scope of practical work.

### Areas for improvement

- Results at A-level, which are well below the national average.
- Attainment in the written components of the syllabus, which is not as good as attainment in practical work.

286. The school offers courses at AS and A-levels. Numbers taking the subject have been low but are increasing rapidly. This widens the scope of what can be done in practical sessions. Few higher attaining students select drama and this partly explains why results have been well below average. It is very rare for a student not to complete the course.
287. The A-level results in 2001 were well below the national average. Caution should be taken when making comparisons because only six took the course. All students gained a pass grade, though none at the highest grades A and B. However, most students achieved a grade higher than anticipated and gained their best grade in drama. This represents good achievement. The results of male and female students were similar. In 2002, results were better. All students gained a pass grade, with a quarter getting the higher grade B. Nearly all students achieved the expected grade, with male students doing better than female students. These students significantly improved on their performance in the 2001 AS-level examination and achieved well. Students did less well in the written than in the practical aspects of drama. The teacher, in only his second year at the school, is planning, therefore, to give greater emphasis to theory work this year.
288. Standards of practical work seen during the inspection are below average in Year 12, but average in Year 13 and students achieve well. No assessed writing was seen because Year 12 have just begun the course and the Year 13 work has been sent to the examination board. It was possible to scrutinise students' notes, which were carefully set out and marked regularly. In Year 13, students work very well together, both in pairs and as a whole class. They use gesture and facial expression to good effect and are not afraid of the silence that arises from a pause. They enter a role quickly and sustain it convincingly. Collectively, they create a

tangible atmosphere, as in the scene on domestic violence, and hold a position, remaining motionless for several minutes. They use their imaginations well, as in a warm-up session where students recalled an incident from childhood, which really scared them, and re-created it in mime. They make lively contributions in evaluating others' performance and often develop their ideas well. A few, however, lack the vocabulary to express more sophisticated ideas but are confident in expressing an opinion.

289. Students in Year 12 are only four weeks into the course. Several lack the confidence, seen in Year 13 students, to take risks, especially the significant minority who did not take drama for GCSE. The few higher attaining students read script extracts from Strindberg's *Miss Julie* with clarity and expression, but others are more hesitant and find it difficult to read from a script and enact a scene at the same time. All, however, try hard to succeed. They concentrate well in the warm-up activities and learn that the way we respond with utterances, such as "I'm alright", depends on the situation we are in. In paired work, students help each other, respecting the other's views. They respond well to constructive criticism and this improves their standards. Most join in discussions on others' performances, but are still learning the language of drama at this level, which will help them to convey their thoughts more effectively.
290. Teaching and learning in drama are consistently good. They are a strength in practical lessons. The teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of the practical aspects of drama and this enables him to model moves expertly. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, male students moved their feet unnecessarily instead of remaining still and conveyed a false impression to the audience. Through careful explanation and demonstration, the teacher enabled students to improve their performance. Lessons are well structured with a starter activity to immediately engage students' interest. For example, in a very good Year 13 lesson, work began in the corridor with students entering the room in slow motion. This made students concentrate, control body movement, use space cautiously and co-operate with one another, all important drama skills. Students' learning in this activity had a positive effect on subsequent work. Relationships are excellent. Students readily accept the teacher's criticism and that of fellow students. They work hard, extending themselves both emotionally and physically. Students' attitudes to their work are very good. Another strength of teaching is the opportunities given for students to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' practical tasks. This leads to significant improvement in performance. For example, a scene on domestic violence practised by Year 13 in midweek was much more effective in its final performance before an audience of teachers and students, on the last day of the inspection.
291. The subject is well managed and made a substantial contribution to the Artsmark Gold award achieved in 2001. The teacher's enthusiasm is leading more Year 11 students to choose drama at post-16. This year, in Years 12 and 13, the numbers are the highest yet. In 2002, a lower attaining student gained a high grade and was the first student from the school to enter drama school. The teacher's analysis of results shows attainment in written work is a weakness and plans are in place to rectify this. This is particularly important since many of the drama students find written expression difficult. Extra-curricular drama enhances overall provision. For example, Year 13 students run the Year 7 drama club, which is well attended and enjoyed by all.
292. It is not possible to judge improvement since the last inspection because little mention was made of drama in the report, but numbers choosing drama at post-16 are much greater in 2002 and the subject has a much higher profile in the college. This, together with the teacher's expertise and enthusiasm, and the students' very positive attitudes, indicates that the capacity for further improvement is good.



## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and history.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- GCE A-level results in 2001 were above average.
- The quality of teaching is very good and results in students achieving very well.
- Students make very good use of their mathematical knowledge to produce good quality coursework.

#### Area for improvement

- Improve the quality of students' work by developing their oral and writing skills.

293. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were above the national average with students achieving better in geography than they did in the other subjects that they studied. Females attained higher than males did. The most recent results show a fall from the previous average results due to staffing issues that have subsequently been resolved. Few students fail to complete the course.
294. The standards of work seen during the inspection are average in both Year 12 and Year 13. This represents very good achievement given students' standards on entry to the course. Students have a foundation of knowledge for AS and A-level work, such as when they use knowledge from the GCSE course to consolidate their understanding of weather charts of depressions. Students in Year 12, for example, observed changes in temperature, precipitation and wind direction in order to plot the position of fronts. They did this successfully, describing and accounting for the changes in the pattern as the depression progressed. Students know about global issues such as the development of countries. They understand, for example, how religion affects a country's attitude to population control but they do not develop answers in enough detail or make use of examples. Students in Year 13 understand how leisure and tourism facilities are classified but are insecure in range and depth of their knowledge and are too reliant on the teacher for guidance. Students are competent in collecting data and using equations to evaluate hypotheses, and when using computers to present coursework.
295. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the course requirements and explanations are very clear. Students in Year 12, for example, made rapid gains in knowledge about weather patterns because the teacher explained the concepts well and this enabled students to work independently to map and explain changes observed. Many students lack self-confidence in oral work, but, by careful lesson planning, teachers have adopted strategies to engage them in group work, leading to active participation with the result that very good progress is made. In some lessons, however, the pace of learning is slow because students rely on the teacher too much and are not challenged enough.
296. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is effective in regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and guidance is given to ensure that high standards are maintained. Students' progress is regularly assessed and detailed evaluation of their work informs well about standards achieved and how to improve. The curriculum is enhanced by fieldwork and many students show initiative in independently organising study arrangements. Year 13 students, for example, planned and conducted

research in Dorset as part of their coursework submission. This enhanced their self-confidence and improved their knowledge of the region's physical and human environment.

297. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection in raising the achievement at GCE A-level from well below average to above average in 2001.

## History

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

### Strengths

- Teachers have a very good working relationship with their students.
- Students feel well supported and have confidence in their teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Sixth form provision in the learning resource centre is limited and is not readily accessible for students during their private study.
- Information and communication technology is seldom used as a learning tool in history.

298. The school offers courses at AS and A-level in history. Numbers of students following the subject in Year 12 vary greatly each year; however, students who begin the course generally go on to complete the course.

299. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were below the national average. Results in 2002 are likely to compare more favourably. No students have achieved the highest grades in recent years although most achieved a pass grade. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. Students were successfully entered for the AS examination in 2001. The majority of students who followed the course in Year 12 have chosen to continue into Year 13.

300. The standards of work seen during the inspection are average in both Year 12 and Year 13 when compared with other students at a similar stage in their course and their achievement is satisfactory. Students' knowledge and understanding of the British history topics is clear, building on information from earlier years. They give a clear account of the Agrarian Revolution and have made the link with the growth of industrial towns. They give clear reasons for the fall in the death rate and recognise the need for reliable statistics. They can explain the growth of poverty and discuss the relative merits of the different methods of poor relief. Higher attaining students identify the influence of the philosophies of the early reformers and economists in government actions of the time. Understanding of European history is less secure. They have a clear picture of the events surrounding the French Revolution and its aftermath and recognise the main forces behind the activities; however, responses about the relative importance of these influences are uncertain. They use sources readily to obtain information, though there is little evidence of evaluation of the source itself.

301. Independent research is thorough in their coursework and students demonstrate an independence and depth of understanding that is not readily evident in their other work. Writing is well organised and the line of enquiry is clearly addressed. They make their own judgements and higher attaining students ensure that they support these with evidence.

302. Students in Year 12 have only recently begun the AS-level course, but they demonstrate independent thought and willingness to challenge and initiate discussion. The achievement of these students is satisfactory and they are making the transition from GCSE to A-level well. They are conscientious in their written work and well motivated. Organisation in their note

making is weak and there is insufficient focus in their reading. This reduces the reinforcement, which would support recall, and would enable them to gain confidence and to move on to a greater depth of understanding. Where they are supported in this organisation, when undertaking their coursework, they achieve a high standard.

303. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this supports clear explanation, and thus students' understanding. Lessons are clearly planned and where excellent teaching was seen a variety of learning strategies were used to ensure the students became active participators in their learning. Here the students' concentration and intellectual effort increased significantly. Where students in Year12 were encouraged to be critical of model answers they demonstrated high expectations and recognition of the need to exemplify and to focus on the question. Where teaching becomes too teacher-centred, and short question and answer methods alone are used to include students, they become passive receivers of information rather than enquiring analysers of the past. Students achieve most when they became responsible for their learning, and when they investigate a question rather than receive information.
304. Students attend a lecture at Birmingham University and this provides a good opportunity to identify with other sixth form students and to benefit from the experience. The department has compiled a collection of books to support the sixth form in their individual study, some of which belong to the staff themselves. These are kept within the history base for individual loan and access is by arrangement. The school learning resource centre, however, has not been developed to support the students' private study time or to encourage wider reading through the use of a range of attractive books. Preparatory reading for the lesson, set as homework, lacks focus. As a result students read with little incentive to analyse what they read. There is insufficient support for students as independent learners and their study skills are undeveloped. Information and communication technology is not generally used as a learning aid and there are very few opportunities for students to undertake the first-hand investigations of historical sites that would develop understanding.
305. Students have confidence in their teachers and feel well supported. They enjoy their work and concentrate well in class. Small groups ensure that students are well known to the staff and their progress is monitored using the full range of previous results in order to identify possible achievement. Numbers choosing to follow the course are affected by timetable constraints and the department is seeking to develop consortium arrangements with other schools in order to extend the opportunities to study history. The department is well managed and teachers are committed to the success of their students. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature and German, but French was also sampled. In 2001, the A-level results in French were very low compared to the national average. In the two lessons that were observed the teaching was satisfactory and students made satisfactory progress. Standards of attainment were well below average in both lessons.

### English literature

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

#### Strengths

- Many students have acquired good skills in conducting research using the Internet.
- Teachers possess a good knowledge of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Many students have a narrow attitude to the subject and tend to read only a minimum.
- Resources in some lessons are inadequate and this restricts students' progress.
- Teaching strategies at present do not ensure that students of all abilities are suitably challenged.

306. In 2001, GCE A-level results were well below the national average. 2001 results were consistent with the results obtained since 1998. Results obtained in 2002 were similar to those obtained in 2001.
307. English has been a popular choice for A-level. In 2002 the number of students choosing the subject has increased dramatically, an important reason being the good results achieved in GCSE English literature. Most students who start a course in English complete it.
308. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards currently being attained in Year 13 are well below the national expectation. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, this represents satisfactory achievement. However, the prior attainment of the Year 12 students who have recently started their AS course is higher than it was for corresponding groups in the recent past. In consequence, their attainment is higher, being just below the national expectation.
309. Most students are reasonably articulate when they are responding to direct questions, though many of them are reticent in the normal classroom situation. Even so, they work co-operatively in groups and are willing to share ideas with other students and teachers. Many have acquired good skills in conducting research using the Internet. These skills were used to advantage to find out about the social and historical background to Shakespeare and other aids to study, such as a summary of the contents of each scene in *Hamlet*. Many students write lengthy, well-organised essays on such topics as what can be learnt of the standard of morality in London during the Restoration based upon a study of William Wycherly's *The Country Wife*. Higher attainers can make some evaluation of what they read. Middle attainers usually write most successfully about the presentation of character and social issues. The work of lower attainers tends to be poorly organised and contain a number of elementary errors. Whilst some students have literary interests of their own, such students are in the minority. Many adopt a narrow approach to reading and lack enthusiasm for it. Some consequence of this is that they lack an understanding of the context of the literature they are studying, have only a limited basis on which to make comparisons and are less confident than they might be in judging the quality of what they read.
310. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. When teaching is most effective, the teacher possesses good subject knowledge and this arouses the interest of students. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson on Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The teacher's careful analysis of the main themes of the novel, followed by a clear explanation of how she wanted students to explore particular ideas in greater depth, provided the lesson with a good sense of purpose. Well-chosen resources stimulate discussion and increase students' understanding, as was the case when students were able to watch an extract from a video of *Twelfth Night* as they were studying the text of the play. Relationships between students and teachers are very good and this creates an atmosphere of co-operation.
311. When teaching is less effective, teachers' planning did not take sufficient account of the wide range of ability, with the consequence that all students were not appropriately challenged.
312. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision of how standards might be raised and she is well supported

by her colleagues. As part of the process of raising standards, consideration might be given to the following: how to raise the overall effectiveness of the teaching; improving resources; a more thorough use of assessment to ensure that teaching is planned in such a way that all students are suitably challenged; and encouraging students to read more widely and with greater enthusiasm.

313. As there were no discrete judgements made about the subject at post-16 level at the time of the previous report, it is not possible to fully comment on progress since then. However, A-level results in 2001 were similar to those at the time of the previous report.

## German

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

### Strengths

- Students improve the quality of their spoken work during the course.
- Students enjoy the lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Students do not read extensively and have limited access to resources outside the classroom.
- Students are not well enough prepared for the demands of the extended writing elements of the examination.

314. The number of candidates entered for the GCE A-level examination in 2001 and 2002 was too low to allow statistical comparisons to be made. Students performed as well as would be expected given their results in the GCSE.
315. Standards are below the national average overall in both Years 12 and 13 but the numbers of students involved is very small. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that students in the current cohort are also attaining similar standards; their performance is in line with what would be expected given their GCSE grades. The achievement of students is satisfactory. Students in Year 13 understand discussions in German on topics such as the effects of alcohol on young people but they find it difficult to give their own opinions. In Year 12, when students have only just begun the course, they cover less complex topics such as the role of the education system in Germany and issues to do with stereotyping. They are able to discuss these matters but do not always develop their arguments well. By the end of Year 12 their spoken language is satisfactory; sometimes it lacks accuracy and fluency because few have spent time abroad. They rely on their contact with the foreign language assistant to develop their spoken skills.
316. Students produce written work in which they express their ideas in fairly simple language and although their basic grammar is usually correct they often struggle with expressing themselves in a more sophisticated manner or at any length.
317. Students have good attitudes and are willing to work hard during lessons but they do not always have access to the resources they need, such as extra reading and listening materials, to enable them to make progress outside the classroom. Students are given some difficult texts to work on in class and persevere until they understand but they do not have many opportunities to update their knowledge of current events affecting Germany. Students do not often work on materials at home in preparation for the lesson. To improve listening skills, students are given some materials to use at home but these are mostly limited to those linked to the textbooks. There is little access to foreign television channels or video material and many students claim that they find listening to the foreign language difficult.

318. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A very positive feature is the high quality of the relationships between staff and students; students feel that the lessons are interesting and varied and as a consequence they work hard, although they do less in their own time than they could. In Year 12, there is an appropriate emphasis on reinforcing key grammatical points and new vocabulary at the beginning of the course. This means that most students can write more accurately as they progress through the course; however, much time is spent revising areas that have been covered at GCSE without moving students on quickly enough. The marking of written work is generally good; errors are signalled and suggestions are made to students about how they might improve content. Teachers use resources that are accessible to students but this is sometimes at the expense of more authentic texts that challenge students in the way required by the examination. Teachers offer freely of their time outside lessons to help with problems that students may have and this enables students to make better progress. There is some work done during lessons on listening to tapes but teachers too often resort to English during lessons and so opportunities are missed to allow students to hear German used at a higher level.
319. Little information and communication technology is used during lessons but students are encouraged to use the Internet in their free time to research topics and extend their knowledge. Students use dictionaries and other reference materials well when told to do so but they have difficulty referring to notes they have made on grammar, for example, because they do not always file their work carefully.
320. The leadership and management of the sixth form course are satisfactory; the newly appointed head of department is making improvements to both the content of the course and the access to resources, and has planned for staff to receive training on the requirements of the examination. There are also plans to co-ordinate the work of the four staff who teach German at A-level to ensure consistency of approach. The provision is similar to that at the last inspection and progress has been satisfactory.