

INSPECTION REPORT

Dame Elizabeth Cadbury Technology College

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103494

Headteacher: Mrs L Brooman

Reporting inspector: Mr J W Ashton
4492

Dates of inspection: 30 September - 3 October 2002

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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 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr A I Rae
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

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13459	Eva Mills	Lay inspector	Community links	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
5910	Peter Fletcher	Team inspector	Mathematics (including post 16)	
32258	Nell Banfield	Team inspector	English	
20380	Neville Pinkney	Team inspector	Science	
31096	John Thornhill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art and design Citizenship	
23418	Roger Yates	Team inspector	Design and technology	
17331	Nigel Pett	Team inspector	Geography	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development
19309	Keith Stubbs	Team inspector	History Religious education	

4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music	
31821	Brian McCann	Team inspector	Physical education Sociology (post 16 only)	
20081	Scott Fellows	Team inspector	Special educational needs Special educational needs assessment English as an additional language Educational inclusion	
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Business studies (including post 16)	
2741	Chris Glynn	Team inspector	Drama	
27201	Clive Ashworth	Team inspector	English (post 16 only)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Dame Elizabeth Cadbury Technology College is a small 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school on the Bournville estate in the South West of Birmingham. It draws pupils from much wider than its immediate locality, including pupils with moderate learning difficulties and speech and communication disorders, into its Curriculum Support Centre. The school has pupils from across the whole attainment range, but overall levels of attainment are below average on entry to the school. A well above average proportion, over one third, of the pupils is eligible for free school meals. A well above average proportion, one in eight pupils, has statements of special educational needs. Just under one quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, largely African Caribbean and Asian heritages. There are currently no pupils whose command of spoken English is at an early stage of development. Boys outnumber girls by a ratio of three to two. Increasing numbers of students, 78 students at present, attend the widening range of sixth form courses. In some cases, students join sixth form classes at the nearby Bournville School.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very friendly, welcoming and inclusive school with many other very good features. Standards are improving. Teaching is consistently good and much of it is very good. The school is very well led. It provides satisfactory value for the monies it receives.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in the light of their prior attainment, especially in English;
- Compared to similar schools, overall levels of attainment are well above average at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11;
- Overall attainment is rising faster than the national average;
- Above average proportions of pupils achieved A* to G grades at GCSE in 2001;
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and much improved since the last inspection;
- The school is very well led, especially by its headteacher;
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good;
- Links with the community are very extensive and very productive;
- Support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good;
- All pupils are cared for and supported well, expectations are high that they will work hard;
- The school is developing and broadening well its curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 and in its sixth form;
- Provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good.

What could be improved

- Provision for both modern foreign languages and geography is unsatisfactory;
- Although teaching and learning are good overall, and much improved since the last inspection, there is some which needs improving further;
- The current length and structure of the school day restrict pupils' learning;
- Inadequacies in accommodation are being exacerbated by rising numbers;
- Provision for pupils with English as an additional language needs rationalising;
- The positive picture of SEN provision is threatened by the disproportionately high numbers of pupils with special needs now being directed to the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998, since when it has made good improvements in almost all of the issues identified at that time. In particular:

- The attainment of pupils has improved overall, including in music, history, religious education and physical education;
- The quality of teaching and learning in religious education, mathematics, music, physical education and history have all been significantly improved, by raising expectations and improving pupil management;
- Pupil attendance is much improved (by a creditable five percentage points);
- Legal requirements are now met for information and communication technology, physical education and for religious education in Years 10 and 11;
- However, provision for geography, and for religious education in the sixth form, remains unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9, Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in National Tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
End of Key Stage 3 tests	E	E	E	A
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	B
A-levels/AS-levels			E	

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Overall levels of attainment on entry to the school are consistently well below average in the core subjects English, mathematics and science.

The school's improvement in overall national test results by the end of Year 9 is faster than the national trend, especially in English. The proportions of pupils attaining the expected level 5 and above in the national tests in 2001 improved to such an extent that they matched the national average in English, but remained well below average in mathematics and science. Compared to the results for similar schools these results are well above average for English and above average for mathematics and science.

Overall GCSE results have improved over the last five years in line with results nationally. They remain well below average overall, but are above average compared to similar schools.

Average point scores for the small numbers of sixth form students taking A and AS levels remain well below average but have improved significantly over the last two years.

The school adds value to pupils' initial attainment during each key stage, particularly in English, design and technology, music and physical education in Years 7 to 9, and in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and drama in Years 10 and 11.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and work hard. However, the attention of some pupils wanes towards the ends of the rather long lessons of 70 minutes duration and when this happens some pupils lose interest and become disengaged.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour, in lessons and around the school, is almost always good. Around school, behaviour is occasionally boisterous but mostly good-natured. Permanent exclusions from the school are very rare. The number of fixed rate exclusions is low in comparison with other schools and much lower than at the time of the last inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Positive working relationships are a strong component of the school. Pupils of different ages, attainment, gender and ethnic background work and socialise well together.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are close to the national average. Rates of unexplained or unauthorised absence are low and punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching and learning in well over nine in every ten of the 155 lessons seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory. In almost seven out of every ten lessons it was at least good, and in two out of every ten lessons it was very good. The teaching in one lesson was excellent. There was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching but in not one single lesson was it either poor or very poor.

The excellent teaching and learning was in a design and technology lesson with a class of Year 7 pupils. Other very good teaching was seen in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, art and design, music, physical education, business studies, sociology and in personal social and health education. There was good teaching in every subject. The teaching of literacy is good overall. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall, but with room for improvement.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and is becoming increasingly more relevant, especially in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Too many pupils fail to receive their entitlement to a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	Provision for pupils with SEN is good. They benefit greatly from the small teaching groups in the Curriculum Support Centre. Good teaching of mainstream SEN groups is complemented by high quality support staff.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)	Provision for pupils with EAL is satisfactory but with room for improvement in some respects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual provision is satisfactory, better than it was at the last inspection. Pupils still do not experience a daily act of collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils. It is a safe and secure place and demands higher and higher levels of achievement from them.

The school works well with parents and is constantly striving to improve further its partnership with them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the senior team, especially that of the headteacher is very good. Pastoral leadership is very good. Subject areas are well led and managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The school is well governed, overall. Governors are fully aware of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school and are actively involved in curricular, staffing and legal issues to do with the efficient running of the school. There are one or two legal matters which need attention.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance very effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well in the main. The school exercises well the principles of best value.

There are sufficient teaching staff to deliver the National Curriculum, except in modern foreign languages. Non teaching staff are in good supply and play a key role in the smooth running of the school. Learning resources are much improved recently, especially since the acquisition of technology college status. Aspects of the accommodation are still inadequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>A very large majority of parents believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school is well led;• The quality of teaching is good;• Their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress in the school;• Behaviour is good and their children like coming to school.	<p>Areas about which a few parents have reservations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework provided;• The amount of information provided by the school on their children's progress;• The range of extra-curricular activities provided.

Inspectors agree with these positive views. In response to parents' concerns; inspectors found homework to be sufficient and relevant, information to be satisfactory and the provision of extra-curricular activities, including visits out of school, to be good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this small 11-18 comprehensive school has 78 students, a significant increase since the previous inspection. It has broadened its provision considerably in recent years, partly by offering more vocational courses but also by strengthening the link with a neighbouring school at sixth form level. The proportion of students from Year 11 who continue into the sixth form varies from year to year – in 2002 it was 58 per cent, the highest proportion ever. A further 6 students joined from other schools. GCSE results in 2002 were considerably better than in previous years but still likely to be below the national average overall. Consequently few students take just AS or A level courses, preferring instead to take a mixture of AS and vocational courses. Numbers of male and female students are fairly even, and minority ethnic groups are well represented on the courses. Few students have special educational needs but these admit to being well supported.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is becoming increasingly effective in meeting the needs of its students. It is cost effective in financial terms. Student's achievement is variable from subject to subject, reflecting their differing attainment levels on entry to the courses and the differing amounts of added value by the end of their courses. The quality of teaching is good, and much of it is very good. Leadership is energetic and effective.

Strengths

- Numbers are healthy and rising and curricular opportunities are widening;
- Links with a neighbouring sixth form enable the school to offer a wider range of courses than would otherwise be the case;
- Teaching is consistently good and some of it is very good. Teachers have very good command of their subjects and they use an imaginative and effective range of teaching and learning approaches which enrich learning;
- Sixth form students have very positive attitudes to their work. They show a high level of maturity and take a responsible approach to their study;
- Leadership of the sixth form is good; development planning a strength;
- Students in the sixth form are well supported by tutors who know them well and ensure that their individual needs are met.

What could be improved

- Lines of communication with the school's sixth form partner need improving in order to provide a more coherent joint provision;
- Study facilities, especially access to ICT, are in need of improvement;
- Legal requirements for religious education are not fully met.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. There is good teaching from knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers. Students are committed and are making good progress. Effective use of ICT is taking place. Sustained success at A level has not yet been demonstrated. Recruitment and retention of students on A level courses is low.
Biology	Good. Teaching is very good and the resultant learning very secure as a result. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and are developing well their ability to research a topic and present it effectively to their colleagues. Both teachers and students make very good use of ICT. The subject is very well led and managed. Success in external examinations is variable from year to year.
Business Studies	Satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good. There are good relationships between teachers and students. Good use is made of ICT. A more consistent policy on matching work to individual student's needs is required. More extension work is needed for the higher attaining students. Insufficient visits are made out to companies and businesses.
Sociology	Good. The quality of teaching is good and some of it is very good. Students achieve well in the light of their GCSE results. Marking is good and students are given realistic and helpful guidance on what they need to do in order to improve. Students are very positive in their approach to learning. Management is good and gives the subject a clear sense of direction and purpose. Students in Year 13 have only three periods of sociology per week. This puts additional pressure on both the teacher and students in their efforts to meet the full course requirements. There are currently too few opportunities for students to use information and communication technology to help them with their work.
English	Good. Teaching is good. The quality of marking and assessment is good. Students have positive attitudes to the subject. The subject is well led and managed. Strategies for developing independent study are under-developed. Techniques for note making and research skills need more emphasis. More extended writing is required on some texts. Wider reading around set texts should be encouraged and guided.

Lessons in most other subjects taught in the school were sampled. The quality of teaching and learning were consistently good and much of it was very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students in the sixth form are well supported by tutors who know them well and ensure that their individual needs are met. They are provided with impartial advice when making choices about careers or employment and are fully supported when making applications to higher education establishments. One student with special educational needs was particularly appreciative of the support given to him.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is energetically and effectively led. A significant step forward is the setting up of the `leadership` group of senior students who meet regularly to discuss issues. There is an increasing focus on broadening the sixth form curriculum, and upon keeping track of students to ensure that they achieve their potential.

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"> • The teaching is good, teachers take individual needs into account and give them extra help when they need it; • The school is smaller than the alternatives and has more manageable buildings and a real sense of community; • The school listens and responds to their views; • They feel challenged to work hard, yet treated as young adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 12 students felt that they did not receive sufficient careers advice and guidance before they entered the sixth form; • A wider range of enrichment activities could be provided; • There is a shortage of adequate accommodation for them to work quietly; • They would appreciate some good quality computers for their use only.

The strengths and areas for improvement identified by students are well founded. Since the recent appointment of a new head of careers, advice and guidance has improved considerably.

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 pupils' achievements

1. The proportions of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum Level 4 or higher at the end of Year 6 in the primary school are well below average in all three of the core subjects English, mathematics and science. Consequently, levels of attainment on entry to the school are consistently well below average. Higher than average proportions of pupils with statements of special educational needs (largely for moderate learning difficulties) are admitted to the school, year on year. Pupils' progress is at least satisfactory as they move through the school, but their overall attainment remains low by national standards.
2. At the end of Year 9, the results achieved by pupils in the national tests in English, mathematics and science in 2001 were well below the national average in both mathematics and science, but matched the national average in English. Sixty one per cent of the pupils achieved level 5 in English, 51 per cent in mathematics and 51 per cent in science. These figures are much higher than those in recent years, especially in English. When compared with the results of similar schools (those with equally high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals) pupils in 2001 attained well above average in English and above average in both science and mathematics. All in all, this equates to good progress in Years 7 to 9, for this particular year group of pupils, especially in English.
3. Overall GCSE results have improved steadily over the last five years, broadly in line with the national trend, but attainment remains low by national standards. Average GCSE points scores in 2001 were well below the national average, above average when compared to similar schools. Girls outperformed boys overall in 2001, though not in the two previous years.
4. GCSE attainment in English in 2001 was close to the national average, with attainment in Language better than in Literature. Though the level of attainment has varied since 1997, there has been an upward trend since 1999. Pupils achieve higher grades in English than in other subjects with entry levels lower than national levels. Girls do better than boys in Language and in Literature, as they do nationally. A commendable feature of the GCSE results is the higher than national proportion of A* to G grades attained by all pupils.
5. GCSE performance in mathematics has improved over recent years, and although the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C in 2001 was well below the national average it was above the average for similar schools. There has been an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to G which is now at above the national average and shows improvement in the provision for lower attaining pupils.
6. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in science was well below the national average, but virtually all pupils gained A* to G grades, which is above average. Results have improved steadily since the last inspection and the unconfirmed results for the 2002 examinations indicate that this trend has also been maintained. Standards are rising at a rate faster than the national rate but remain at a level well below national averages.

7. GCSE results in other subjects in 2001 were all significantly below the national average in terms of A* to C grades, but in most cases they matched or exceeded the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving A* to G grades.
8. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' written work, match the most recent validated test and examination results in most cases. However, in some instances, especially in Year 9 towards the end of Key Stage 3, work seen was lower than recent teacher assessments had indicated, pointing either to over generous assessments or to some other reason. In art and design and in music, assessments have been over generous. In French, on the other hand, the highest attaining group in the present Year 9 had such a variety of different teachers over an 18-month period, many of whom were non specialists, that pupils' understanding of the foreign language is much weaker than it otherwise would be.
9. Literacy standards have improved greatly in recent years. The proportion of pupils attaining national standards in, for example, English by the end of Year 9 has improved steadily since 1999. Standards of literacy on entry to the school are well below average, with one third of pupils having reading ages more than two years below average levels. By the end of Year 11, literacy standards overall are in line with the national average, with attainment in English Language better than that in Literature. Attainment in English Language and Literature at A* to C is below national standards, with attainment at A* to G above national standards. Girls attain at a higher level than boys, with girls entered for Literature attaining close to national standards at A* to C.
10. Standards of numeracy are below average. Many pupils have difficulties with numeracy, and often have to work out number facts that they should be able to recall. They are not yet showing the ability to discuss strategies for calculating or to use known results to deduce unfamiliar ones. However, pupils' progress in subjects other than mathematics is not significantly diminished by poor numeracy skills as work in these subjects does not usually demand high levels of computation or number awareness.
11. By the end of Year 9 in 2001, pupils achieved at least satisfactorily compared to their prior attainment on entry to the school in almost all subjects. In English, design and technology, music and physical education pupils achieved better than expected and made good progress across this key stage. This progress was sometimes not reflected in greatly improved performance in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests. In modern foreign languages, achievement was less than expected due largely to difficulties in recruiting staff of sufficient quality during periods of staff absence. Analysis of relative achievement by ethnic group is still in its early stages.
12. By the end of Year 11 in 2001, pupil achievement compared to their prior attainment was mostly as expected from pupils' prior attainment. Analysis of achievement by gender across Years 7 to 11 shows girls catching up and overtaking boys in average GCSE point scores between Years 9 and 11. Achievement was better than expected in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and drama.
13. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. In Years 7 to 9 the rate of progress is often on a par with other pupils, with good examples being seen in design and technology, physical education, ICT and English.
14. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall with good progress being seen in ICT lessons. However, there are missed opportunities in Years 7 and 8 to accelerate their progress because of ineffectual specialised support.

15. In 2001, the school exceeded, by three percentage points, its agreed performance targets for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE grades A* to C. It exceeded its target for at least one A* to G grade, by two percentage points, and its target for an average points score of 30 points by over three percentage points. This represents good achievement across this key stage. The unvalidated results for 2002 look to be the best for many years, and again exceed the school's agreed targets.

Sixth form

16. The standards achieved by students in the sixth form have been low compared with those seen nationally, but there are signs of improvement recently.
17. The average points score of students who took two or more A-level examinations was 6.4 in 2001, which is well below the national figure of 17.4. In 2002 the corresponding school figure for A level was 9.5 and 14.8 for AS level. There are no national figures for 2002 with which to make comparisons yet.
18. Increasing numbers of students have begun taking vocational courses, but so far results are inconclusive since numbers have been so low.
19. The school has realised that the best way to increase the proportion of students remaining on into the sixth form is to run a number of vocational courses in years 10 and 11. This has already resulted, for example, in increased numbers of students, including some higher attaining students, opting to study either ICT or business studies in the sixth form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and work hard. In lessons, the vast majority of pupils behave well, listen attentively to their teachers and to each other, and work well in pairs or groups when necessary. They take part willingly in discussions, respond confidently and are prepared to contribute ideas. In most lessons pupils concentrate well and are fully involved in their tasks. However, the attention of some pupils wanes towards the ends of the rather long lessons of 70 minutes duration and when this happens some pupils are seen to lose interest and become disengaged.
21. Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is almost always good. Pupils clearly understand the school's behaviour management systems and see the collective benefit of responding in a mature way. Behaviour is effectively and sensitively handled by most members of staff. Permanent exclusions from the school are very rare and the number of fixed rate exclusions is low in comparison with other schools and much lower than at the time of the last inspection. During inspection the behaviour of some pupils fell short of the standard set by the school during lessons where teaching was less than satisfactory and teachers failed to impose a reasonable working atmosphere. Around school, behaviour is occasionally boisterous but mostly good-natured.
22. Pupils with special educational needs work collaboratively with their peers. Their behaviour is good and those pupils with identified behavioural problems are well managed and supported, especially in the Curriculum Support Centre (CSC).
23. Positive working relationships are a strong component of the school. Respect between teachers and pupils is evident and is demonstrated in the shared commitment to raise achievement. Pupils know that their teachers want them to do well and they respond accordingly. Similarly, relationships between pupils are good. Pupils work well together,

sharing and responding positively to the expectations set by the staff and this provides a climate in which pupils can and do learn. Pupils of different ages, attainment, gender and ethnic background work and socialise well together. Instances of bullying or aggressive behaviour are infrequent and are dealt with effectively when they happen. There is little evidence of racism and any comments are suitably documented and action taken.

24. At the time of the last inspection, attendance rates were very low and this was a key issue. Since that time the school has introduced measures which have resulted in much improved levels of attendance which are now close to the national average. Rates of unexplained or unauthorised absence are low and punctuality to school and lessons is good.

Sixth form

25. Sixth form students have very positive attitudes to their work. They show a high level of maturity and take a responsible approach to their study. They conduct themselves very well, are polite and motivated. During inspection, students were happy to discuss their work and talked with enthusiasm about their studies. In lessons they are fully involved and are willing to discuss their ideas and explore issues. Students of different genders, attainment and ethnic backgrounds mix well together.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good, overall. In well over nine in every ten of the 155 lessons seen during the inspection teaching was at least satisfactory. In almost seven out of every ten lessons it was at least good, and in two out of every ten lessons it was very good. The teaching in one lesson was excellent. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching, and in not one single lesson was it either poor or very poor. This amounts to a substantial improvement since the time of the previous inspection. It reflects not only the significant turnover in teaching staff since then, but also a much greater focus within the school upon sharing good practice in teaching and learning, backed up by a determination to drastically improve the systematic monitoring of its quality.
27. The excellent teaching was in a design and technology lesson with a class of Year 7 pupils. The very good teaching was in English (Year 8); mathematics (Years 8 and 13); science (Years 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13); art and design (Years 8, 10, 11 and 12); design and technology (Years 9 and 12); music (Years 7 and 10); physical education (Years 7, 8 and 10); business studies (Year 10); sociology (Year 13) and in personal, social and health education (Years 7 and 10). There was good teaching in every subject.
28. The better teaching, seen across all year groups and most subject areas, was notable for the teachers' secure knowledge and understanding of their material; the effective way in which teachers share their clear learning objectives with pupils, and effectively review them at the end of lessons. It was notable also for teachers' high expectations of what their pupils are capable of; their enthusiasm; their good relationships with their pupils; their very good use of every minute available, and for their skilful preparation, making sure that the material is matched to the range of pupils' attainment in each teaching group. The better teaching was seen to vary classroom routines, to modify the teaching and learning strategies to suit the topic; and to make sure that pupils are actively involved in the lesson quickly without having to listen passively to over-long introductions from teachers. Homework in these better lessons is used regularly to consolidate and extend classwork, and teachers make the best use of all the resources available, including ICT where appropriate, and in-class support, when available.

29. The design and technology lesson seen with pupils in Year 7 was excellent because it exhibited many the above characteristics to a very significant extent. Particularly good use was made of the available resources, which included a well briefed classroom assistant and sufficient lap top computers for every one of the 24 pupils to have one each. The pupils, all relatively new to the school, demonstrated immense enthusiasm for the valuable experience they were gaining. Their respect for the quality of the teaching and for the quality of the experience they were encountering was tangible. Their behaviour was exemplary. The pace was very brisk, and was enlivened by excellent exploration of the pupils' previous knowledge. Pupils were well catered for with the support of the classroom assistant. Extension activities were there for the higher attaining pupils. Consequently the pupils' learning was excellent and their attainment in the lesson was well above average for this age group, a tribute to the improving standards in this Technology College.
30. The unsatisfactory teaching in the main school was mainly in Year 9 and was spread across mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, religious education and the specialist support for pupils with English as an additional language. The main problems with the weaker mathematics teaching were the low pace of work, the work not matching sufficiently the range of pupil attainment in a group and not using practical resources sufficiently to introduce difficult ideas. In geography, the problems were again caused by too slow a pace and the teaching not adapting the work sufficiently to meet the range of differing needs in a class. On some occasions in geography lessons there were too many low-level tasks which failed to enthuse pupils. Other shortcomings in occasional lessons elsewhere, in history, modern foreign languages and religious education, included expectations which were too low, too much time being spent on particular activities, unclear guidance to pupils, too great an emphasis upon teacher talk and too few opportunities for pupils to practice independent learning. In these lessons, learning was less than it should have been and was less than secure, the direct result of weak teaching.
31. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) had satisfactory or good learning opportunities in nearly every lesson seen. They benefit greatly from the small teaching groups in the Curriculum Support Centre (CSC). Good teaching of mainstream SEN groups is complemented by high quality support staff. Most, though not all, mainstream subject teachers take note of pupils' learning targets and modify their teaching appropriately. This should improve further when all staff have fuller involvement in the writing of Individual Education Plans as required by the new national Code of Practice for SEN.
32. Provision for pupils whose home language is other than English is satisfactory overall. Most subject teachers are aware of and able to meet the language needs of these pupils for whom English is an additional language. However, specialist support is unsatisfactory. Here the work is insufficiently well planned and support materials and strategies are sometimes inappropriate.
33. The teaching of literacy is good overall. The school has well established systems for tackling the low levels of literacy of many pupils when they arrive at the school. All Year 7 pupils are assessed on entry to identify those whose needs have not fully been met by the national literacy strategy. These pupils are allocated an older pupil as a paired reader and read regularly during registration. All Year 7 pupils read during registration and are able to borrow books from the school library for this purpose. In some English lessons, where the focus is literacy, the teacher designs writing activities which help lower attaining pupils to develop writing skills. In other lessons, effective planning strategies are helping pupils to structure their writing. However, understanding is not always checked or extended to ensure it provides a satisfactory basis for writing tasks.

34. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall, but there is much room for improvement. The mathematics department is seeking to raise standards of numeracy by adopting ideas from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. There has been improved liaison with primary schools. Master classes have been organised for Year 6 pupils and use of transition material is improving curriculum continuity for pupils entering Year 7. Lesson plans are based on the National Framework. Objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and the three-part lesson structure is widely used. Plenary sessions are becoming more effective, but the introductions to lessons are too long and do not focus sufficiently on oral and mental mathematics. There is good use of number equipment such as number cards and lines. There was little focus on numeracy in lessons seen other than in mathematics, except in a music lesson in which pupils were encouraged to practise numeracy skills by counting the number of beats in bars and looking at different possibilities.

Sixth form

35. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good overall and in one quarter of the 28 lessons seen it is very good.
36. In English, mathematics and business studies the quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen was consistently good. Some teaching and learning in sociology was also very good. In biology most of the teaching was very good.
37. Knowledgeable and well-organised teachers using a wide range of strategies are much in evidence. Student-teacher relationships are very good throughout all the courses inspected. Exceptionally good use of ICT can be seen in mathematics, business studies and science, and good evidence of the effect of its use is seen in English. A common factor across all the courses is the extent to which homework is set on a regular basis and serves to reinforce and extend students' learning. The amount of time and effort students are expected to devote, in their own time, to preparing work to be presented to their peers in the next lesson, is high. Note taking and independent research skills need further development by teachers of English to enable all students to extract maximum benefit from the good teaching they receive.
38. In only one case, an isolated example of the teaching of the communication aspect of the school's work on key skills, was there any teaching that was unsatisfactory.

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

39. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that successfully offers a range of opportunities which are relevant to, and meet the needs of the pupils. In Years 7 to 9, the full National Curriculum is taught, and all requirements are met. All pupils study religious education and information and communication technology (ICT); French is the modern foreign language. All pupils study personal, social and health education (PSHE) in all three years, and drama in Year 7. Pupils in the Curriculum Support Centre (CSC) are timetabled separately for English, mathematics, geography and history. The timetable gives most subjects appropriate amounts of teaching time, an exception being the relatively low amount of time given to French in Year 7. The legal requirements of the National Curriculum are now met at this key stage. Improvements have taken place since the previous inspection in the provision for music, physical education, religious education and ICT.
40. The range of learning opportunities in Years 10 to 11 is good. Core subjects are the same for both attainment bands: English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Subjects in the three option columns include

those subjects already studied in Years 7 to 9 and, in addition, pupils can choose vocational (GNVQ) courses at foundation and intermediate levels in business studies, and leisure and tourism. In ICT, all pupils study GNVQ: some pupils follow the full course, which is the equivalent of 4 GCSE's. Pupils are also able to study for the computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) certificate. A new GNVQ course has just begun in science for two groups in Year 10. With the Skill Force course, provided by outside instructors, the school shows a willingness to take pupils' needs into consideration in adapting its programmes. Skill Force provides a course in both years which meets specific needs and aspirations through vocational elements, with pupils studying for the full range of bronze, silver and gold awards of the ASDAN course. With its aims of improving attendance, attitude and attainment, this course also involves links with the community. The provision for vocational education is good.

41. National Curriculum requirements in Years 10 to 11 are met in all subjects, apart from modern foreign languages. The school's inability to recruit and retain sufficient specialist teachers has resulted in the provision for French being placed in the option column. Pupils studying alternative courses have not been correctly disapplied from the National Curriculum.
42. The school teaches four lessons of 70 minutes each day. This amounts to just over 23 hours a week, which is below the national average of 25 hours teaching time. The length of the lessons – 70 minutes – places constraints on teaching styles, tasks and standards in a number of subjects, for example, history, geography, religious education, mathematics and modern foreign languages. The strengthening links with Bournville School allow students to continue at post-16 with subjects that would not otherwise be available at their respective schools. The two schools presently have different times and different numbers of lessons each day, which is not an ideal situation.
43. The provision of extra-curricular activities has improved since the previous inspection. There is a good variety of clubs and activities, which pupils take up reasonably well. The school provides good and varied opportunities for outside links with industry. Provision for extra-curricular opportunities in sport is good.
44. The relationships with partner institutions are very good. Effective links exist with partner primary schools, Bournville School, Bournville College, and local universities. For example, close links with Bangor University are being established with a video link in a new course of psychology in the sixth form, and with the Birmingham Universities via master classes in physics, chemistry, medicine, law and ICT.
45. Overall provision for personal social and health education (PSHE) is good. It deals with both drugs education and sex education. The school has moved away from the delivery of PSHE in tutorial periods to a timetabled provision for Years 7 to 11, involving fortnightly lessons taught by a specialist team. This system is already proving to be a more successful model of delivery, with six teachers forming a strong committed team. The quality of teaching observed will provide a good basis for the success of the new arrangements. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a clear vision of how PSHE should be developed. She has made a good start in providing a framework and schemes of work which will ensure a comprehensive coverage and incorporate the new citizenship programmes of study. PSHE resources are limited, but good quality paper resources and worksheets are used effectively. Good use is made of resources produced by outside agencies, in particular, CD-ROM and videos. Very good links and partnerships have been formed with a number of outside organisations. For example, the Birmingham Health Institute provides a useful resource bank and expertise in the classroom for the delivery of aspects of the curriculum such as healthy eating. Similarly,

Bournville Police regularly visits the school to lead sessions on safety, fitness, bullying and racism. BT personnel help cover aspects of citizenship through the use of drama with an emphasis on speaking and listening and Bournville Village Trust lead projects that help pupils aware of environmental issues.

46. The provision for careers is satisfactory. Since the recent appointment of a new head of careers it has improved considerably. It is now well organised and a new careers area with more open access for pupils has been set up. A development plan is in place and has been evaluated by the local Careers Education Business Partnership. At present, careers education is taught in PHSE but extensive business links through other subjects provide very good opportunities for pupils to learn about work. Connections with the College of Food, Jaguar Cars, Cadburys and Birmingham University provide pupils with a wide range of guidance and careers education. The world of work is introduced to pupils through a well-organised and carefully managed work experience programme. The school liases with the local education authority to provide a wide range of quality placements, some pupils arranging their own. The level of support and supervision is good.
47. Implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies across the school is progressing satisfactorily. The school has spent time planning for the literacy strategy, and has shared the planning across the curriculum. A clear commitment has been demonstrated by the appointment of a literacy specialist to support this planning and to provide exemplar teaching. The exemplar teaching observed in English was good, but implementation of the strategy across the rest of the curriculum is very variable.
48. There is a whole-school numeracy policy, and the mathematics department has led effective whole-staff training. Some departments have considered how they can contribute to the development of numeracy and have referred to this in policy documents. There are some opportunities for pupils to apply numeracy across the curriculum. In geography, pupils handle data and use graphs, co-ordinates and scale. In design technology they handle data, use spreadsheets and calculate proportions. In science they measure various aspects of matter (length, volume, electrical resistance, current, concentration, density, and so on) and manipulate the data collected in many different ways. In a music lesson, pupils are encouraged to practise numeracy skills through an activity involving counting the beats in a bar, but at present there is little evidence that other curriculum areas are identifying opportunities to do mental calculations or discuss the numbers that arise in their work. For example, a history lesson about chronology could have involved pupils in simple calculations about dates. Percentages relating to marriage and divorce were met in religious education without associated discussion.
49. The curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. Specialised teaching in the Curriculum Support Centre (CSC) and in SEN groups in mainstream classes provide good opportunities for pupils to have access to the full curriculum. Learning support assistants are of good quality and provide good support to pupils who need special help. Hearing-impaired pupils are well supported in mainstream classes by a specialist part-time teacher. Alternative non-GCSE courses for Years 10 and 11 allow pupils to continue learning at a level appropriate to their levels of attainment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

50. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, an improvement since the last inspection.

51. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, improved since the last inspection. A good policy now exists and this is implemented effectively in some subject schemes of work, although the opportunities for reflection are not always well taken. Good practice occurs in assemblies where issues relate well to the formulation of values and beliefs as staff address personal standards. This was seen through the theme of 'persistence' during the inspection. Assembly themes effectively cover elements of moral, social and cultural development. However, the requirements of a daily act of collective worship are not met. Some tutors take the opportunity to use form time to address further a wide range of issues which are relevant to pupils' personal development but do not use the time for collective worship.
52. The overall ethos of the school is supportive of pupils' spiritual and moral development, and the provision for moral development is good. The code for behaviour and relationships sets firm standards and high expectations of pupils' conduct, which most teachers consistently reinforce. In several subjects pupils and students are given clear opportunities to exercise moral judgement. In written work, some pupils complete thoughtful, well-considered and sensitive pieces about a wide range of moral issues. Examples of work with a moral dimension are found in geography, through the consideration of issues surrounding developed and developing countries, in science, through issues relating to genetics, and in religious education, in the study of codes of morality based on various faiths. The encouragement of tolerance between pupils of different faiths and cultural heritages adds to the provision for a moral code. Pupils also support charities, which adds to their understanding of moral and ethical issues.
53. Pupils generally relate well to each other and to their teachers in lessons. They enjoy good social relationships, collaborate well in group and pair work, and are supportive of each other in class. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of personal skills, particularly presentational skills in history, transferable skills in music, and awareness of character and personal interaction through drama. In religious education, social issues such as family units and communities form an important part of learning, as does the spread of urbanisation in geography.
54. The provision for social education is good. It is closely linked to the development of values and a moral code as opportunities are given for pupils to work together and share and collaborate. The range of extracurricular activities plays a good part in this work as do the opportunities for links with the community and work place. Links with the police address issues of racism and anti-social behaviour. School productions and excursions enhance the opportunities for social interaction amongst the diverse range of pupils. The range of sports available supports team spirit and fairness. This inclusiveness is an integral part of developing pupils' personal views. It also links well with their overall cultural development, the provision of which is good.
55. An awareness of cultural heritage is supported by work in geography, history and art as the development and features of the locality are considered. In art and design, experiences of the work of Georges Rouault are an example of how pupils study different interpretations, and this has been linked with work in poetry. Pupils are given the opportunity to discover and learn about the music of other cultures, such as the Caribbean; well demonstrated by the choir rehearsal. Design and technology provides opportunities as pupils consider the wide variety of food to be found in different cultures, and the significance of diet and festivals. Better opportunities to experience life in a multi-cultural society now exist. For example, the introduction by the history department of a 'black history month' is helping to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural differences.

Sixth form

56. Curricular provision for students in the sixth form is good. It has broadened its provision considerably in recent years, partly by offering more vocational courses but also by strengthening the link with a neighbouring school at sixth form level. In addition to English, mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics and sociology, students can choose advanced vocational courses (AVCE) in manufacturing, art and design, health and social care and business studies, and on-line ICT. Psychology is offered at Advanced Supplementary (AS) level: this is new to the school this year, and is provided by video link and also supported by a learning mentor. Students also follow a general studies course in Year 12. Only a small number of students are undertaking the straight AS course of 4 subjects: the rest are on an A level and AVCE mix, which is in line with the school's new policy. Requirements for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form are not fully met. Enrichment courses in the sixth form are limited at present.
57. Students display concern for each other and this reflects the provision that has been effectively made for their personal development in Years 7 to 11. The general studies course provides an effective structure in which students can discuss a wide range of issues, through well structured sessions. These sessions enable them to consider values and beliefs of political, social and ethical dimensions, as seen in a lesson about 'Education as empowerment.' The opportunity of supporting younger pupils brings social and cultural issues to the fore, as do the opportunities to be of service to the school and community. Legal requirements for religious education are not fully met, and this lessens the opportunities for students to discuss philosophical and cultural issues relevant to the diverse society in which they live.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

58. The school has very effective systems in place to provide personal support for pupils. This support is given a high priority and the senior management team and governors have invested time and resources to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. A pupil support team, involving senior managers and learning mentors, has been established with the clear aim of raising pupils' attainment by removing potential barriers to their learning. This often involves providing emotional support when pupils are having difficulties but also provides a useful link between pastoral and academic staff, ensuring a whole-school approach to the support of pupils. Mentors from within the school, and from the world of business, work with pupils and provide useful guidance.
59. Good behaviour is expected, promoted and achieved. Systems for rewarding good behaviour and for discouraging unacceptable behaviour are understood by pupils and appreciated by parents. The pupil support team is heavily involved in this area of the school's work, with clear lines of communication to ensure that instances of misbehaviour are recorded and effective action taken.
60. In order to improve the unsatisfactory attendance levels found at the previous inspection the school introduced rigorous systems to check pupils' attendance and to follow up any absences. A member of staff has been appointed as attendance officer to check registration data and lateness. Parents are contacted by telephone if no explanation has been received for absence. The pupil support team is also involved in the monitoring of attendance and the school has good support from the educational welfare service. These measures have resulted in a creditable five percentage point increase in attendance rates, bringing levels very close to those achieved nationally.

61. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to deal effectively with child protection issues. An experienced member of staff has responsibility for this, appropriate guidance is given to staff and there is good contact with supporting agencies. Sound arrangements have been made to comply with the requirements of health and safety legislation. Safe practices were observed in lessons and around school, with pupils being reminded during lessons, such as physical education and science, of the need for care. Most of the health and safety issues of the last report have been addressed, but the pupils' toilets remain in need of attention. An electricity sub-station in the school grounds is a potential hazard as it is only secured by a wooden fence. The school has taken this up with the appropriate authorities and is awaiting action.
62. The care and support for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils are assessed for early identification of special educational needs by means of liaison with partner primary schools and use of appropriate tests on arrival in Year 7. All staff are provided with a well constructed dossier of information on each pupil. Targets, which are included in individual education plans are mainly sufficient in number, manageable and achievable. There is an established system of liaison between the special needs co-ordinator and named teachers from each department. However, individual education plans are not used consistently by all subject teachers and not all departments have sufficient regard to the requirement of the new national Code of Practice that these plans are the responsibility of all staff, not just special needs teachers. Communications between departments and special needs staff need to be tightened to ensure all assessment data is kept up to date.
63. Initial identification of pupils who speak English as an additional language who may also have special needs is not based on sufficiently clear or secure criteria. In identifying the first language of pupils the school does not, at present, take enough care to consult both pupil and parent as to their views.

ASSESSMENT

64. Whole-school approaches to assessing pupils' work and monitoring their progress are good overall, except that teacher assessments in some departments were found to be over generous in Years 7 to 9. Teaching approaches give good evidence of pupils' on-going progress, and marking is generally effective and regularly done. A minority of marking in mathematics and modern foreign languages is not done soon enough, so that pupils on occasion do not correct their work and continue to make the same mistakes. The school's agreed procedures for grading achievement and effort are implemented well, and, although a range of other grades is also awarded, pupils understand the system well. Supportive comment is used to encourage pupils, but insufficient advice is given about how to improve. Procedures for determining the levels of the National Curriculum achieved by all pupils in the different subjects are good in most cases.
65. Since the last inspection the school has developed a range of effective statistical methods, including the MidYIS and YELLIS systems, for tracking pupil progress and predicting performance in Years 9 and 11, and for identifying gifted and talented pupils. Spreadsheets showing pupil performance records are available to all teachers on the school's computer network. These approaches are providing valuable information to enable departments to target the performance of individual pupils and groups. They also help to make comparisons between the results in the different departments in the school and to inform annual departmental reviews. This is having a positive effect on pupil performance, but in some subjects there is still insufficient reference to the available data about pupils' prior attainment when planning, to ensure that all pupils are able to make the best possible progress. This is

particularly apparent in groups with a wide attainment range, and in the provision for the highest attainers in the school.

Sixth Form

Assessment in the sixth form

66. Assessment of students' work in the Sixth Form is good. Work is well marked, sometimes by the student with oversight from the teachers. Teachers mark regularly themselves, including homework assignments, and often add diagnostic comment to help students to make progress. The school is using the ALIS package to analyse performance and to predict results at A Level. Estimated grades are shared with students and targets are agreed. The small groups in the sixth form mean that the teachers are able to respond well to the assessment information gained to match the work to the needs of individual students. Some departments, for example mathematics, do not yet routinely use the available data to demonstrate added value to pupils' achievement from GCSE to AS and A level and to quantify the progress made by those who do not complete the course.

Advice, support and guidance in the sixth form

67. Students in the sixth form are well supported by tutors who know their pupils well and ensure that their individual needs are met. Students have daily contact with their tutors and appreciate the personal and academic support given to them. Those who miss tutorials through illness or holiday are given extra help to ensure that they do not fall behind their peers. Students are provided with impartial advice when making choices about careers or employment and are fully supported when making applications to higher education establishments. One student with special educational needs was particularly appreciative of the support given to him.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. The school has maintained its effective partnership with parents, the vast majority of whom are supportive of the school. Parents' views are positive in most aspects of the school's work. They are particularly pleased with the leadership and management of the school and with teachers' expectations that their children will work hard in school. They believe teaching to be good, that their children make good progress, behave well and like coming to school. Parents feel that the school is helping their children to mature. Inspectors agree with these positive views.
69. Areas about which a few parents have reservations are the amount of homework provided, information on pupils' progress and the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors found homework to be sufficient and relevant, information to be satisfactory and the provision of extra-curricular activities, including visits out of school, to be good.
70. Students in the sixth form were canvassed for their views. Most of the replies to the questionnaire were from Year 12 students who have only recently joined the sixth form. During inspection, views were elicited from students in Years 12 and 13. Students said that they value the very good relationships with staff and the support they receive from them. They feel that they are given extra help when they need it and are provided with sufficient information when making choices about careers or higher education. They have good contact with their tutors. The only area of concern was the lack of adequate accommodation for them to work quietly, and the lack of computers for their use alone.

71. Parents of children in all year groups have adequate opportunities to meet teachers to discuss progress. In addition to consultation evenings, at which parents' attendance is disappointingly low, the school has set aside two days each year during which pupils and teachers can discuss their work and to which parents are invited. Higher proportions of parents take advantage of these opportunities. Interim reports are produced at the end of autumn and spring terms with a full written report in the summer term. These full reports have been improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. They include targets for improvement although some do not give enough information specific to the subjects. Information about the school and its work is good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

72. A major factor in the increasing success of the school is the very effective leadership of the headteacher. She is ably supported by a strong leadership team, one of whom has just been promoted to a headship elsewhere. The head's clear vision of how the school needs to improve enthuses governors, staff, pupils and parents alike and has driven it forward significantly since the time of the last inspection.
73. The governing body supports the school well through its regular meetings and the work of its committees, and is able to demonstrate that it is fully in touch with the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Most, but not all, legal duties have been satisfactorily fulfilled. Exceptions include that not every pupil receives a daily act of collective worship. Also, many pupils are allowed to opt out from part of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11 without this being formally applied for. Provision for religious education in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.
74. The school / governor partnership works well. Governors leave the school's senior staff to manage the school on a day-to-day basis, trusting that they will be kept well enough informed to fulfil effectively their key role of 'critical friend'. Examples of this important role in action include that of persuading the school to take out insurance cover for staff absence, and playing a full part in the important task of assuring staff competency in key areas of weakness.
75. The school's clear mission statement and its 12 aims are a good mixture of the academic and the caring, of challenge and support. Whole school long term strategic planning and the current annual action plan are both models of their kind. Links with departmental planning are strong. The school's present and future priorities are documented well. A good start has been made on priority one; improving the standards of attainment of all pupils. Priority two, developing a pastoral curriculum to support the improvement of standards, is well in hand. Priority three, improving standards of attendance, is being achieved. Priority four, to develop a viable, flourishing sixth form Centre, is further along the road towards being achieved than a school as small as Dame Elizabeth Cadbury, might reasonably be able to expect.
76. The co-ordination of both care and academic guidance is well carried out by two very effective key stage co-ordinators. Subject areas are never less than satisfactorily led and most are led well on the whole. Physical education, design and technology, and science are very well led. New leadership in recent years has re-energised some departments, mathematics for instance, and brought about significant improvements since the last inspection. The recently appointed PSHE co-ordinator has a clear vision of how PSHE should be developed. She has made a good start in providing a framework and schemes of work that will ensure a comprehensive coverage and incorporate the new citizenship programmes of study.

77. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The special needs co-ordinator and the head of the Curriculum Support Centre work effectively together to create a harmonised provision throughout the school. However, the efficiency of these management systems is threatened by the increasingly imbalanced nature of pupil need within the school, caused by an unusually high percentage of pupils with special educational needs in the new intake. The legal requirements for the provision for pupils with special educational needs are met. In the light of increasing numbers of pupils with special educational needs the school should review, on a whole school basis, its systems for the construction, distribution and ongoing evaluation of pupils' individual education plans. This process should be harmonised, whenever possible, with departmental target setting processes already in place and become the equal responsibility of all staff in accordance with the new national Code of Practice.
78. The specific grants made available to the school are allocated effectively in the main, including funds provided by Excellence in Cities. However, the small grant for ethnic minority achievement (EMAG) is at present confined to English language support without the opportunity to address wider issues of minority ethnic achievement. The management of provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is barely satisfactory at present.
79. There are sufficient teachers to deliver the National Curriculum except that, over the past two years, the school has encountered severe problems in recruiting and retaining specialist teachers to cover the long-term absence of two teachers in modern foreign languages. There is a good mix of experienced and newer teachers to the profession. More than half of them have only been at the school for five or fewer years. This infusion of fresh ideas is having a very positive effect upon the school's development. Promoted posts are almost evenly split between male and female teachers at every level.
80. Investor in People status was achieved in November 2001 with a very complimentary assessment report. It praised the school, amongst other things, for all the staff sharing a vision of where the school is going; feeling that they have a voice, are listened to and are consulted about plans to improve and to change what happens. The report speaks of supportive line managers, effective induction of new staff, and of the good opportunities staff are given to change roles and to take on exciting additional responsibilities. The inspection team also concludes that professional development is good, teachers are encouraged and helped to share good practice. Induction of newly qualified teachers and of teachers new to the school is good. The school meets well the criteria to support the training of new teachers.
81. In the autumn of 2001 an authority-wide inspection of sixth form provision, led by Her Majesty's Inspectors concluded that 'inadequacies in the accommodation are being exacerbated by rising numbers'. The buildings are too small for the current pupil numbers. Some classrooms are in full time use. Corridors and staircases are too narrow, making the movement of large pupil numbers difficult, although teachers and sixth formers do manage the situation very well. The recently re-modelled suite for design and technology provides very good accommodation and facilities. Three rooms have been converted to computer suites and these are proving invaluable both for the teaching of information and communication technology and for use by subject areas in their teaching. Science is short of accommodation overall. Provision for music is inadequate to allow for development of the desired range of activities. There is no room for groups to rehearse and large pupil groups working on keyboards are very cramped. Facilities for peripatetic tutors are very limited. There is no room suitable for drama. Although there has been some improvement in the facilities for physical education, the school still lacks a suitable sports hall and a permanent

access to playing fields. All school sports matches have to be played on away grounds. The school is very short of office and storage space generally. The main entrance and office suite is inadequate in both size and layout, and very few of the school's middle managers have offices as a base. Large steel storage containers to the rear of the school are needed to store the school's examination furniture, and furniture for the church that uses the school premises on Sundays. The interior decoration has been improved and good use is made of displays and art work to liven up the décor. The exterior fabric is in need of repair. Work has started but serious problems with deteriorating concrete and steel reinforcing rods will prolong the repairs. A small electricity sub-station to the rear of the school building has inadequate security fencing. Although a major area of the playground has recently been re-surfaced to a good standard, there are a number of potholes on the area designated for basketball. The site managers and their staff take a pride in their work and their efforts are valued by all members of the school community. Disabled access is presently confined to the ground floor of school buildings. This situation has changed little since the last inspection. The school should begin a fresh audit in preparation for producing an accessibility plan by April 2003.

82. The majority of departments are satisfactorily resourced and this enhances the learning opportunities for the pupils. Some departments are particularly well resourced such as design & technology, history, ICT and PE. Others need improvement so that the unsatisfactory current resources do not adversely effect curriculum opportunities. There is particular concern in drama and music where resources are minimal with some adverse effect on learning. The library, which is an important resource, has to be used too often as a classroom, limiting its accessibility to other pupils. Some books in the library are now out of date for subjects such as history and music.
83. Financial management and control are good, with clear procedures in place for the allocation of funds and the monitoring of the effectiveness of spending decisions. Weaknesses found at the last inspection have been dealt with and the school manages its budget well, with clear procedures to identify the priorities of the school development plan and to ensure that funds are allocated accordingly. The governing body, particularly the finance committee, is fully involved in the strategic spending decisions and is kept fully informed about expenditure and in monitoring the results of the school's spending. The school employs an external financial consultant in the setting of the budget. This consultant makes regular visits to assist in the monitoring procedures. Staff involved in implementing financial planning decisions are experienced, meticulous and make good use of modern technology. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.
84. The school's unit costs per pupil are high. However, the quality of education provided and the results in terms of pupils' progress and their attitudes to their work indicate that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

85. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The head of the sixth form and sixth form tutors form an effective team. Students have confidence in their tutorial team and its leadership. Good formal and informal contacts are maintained with students, including through the regular meetings of a leadership group of senior students. There is an increasing focus on broadening the sixth form curriculum, strengthening student recruitment and induction and upon tracking students to ensure that they achieve their potential. Development planning is a strength, paperwork is a model of clarity and helpfulness. Diagnosis of what needs doing is accurate. A key target is the improvement of lines of

communication with the school's sixth form partner in order to provide a more coherent provision. This year the traffic is one-way. A number of Dame Elizabeth Cadbury (DEC) students attend specific sixth form courses at Bournville School but no Bournville students are attending DEC.

Resources

86. There are sufficient well qualified specialist teaching staff to deliver most but not all of the planned sixth form curriculum. Where student take-up would be so low as to be uneconomical or where there is not the necessary expertise at DEC, the opportunity for students to join existing classes at the nearby Bournville school is taken up by a number of students each year. This year DEC individual or pairs of students are exercising this option to attend courses at Bournville in drama, physical education, history, geography, ICT, chemistry, music and psychology. Social provision for sixth form students is adequate, although the two rooms provided contain little in the way of furniture or facilities. Study facilities are limited and students would benefit from having access to computers for their use only. Resources for learning in lessons are good, particularly in terms of the provision of lap top computers, which were seen to be used very well in a number of lessons.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

87. In order to improve the quality of education and raise standards higher, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve the provision for modern foreign languages and for geography by:
 - either increasing the proportion of pupils who take a modern foreign language in Years 10 and 11, or arranging for them to be formally disapplied in order to follow more appropriate courses;
 - exploring ways of making geography more attractive to pupils as an option choice in Years 10 and 11;
 - increasing the use of ICT as an aid to learning, in both subjects;
 - increasing pupils' confidence in the skills of listening and speaking the foreign language;
 - ensuring that pupils work harder than teachers in language lessons;
 - and that the teaching meets the differing needs of pupils more in geography.
(Paragraphs 143-148, 170-178)

- (2) Improve the weaker teaching in some departments by, where necessary:
 - increasing the slow pace of work;
 - matching work more effectively to the range of differing needs in a class;
 - raising expectations of some pupils;
 - strengthening departmental monitoring.
(Paragraph 30)

- (3) As soon as funds permit, remedy the inadequacies in accommodation, especially:
 - in physical education, music and drama.
(Paragraph 81)

- (4) Lengthen the teaching and learning week and re-structure the teaching day in order to:
 - maximise teaching and learning time for pupils;
 - provide more flexibility for the curriculum planners and for the timetabler;
 - improve the productivity of lessons in general.
(Paragraphs 20, 42)

- (5) Improve the scarce support provision for pupils with English as an additional language by:
 - deploying it where it is most needed;
 - ensuring that the support is planned effectively in order to make the best use of the time available.
(Paragraphs 14, 32)

- (6) Take the steps necessary to limit the intake of pupils with special educational needs in order to:
- preserve the effectiveness of the present provision.
(Paragraph 103)

Sixth form

- (7) Improve the lines of communication with the school's sixth form partner in order:
- to provide a more coherent joint provision.
(Paragraph 85)
- (8) Improve sixth form study facilities:
- especially the dedicated access to ICT.
(Paragraph 86)
- (9) Ensure that the legal requirements for religious education in the sixth form are fully met by:
- providing sufficient time to do justice to the Local Agreed Syllabus
(Paragraph 56)

LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

88. Links with the community are both extensive and productive. The school has established very good links with local business and with partner schools and colleges which greatly enhance the education of pupils by broadening and enriching the curriculum they receive. Due to the many initiatives the school has undertaken in this area, pupils are provided with opportunities and experiences which would not otherwise be possible.
89. Specialist Technology College status was achieved by the school in September 2001. The school's bid was well supported and aided by representatives of local industry and by partner schools. A large number of local firms support the school by providing sponsorship in the form of resources and rewards for pupils and by providing work experience placements for Year 10 pupils. Local business is well represented on the governing body of the school.
90. As a member of the Birmingham Excellence in Cities Partnership, the school is able to offer pupils access to the facilities of the City Learning Centre which is based at a community high school a short mini bus journey away. Staff are able to share the expertise of the Learning Centre staff and offer pupils the increased opportunities afforded by the additional resources there. During the inspection Year 8 pupils visited the centre to carry out a joint religious education and design and technology project. As the centre is equipped with a higher level of resources, this enabled pupils to make more progress than would have been possible within school.
91. The design and technology department makes especially good use of its business links, with extensive input from local firms which provide practical experience for pupils. The school is one of only four schools allowed to visit one local manufacturing plant, the main employer in the area. During the inspection, Year 9 pupils visited this factory and other year groups are welcomed when completing project work.
92. Many local firms provide very useful support to the school by providing mentors to Year 10 and 11 pupils for careers advice and in preparation for GCSE examinations. These mentors help to advise pupils on examination and interview techniques as well as leading by example.
93. The school takes pupils from a large number of primary schools and makes good arrangements to ensure a smooth transition to secondary education. The head of Year 7 visits every contributing school to exchange information. There is a detailed programme of visits and Year 6 pupils enjoy a 'taster' day at secondary school. Curricular liaison with the school's main contributing schools is very good. Secondary staff visit primary schools to teach and to advise primary staff. Higher attaining Year 6 pupils attend 'master classes' at the school where they receive extra tuition in English, mathematics and science. These classes are available to pupils regardless of which secondary school they intend to join. Technical support in ICT is also provided by the school to local primary schools as part of its technology college status. This support is much appreciated by primary staff.

94. Sixth form staff have good links with universities and colleges which provide pupils with information and personal experiences which are beneficial when they are making choices. Several departments within the school work with Birmingham University.
95. Local police officers are involved in citizenship education. Personnel from the local police station provide very useful guidance to pupils and support to staff in drugs misuse and racial awareness lessons. The school also provides accommodation and resources for adult education classes and is the most heavily subscribed centre for adult education in south Birmingham.
96. Representatives of the local business community, support services, local schools and colleges are very supportive of the school and praise pupils and staff highly. The school's efforts to involve local business and partner institutions have been very successful.

PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

97. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school has a well run and well staffed Curriculum Support Centre (CSC) with 45 places. Currently, 43 pupils divide their time equally between small teaching groups in the CSC and mainstream classes in Years 7 and 11. In all, 125 pupils are on the school's special educational needs (SEN) register, new intakes are demonstrating increasingly complex needs along the autistic spectrum and the number of new pupils with statements of special educational need is gradually rising. Pupils who stay wholly in the mainstream are well supported by the school's special needs co-ordinator and a small but effective team of learning support assistants.
98. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Good caring relationships between pupils and staff coupled with high expectations of teachers underpin the satisfactory achievement of pupils with SEN. There is a better match of strategy to need than seen at the last inspection, most teachers are usually aware of and use the learning targets which pupils keep at the front of their planners.
99. The initial assessment of most pupils is thorough and allows early identification of any special needs. Ongoing assessment is satisfactory and is done through a regular process of review meetings and professional discussion together with further testing when appropriate, for example, using non verbal reasoning tests for pupils with language difficulties. Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are adequate and identify appropriate learning targets. Similarly, statements of special educational need are reviewed annually in collaboration with parents and carers.
100. The management of special needs provision is good with the special needs co-ordinator and head of the Curriculum Support Centre working together effectively. There is a clear policy and vision for the direction in which special needs provision should go.

101. The majority of pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning, they work together and are ready to help one another. Behaviour is, almost without exception, good and pupils are polite and courteous. Pupils in the Curriculum Support Centre especially reflect in their own behaviour the noticeably caring and positive ethos which is a strength of the provision as a whole.
102. Staff make full use of the help of outside agencies to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, a part time specialist teacher supports hearing-impaired children, both in class and on a one-to-one basis in a specially equipped room.
103. This positive picture of SEN provision is, however, threatened by the disproportionately high numbers of pupils with special needs now being directed to the school. The school as a whole is having to make major adjustments to its teaching styles and to the curriculum it offers. At senior level insufficient time has been given to addressing the difficulties posed to all staff by the growing imbalance in the school between special needs and non special needs pupils. Within SEN provision, staff are already struggling to maintain the quality of target setting and teaching faced with the increased amount of paperwork which the number of pupils generate. As a result, some areas, such as regularly updating assessment records and specialised investigations of the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language, and who may also have special needs, have sometimes been overlooked. Similarly mainstream subject teachers have sometimes not made as much use of individual education plans as they should.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	128
	Sixth form	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		63

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	1	24	52	43	8	0	0
Percentage	1	19	40	34	6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	7	18	2	1	0	0
Percentage	0	25	64	7	4	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 here as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	568	78
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	227	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	60	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	125	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	58

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	49

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	90.0
National comparative data	90.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	68	47	115

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	35	38
	Girls	34	24	21
	Total	70	59	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (51)	51 (41)	51 (32)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (16)	28 (15)	11 (7)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	37	37	38
	Girls	36	27	21
	Total	73	64	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (47)	56 (41)	51 (32)
	National	65 (47)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (17)	29 (15)	10 (7)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	58	37	95

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	14	52	57
	Girls	15	34	36
	Total	29	86	93
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	31 (25)	91 (94)	98 (100)
	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	31.0
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	N/a	N/a	N/a

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	5	5	10
	Average point score per candidate	7.6	5.2	6.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

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	476	10	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	3	1
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	20	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	21	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	98	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	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)	46.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	452

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	18.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	2,137,983
Total expenditure	2,115,785
Expenditure per pupil	3,280
Balance brought forward from previous year	13,235
Balance carried forward to next year	22,198

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	545
Number of questionnaires returned	335

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	54	5	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	42	50	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	51	4	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	52	11	4	4
The teaching is good.	41	49	4	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	45	9	2	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	34	4	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	36	51	6	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	45	47	1	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	49	3	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	44	8	2	14

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

- Relationships with pupils are positive, inspire confidence and support learning;
- The teachers have good subject knowledge;
- Pupils have confidence in speaking and listening, particularly boys in Years 10 and 11;
- There is good pace and challenge to support learning in Years 10 and 11;
- The new framework for teaching English in Years 7 to 9 has been successfully adopted in the new scheme of work;
- The use of ICT is extremely well developed in English.

Areas for improvement

- The implementation of the literacy strategy through the department's revised scheme of work needs improving;
- Pupils' understanding through reflection and discussion of texts is undeveloped;
- Speaking and listening skills should be developed further through improved teacher skills in questioning.

Standards and achievement

104. Standards of attainment in English in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were average when compared with schools nationally but well above average when compared with similar schools. Pupils achieve higher standards in English than in mathematics and science. Girls achieve higher standards than boys do nationally, and in 2001, in comparison with national averages, both boys and girls achieved broadly in line with national levels. This represent good progress over the key stage.
105. In lessons and in work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 are in line with national expectations. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils answer questions with enthusiasm in question and answer sessions and use opportunities to exchange ideas in pair and group work. Lower attaining pupils respond more briefly. Pupils listen attentively though attention wanes when activities are not sufficiently focused. Reading skills are satisfactory, particularly in relation to levels of pupils' prior attainment. Pupils read aloud competently and with expression, and even though some are still developing reading skills, they are willing to read texts aloud in class. Pupils are able to obtain and respond to information from texts but this is more limited when prior discussion of the text has not taken place. On these occasions, pupils do not have sufficient understanding to complete tasks with interest and accuracy. Pupils are encouraged to use dictionaries and consult them confidently. Pupils make good progress in producing extended pieces of writing in a range of forms for different purposes, but writing in response to literature and persuasive writing is more in evidence than more formal pieces of writing. By Year 9, lower attaining pupils are able to write at some length without help, all pupils can use simple planning guides to structure their writing and higher attaining pupils can write descriptively and at length about friendship. Pupils develop understanding about language such as the functions of paragraphs, and extend their vocabulary through activities involving prefixes and suffixes and the study of texts such as 'The Space Demons'. There are variations in the

quality of work, with problems for lower attaining pupils in spelling and the use of speech marks, but even pupils with the lowest level of prior attainment communicate meaning legibly and can complete a variety of short pieces of work such as descriptions, letters and conversations.

106. Attainment in GCSE in 2001 was close to the national average, with attainment in Language better than in Literature. Though the level of attainment has varied since 1997, there has been an upward trend since 1999. Pupils achieve higher grades in English than in other subjects with entry levels lower than national levels. Girls do better than boys in Language and in Literature. A commendable feature of the GCSE results is the higher than national proportion of A* to G grades attained by all pupils. Since pupils' levels of attainment in English on entry to the school are well below average, achievement at or above the national average indicates good progress.
107. In lessons and in work seen, attainment in Years 10 and 11 is in line with national expectations. Pupils speak and listen well, especially boys, who respond with confidence, sensitivity and understanding to both literary and non-literary texts. They take part in discussions with enthusiasm and indicate understanding of similes, stanzas and other poetic terms. Pupils' reading skills are satisfactory and they show understanding and good recall, with higher attaining pupils indicating a growing appreciation of challenging texts. For example, in studying John Donne's 'The Sun Rising', higher attaining pupils are able to explain personification of the sun and appreciate the poet's humorous tone. Pupils complete increasingly extensive writing supported by encouraging and personal marking. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used widely for drafting and re-drafting, research and word processing so that by the end of Year 11, pupils have developed a sophisticated level of knowledge of systems for presenting information, including the use of Powerpoint software. Finished pieces, therefore, are in line with national expectations in terms of content and style.

Quality of education

108. In seven of the twelve lessons observed, the teaching was satisfactory and in five it was good. In no lesson was the teaching unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned with the needs of individual pupils clearly documented. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding of the subject that enables them to explain clearly and develop pupils' understanding. Use of questioning, however, does not always support pupils in extending their thinking and pupils are often given the answer too quickly. Therefore, pupil independence is not always developed. The pace of lessons in Years 10 and 11 is good, with pupils constantly being challenged to maintain attention, for example by a variety of tasks to develop understanding of prison life prior to writing in role as a prisoner.
109. In Year 9, pace was not always in evidence, with pupils spending too long finding and recording examples of prefixes used to construct opposites. The result was that attention was lost and understanding essential to the main task was not developed. Teaching was less effective therefore when the focus and pace of a starter activity was not maintained, or when a text was read and understanding was not secure prior to beginning the main task.
110. Marking of pupils' work is good in Year 10 with positive, perceptive and detailed comments indicating how pupils can improve their work. Marking is more variable in Years 7 to 9 with some examples of clear marking which enabled pupils to understand what they were doing well and how they could improve. Some pieces of work, however, were not marked so pupils and teachers were unaware of progress made.

111. Relationships in the classroom are good with staff demonstrating a positive, supportive and caring approach to the pupils. This is a strength of the department and forms the basis of the generally good behaviour of the pupils. The instances of poor behaviour were managed firmly and positively, enabling pupils to be clear about the high expectations held by teachers.
112. Pupils' differing educational needs are well recognised in lesson planning where individual pupil needs are recorded, and in the use of recommended strategies for the management of these needs. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, are supported in meeting the challenge of tasks through the provision of a range of appropriately modified materials. A good example of this was a Year 11 lesson where a small group of pupils with special educational needs were able to develop a clear understanding of the relationship between characters in the play 'Our Day Out'. Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 were challenged by the levels of texts used and by the expectations of staff, but some opportunities were lost to challenge similar pupils in Years 7 and 9 because expectations and the level of text and task were low.

Leadership and management

113. The department is well led. The head of department has a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils and the strengths of the department. Self-evaluation enables the department to critically examine present strengths and to focus on areas for development. It also enables the department to monitor and support each other to develop their teaching skills further and to support less experienced members. The new framework for teaching English in Years 7 to 9 has been successfully adopted in the scheme of work. There are literacy lessons for some pupils who need to improve, where the literacy specialist uses the strategy successfully to reinforce basic rules of spelling and grammar as well as develop writing skills. Regular meetings take place that focus on pupil attainment so that analysis of individual pupil progress informs target setting. ICT is extremely well developed in the subject.
114. Progress since the last inspection has been good, with the attainment of pupils improving. Speaking and listening skills, particularly of boys in Years 10 and 11, are good. The writing of lower attaining pupils has improved but attention still needs to be given to the development of their more formal writing. The reading skills of all pupils have improved. The further improvement of writing and reading is now planned through the new schemes of work.

DRAMA

115. Drama was not a significant part of the curriculum offered at the time of the previous inspection and was not reported on in that inspection report. Since then the school has made a strong commitment to the introduction of drama as a GCSE course and this year has introduced it as a discrete subject to be taught at Key Stage 3 beginning with the current Year 7 classes.
116. The impact of the subject at GCSE has been considerable and impressive results have been gained in the examinations. The 2002 results confirmed all pupils entered gaining a pass grade and 94 per cent of them gaining a grade between A to C. These were higher overall than the grades gained in other subjects by the same pupils and represent very good achievement. Drama is thus emerging as a potential strength of the school.
117. The work seen during the inspection was mainly of classes at the beginning of their courses. As the subject is not yet taught as a specialist subject in Years 8 and 9, the Year 10 pupils are

starting their GCSE course with minimal experience of the syllabus and course content. For Year 7 pupils, given the timing of the inspection so early in the new school year, they were also at the start of their work in the subject. Prior experience of it in the primary school is not extensive for many pupils and this adds to the novelty of the experience. Consequently, the standard of work seen reflected this lack of experience but was satisfactory in three of the four lessons seen. It was good in one of the Year 10 lessons. In all lessons pupils demonstrate secure basic skills in mime, movement and improvised work with a growing understanding of the importance of the correct use of vocal range and content. The Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of theatre styles including comedy, tragedy, farce, and pantomime. They quickly picked up the main features of melodrama and were able to show their understanding well in effective self-devised scenes on the theme of evictions.

118. Pupils' attitudes to the work are very positive and all groups seen entered into the work set with good humour and a marked sense of co-operation and support for each others' efforts. The subject makes a good contribution to the social development of the pupils and the inclusive nature of the work enables pupils of all abilities and from different social and ethnic backgrounds to work together effectively.
119. The teaching seen was satisfactory in three lessons and good in one other. Its strength is in the enthusiastic commitment and rigorous way in which the recently appointed head of drama approaches the work. Pupils benefit considerably from this enthusiasm and the very good relationships and controls evident in lessons. The department is being managed with similarly impressive enthusiasm but lacks significant resources and the accommodation is far from ideal if the work is to encompass all the theatre arts. Developing courses in stagecraft and production techniques will be severely constrained without investment in these areas. Developing the curriculum in the subject is a target of the subject leader who is enriching the pupils' experience, and his own, by appropriate involvement in extra-curricular work with contributions from teachers in other schools, visiting actors, a programme of theatre visits and projects with local community and theatres. The school should seek to maintain this support for the subject, which is in a very good position to make an even more valuable contribution to the life of the school and the personal development of all the pupils.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are rising and compare well with those for similar schools;
- Teachers are caring and committed and relationships are generally good;
- There is good use of ICT in mathematics lessons.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results are below those in other subjects in the school for the same pupils;
- Effective oral and mental starters to lessons in order to improve standards of numeracy are underdeveloped;
- The over long lessons adversely effect pupils' learning.

Standards and achievement

120. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well below the national average but well above the average for similar schools. Mathematics results compared reasonably well with those in science but were below those for English. Average point scores improved steadily over the previous three years, at above the national rate. GCSE performance has improved over recent years, and although the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C in 2001 was well below the national average it was above the average for similar schools. There has been an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to G which is now at above the national average and shows improvement in the provision for lower attaining pupils.
121. The department has contributed to the development of literacy across the curriculum through the display of key words which are referred to regularly in planning and in teaching. However, mathematical words are often misspelled and rarely corrected and, apart from good extended writing in GCSE coursework activities, there is little writing in mathematics books and investigative work often lacks written explanation. Many pupils have limited numeracy skills and often have to work out calculations for which they should have rapid recall.
122. Attainment on entry has been overall well below average and standards in lessons seen reflect this. Many pupils work at levels below the national average and generally make satisfactory progress, including those with SEN. Higher attaining pupils work at or above the national average levels but overall the highest attainers are not making rapid enough progress in relation to their prior attainment, so that they repeat work which they have already covered in previous years. This limits the progress which they are able to make in lessons. The banding arrangements mean that many groups contain a very wide range of attainment, which makes it difficult to ensure that all pupils make good progress, and little use of extension or support activities was seen.

Quality of education

123. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, with just over half at least good and one sixth very good. Teachers are caring and concerned to do their best for the pupils and relationships are good with a firm but friendly approach. Pupils generally respond well, behave well and co-operate fully. Lessons are well planned and show the

influence of the National Numeracy Initiative. Objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and the three-part lesson structure is widely used. Some good plenary sessions were seen, but introductions were mainly too long and did not focus sufficiently on oral and mental mathematics. Resources are used effectively, particularly equipment such as number cards and lines. The department is making effective use of ICT, including the exploration of algebra and pattern with spreadsheets and graph drawing using an interactive whiteboard. However, the scheme of work does not highlight specific ICT activities and the department's graphic calculators are rarely used. A small number of lessons seen had unsatisfactory features that limited the progress pupils made. These included poor behaviour of pupils that was not well managed by the teacher, slow pace of work, not matching work to prior attainment, and failure to use practical resources to illustrate difficult ideas. Marking of pupils' work is generally good, as is the presentation of pupils' work, and approaches to assessment are effective. However, marking is not done meticulously, particularly with groups of low attaining pupils and a minority of exercise books contain a lot of unfinished or uncorrected work, in some cases with pupils repeating the same mistakes. Homework is used regularly to consolidate and extend classwork, and is reviewed effectively in the next lessons.

Leadership and management

124. The department benefits from the strong leadership of the head of department and the numeracy co-ordinator both of whom were recently appointed. Development plans show a clear vision and recognition of the needs of the department, and a commitment to implement the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The organisation of teaching groups, many of which have a wide spread of attainment, and the very long lessons, have an adverse effect on pupils' learning. Since the last inspection, many aspects of the work of the department have improved, including standards achieved, the quality of teaching, and the monitoring of the work of the department. However, the large number of part-time teachers and limited specialist accommodation restricts the extent of day-to-day monitoring and support which the head of department can offer.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good;
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good;
- Assessment data is well used to set targets and to monitor pupils' progress;
- There is effective use of computers in teaching and learning;
- The extra-curricular science club is strongly supported.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment by pupils in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations is not yet high enough;
- Not all lessons have an effective plenary review to assess the quality of learning;
- There are insufficient opportunities for extended writing, particularly in Years 7 to 9;
- Higher attaining pupils do not have sufficient access to extension work within lessons.

Standards and achievement

125. Attainment by pupils in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well below the national average but were above average compared to similar schools. After the last inspection, results declined steadily until the 2001 tests when they improved dramatically. The unconfirmed results of the 2002 tests indicate that this improvement has been maintained. In the GCSE examinations in 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well below the national average, but virtually all pupils gained A* to G grades. Results have improved steadily since the last inspection and the unconfirmed results for the 2002 examinations indicate that this trend has also been maintained. Standards are rising at a rate faster than the national rate but remain at a level well below national averages.
126. In lessons and in work seen during the inspection, standards overall are below the nationally expected level in Years 7 to 9, but slightly better than indicated by the national test results at the end of Year 9. Pupils' learning in lessons is generally good but they display very limited ability to recall work from previous lessons. As a result they do not build up a secure knowledge base, and this affects their performance in tests and their ability to apply knowledge. Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment in science. Their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. They develop sound practical skills and understand how to plan fair tests for their investigations. They are enthusiastic about practical work, handle equipment confidently, with due attention to safety and generally achieve good results. Good examples were seen of pupils expressing wonder when, for example, Year 7 pupils used microscopes for the first time and observed plant cells from onions, and Year 9 pupils measured the heat energy produced on burning different food samples. Higher attaining pupils achieve well and are more confident in discussing their work. After plotting a graph showing the heartbeat recovery after exercise, Year 9 pupils were able to predict how the graph would look if the person had been a regular smoker. Pupils' written work is generally satisfactory and key words are well understood. However, opportunities for extended writing in science are very limited. Lower attaining pupils are well catered for, with suitably modified work and good support to make satisfactory progress.
127. In lessons and work seen, attainment in Years 10 and 11 is below the nationally expected level, but better than indicated by the 2001 GCSE results. The improved use of assessment data to set targets for pupils is having a positive impact on standards, but the majority of pupils still have difficulty in assimilating and applying information and ideas. Coursework

investigations are generally well carried out, and data handling skills are satisfactory, but pupils do not display clear critical skills in evaluating their work. They respond well to the use of computers in lessons, such as seeking information about products from oil or accessing Internet web-sites for revision topics. Higher attaining pupils respond well to challenging work such as relating energy changes in chemical reactions to changes in bonding, and using molecular models to examine the process of oil 'cracking'. However, such pupils are not regularly given extension work in lessons to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Quality of education

128. The quality of teaching overall is good. It was at least good in two-thirds of the lesson observed and very good in one quarter of the lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in their delivery. Clear learning objectives are identified for lessons and are shared with pupils, but are not always effectively reviewed at the end of lessons to assess progress and to inform planning. Practical work is well organised and supervised, and safety aspects are thoroughly discussed with pupils. Teachers manage pupils well and relationships are very good. Pupils respond well in lessons and maintain good levels of concentration. A very small minority of pupils occasionally displays inappropriate behaviour, but teachers generally ensure that learning is sustained throughout lessons. Teachers are increasingly using information and communication technology to good effect in lessons. Powerpoint presentations are well used, sensors and data loggers are used to collect and process experimental results and the Internet is well used to seek information.

Leadership and management

129. The department is very well led and the current job-share arrangement for head of department is working very well due to the excellent relationship between the persons concerned. They have a shared vision and clearly defined areas of responsibility. All members of the teaching staff have designated areas of work to monitor and develop and this generates very clear team spirit and a shared commitment. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are good. Additional support is well provided through booster classes and the very good services of the industrial liaison mentor. Curricular planning is good and a new GNVQ Applied Science course is being introduced for two sets of pupils in the current Year 10. This course has an industrial focus and is already providing enhanced links with industry and public services. There are very flourishing science clubs for Years 7 and 8 pupils who are working towards British Association of Young Scientist awards. Accommodation is currently unsatisfactory. Several lessons have to be taught outside lessons and this presents logistical and planning problems. The two new laboratories provide good quality accommodation, but the older laboratories are in need of re-furbishment to provide adequate services and flexibility for practical classes. Resources are generally good and the recent acquisition of a stock of wireless laptops is proving a boon to both teaching and learning.
130. Since the last inspection standards have risen but still remain at levels well below the national average. The quality of teaching has improved and much greater use is being made of information and communication technology. Good systems are in place to monitor pupils' progress and these are being effectively used to target support to pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- GCSE results have risen dramatically since 1997;
- The quality of teaching is good, lessons are particularly well-planned;
- There is good use of personal sketchbooks;
- Standards of work with colour, ceramics and printing are above average.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of observational drawing are below average, particularly in Years 10 and 11;
- ICT is under-used both for research and making art;
- Class sizes are too large, particularly in Year 9.

Standards and achievement

131. The percentage of pupils gaining level 5 by the end of Year 9 in 2001 was 94 per cent compared to the national average of 73 per cent. However, work seen did not match this assessment and the figure must be regarded as unreliable. Much improved individual assessments were introduced this year and standards of work seen make the 2002 figure of 60 per cent of pupils gaining level 5 an accurate picture of standards at the end of Year 9. Girls performed significantly better than boys. Standards are highest when pupils use colour and composition using techniques inspired by the work of famous artists. Printmaking skills and ceramics are also areas where pupils produce work above average for their age group. Standards of drawing are generally below average and this has an adverse effect on standards of finished work.
132. GCSE grades have risen dramatically since 1997 when only 17 per cent of pupils achieved an A* to C grade. In 2001, the figure was 46 per cent compared with a national average of 64 per cent. In 2002, the result of 67 per cent represents an outstanding improvement since the last inspection. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 have largely matched these results, with much of the work of average standard for the age group. Pupil's standards of ceramics and printmaking are above average but general weakness in drawing skill is evident in much of the work.

Quality of education

133. All the lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was at least good and in half of them it was very good. Lessons were very well planned, pacy, structured and incorporated a wide variety of activity. Lessons are taught with enthusiasm and energy. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of the subject across both two and three-dimensional work. Whole-class demonstration of sculptural and printmaking technique is particularly effective in developing pupil skills. Good facilitation skills are also evident in the classroom management of the wide range of learning activity that often occurs within each lesson. Work is regularly assessed and good work rewarded. Pupils are involved in recording and assessing their own work. Homework linked to classroom work is effectively set at the beginning of each lesson and is marked promptly. All pupils use sketchbooks for research and developing personal ideas. The art rooms provide suitable accommodation and are adequately resourced. However, very large classes, particularly in Year 9, produce cramped conditions and adversely effect standards of learning, especially in practical lessons.
134. Lessons are planned and delivered to ensure pupils of all levels of attainment and backgrounds make good progress. Opportunities are also used to develop pupil's literacy.

Good work-routines and teamwork are noticeable features of classroom and resource organisation and this makes a positive contribution to pupil's social development. Work is well kept.

Leadership and management

135. The management and leadership of the department are good. Departmental documentation is very good. The Head of Department has made significant improvements to the department since being appointed in January 2002. The GCSE results achieved in 2002 were outstanding. The curriculum is now more broad and balanced, particularly in Years 7 to 9 where printmaking and sculpture are now experienced. Display work and the general appearance of the classroom have vastly improved and work displays are regularly updated. Areas for future improvement are clearly stated and there is a commitment to continuous improvement and higher standards driven by enthusiasm, energy and determination.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good. Subject knowledge and teacher enthusiasm are real strengths;
- Very good use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning including use of the City Learning Centre (CLC);
- There is good variety and quality of work by pupils of all ages;
- The behaviour and attitude of the pupils to both the staff and subject are good;
- Standards are rising, especially for pupils aged 14 to 16;
- Health and safety advice is very good;
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of design capability using traditional methods needs to be improved;
- The presentation of folder work is less good than it should be;
- Literacy skills, especially speaking and writing, need improving;
- The use of electronics and systems and control are under-developed.

Standards and achievement

136. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessment in 2001 shows that pupils were achieving below the national average. Although levels of attainment in designing and making skills are low on entry pupils make good progress between Years 7 to 9. In lessons and in work seen the standard and variety of work is at least in line with comparable schools. A significant minority of pupils make very good gains in skills, knowledge and understanding of the design and technology process. Very good gains are made in the use of ICT and pupils are confident and competent in using a variety of software in both design and make assignments and in graphics.
137. Practical skills are being developed systematically and pupils enthusiastically take part in lessons, for example in a Year 7 lesson using laptop computers and computer aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) software. Other very good examples were when working in "companies" in textiles to develop batch production, and in food when developing products for dairy intolerant and coeliac diets. The recently upgraded facilities ensure that pupils have

access to a quality environment and a very good range of safe workshop facilities. Pupils achieve well in comparison to prior performance.

138. Standards at GCSE were well below the national average in 2001 with 31 per cent of pupils attaining A* to C grades. The percentage of A* to G grades on the other hand was slightly above the national average. Results have improved since the last inspection. There has been particular improvement in the use of ICT and in the quality of written evaluations in food technology. Results compare favourably with those in other subjects, with girls gaining better results than boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across Years 7 to 11.
139. In lessons and in work seen, attainment in Years 10 and 11 is at least in line with national expectations. As a result of very good teaching and the range of learning opportunities offered, pupils achieve well. Design folders are well prepared with a good range of research evidence and process, although improved presentation skills and paper management would improve their standard, quality and value. Research evidence is used well in all areas to support outcomes, for example in a Year 11 lesson on, "What is a specification?" Making is better than designing. Due to the very good use made of demonstrations, for example, in the making of a desk tidy, the quality of practical work is very good.

Quality of education

140. The quality of teaching and learning was at least good in every lesson seen. In half of the lessons seen the teaching was very good and in one lesson it was outstanding. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In all lessons staff work to very good individual plans developed from well-prepared schemes of work. Pace, challenge and the level of pupil involvement and interest are all very high, as are the staff expectations for pupils. Questioning skills are very well developed. Pupils develop independence and initiative. The range and variety of teaching styles used across all areas is very good but with a consistent approach to class management and organisation that pupils respect and enjoy. No time needs to be wasted on maintaining order. Very good teaching of ICT ensures that skills of software navigation are taught systematically across all areas, for example in a presentation on computer aided machining in textiles. Pupils aged 14 to 16 receive very good one-to-one feedback on projects. This, linked to whole-class teaching and demonstrations ensures that pupils learn well and produce quality products. Very good extension work is provided for gifted and talented pupils and the arrangements for Year 11 pupils to attend extra sessions to complete coursework is a particular strength of the subject.

Leadership and management

141. The department is very well led and all staff display very good knowledge and skills in their particular specialisms. The development of the department and the successful Technology College bid is a credit to the joint working of the staff and school management. The design and technology curriculum has gained momentum over the last three years. The development of ICT, computer aided design and making (CAD/CAM) systems, post 16 provision and the range of courses provided are all significant factors in moving the department forward. Assessment procedures are good as is the monitoring and tracking of pupils across year groups. Internal standardisation of levels and grades takes place ensuring that pupils are well informed about their progress and levels of attainment. A strong feature of the department is the excellent level of technician support. The whole department works very well as a team.
142. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in the provision for design and technology. All health and safety issues have been addressed, standards of attainment have improved and pupils achieve well. Results at GCSE have improved. With staff working

to their strengths, the breadth and balance of the technology curriculum has improved and now includes manufacturing in the sixth form. The accommodation has improved, only one area, food, needs further refurbishment. Work needs to be done on speaking and writing and in the development of basic design skills for the younger pupils. There are some shortcomings in the way that many pupils present and develop their folder work. This could be addressed by moving towards sketchbooks rather than a loose paper system. Since the last inspection the school has achieved Technology College Status and this is having a significant positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning in design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the provision for geography is **unsatisfactory, although there are some strengths.**

Strengths

- Pupil achievement is improved in Years 7 to 9;
- The best lessons contained notable strategies for improving pupils' literacy and numeracy;
- The partnership with learning support staff is good for pupils with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching does not meet the differing needs of pupils to eliminate underachievement;
- ICT is not used sufficiently in the teaching and learning of geography;
- Too few pupils choose geography as an option in Years 10 and 11;
- Leadership and management needs strengthening.

Standards and Achievement

143. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments in 2002 show pupils' attainment is likely to be broadly in line with national expectations. There is a wide range of prior attainment in Years 7 to 9; a significant proportion of pupils enter the school with below average attainment and with special educational needs. Below average standards in literacy have an adverse effect on overall standards. Most pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve at a satisfactory level overall for their prior attainment, but standards of work seen indicate that the present group of pupils will attain standards which are below average by the end of Year 9, reflecting their prior attainment, but also the quality of teaching.
144. Pupils in Year 7 were continuing their introductory work on the locality and the interpretation of land use maps. Pupils were achieving at a satisfactory level overall, although work set for the highest attaining pupils did not maintain their interest over the full 70 minutes of the lesson. Pupils in Year 8 had a widely differing view about the formation and characteristics of waterfalls through their study of Niagara Falls. Potentially higher attaining pupils in Year 9 can use a range of geographical skills to extract information from maps and other sources and apply the knowledge gained to an understanding of how processes interact to create patterns. In discussion with the highest attaining pupils, they responded well to challenging questions, and can explain interactions between human and physical processes and use a range of geographical factors to explain and predict change in the characteristics of places over time. The work in lessons during the inspection about the North Italian Plain displayed some of these characteristics of attainment and achievement, but overall the work set in some classes did not make sufficient demands of the pupils. This applies equally to higher attaining pupils as well as to pupils with special educational needs, although when these pupils are effectively supported by learning support staff or taught in small groups, they do well. There is too little use of information communication technology (ICT) to support pupils' independent learning.

145. Judgements on standards by the end of Year 11 cannot be made as no pupils chose to take geography in 2001. In 2000, all pupils who took GCSE gained a grade between A* and G, an improvement since the last inspection. The small number of pupils who took the examination makes a comparison with the national average unreliable. Similar results were obtained in 2002. Standards in Year 10 for the small number of pupils taking the GCSE course are below average. There is a significant range of prior attainment in the group, with several pupils having special educational needs, but they achieve satisfactorily. Current work shows that pupils can give a simple explanation of the differences between more and less economically developed countries. However, their general geographical knowledge and recall of examples is below average.

Quality of education

146. Teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, lessons observed ranged between good and unsatisfactory, and from other inspection evidence, teaching over time is broadly satisfactory. Where teaching is good, pupils respond well to teachers' expectations for work and behaviour. Pupils sustain their concentration and work productively. These lessons are effectively planned with a range of appropriate activities which support pupils' learning. Good strategies are used to support pupils' understanding of their work by sharing the learning objectives and ensuring that they know what they are to do. Teachers also make sure that the shortcomings in pupils' literacy skills are addressed by reading with them, making pupils read aloud, and covering key words with clear definitions. Opportunities are also taken to develop pupils' numeracy as they work with data, graphs and co-ordinates. This action for literacy and numeracy is a strength. Lessons conclude with a review of the work done to check levels of understanding. Homework is effectively used to either consolidate or to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. In lessons taken by staff from the learning support department, very good use is made of a range of strategies which make good demands of the pupils. The teachers adapt the scheme of work very well so that the work meets pupils' needs and sustains their interest. These pupils then learn well, a good improvement since the last inspection.
147. Where teaching is only satisfactory, and in lessons which are unsatisfactory, the work set is not adapted sufficiently to meet the differing needs of the pupils. This leads to lessons in which pupils lose their concentration and their behaviour deteriorates. There are not enough different activities; teachers talk for too long, the pace of the lessons is slow and learning is unsatisfactory, with underachievement. Too many low level common tasks are set; colouring-in maps, copying graphs and completing work sheets. Whilst many pupils complete this work they comment that they do not enjoy it and their learning becomes unsatisfactory. This was also the case at the last inspection, and has a negative effect on learning for the higher attaining pupils. When teachers do not make sufficient allowance for pupils' differing needs, progress becomes unsatisfactory and there is underachievement. The choice of topics for study ensures pupils can develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of geographical issues, although opportunities for reflection are limited.

Leadership and management

148. Leadership and management are broadly satisfactory. The department development plan is well written appropriate and strategic. Strengths are found in the regular assessments, but marking of class-work is inconsistent and National Curriculum levels are not always used or shared with pupils as targets. There is particularly good emphasis on literacy development, and the links with special educational needs staff are very good, both aspects showing good improvement since the last inspection. Schemes of work are being revised to support the

development of work to meet the wide range of pupil capability. Opportunities have also been taken for gifted and talented pupils to attend courses provided at Birmingham University. The accommodation is satisfactory, as are general resources, which are generally used satisfactorily. Shortcomings occur because of the limited access to computers, and the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. Even though there are only a small number of teachers, there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and there has been insufficient improvement in teaching. The head of department, and other teachers in the department, also carry significant whole school responsibilities, and there is insufficient focus and direction to initiate significant change. Even though standards by the end of Year 9 show added value, the convolution of curriculum time, the low retention of pupils in Years 10 and 11 to provide viable groups for GCSE, and eventually courses in the sixth form, are significant concerns. Because of these last two issues, and the shortcomings in teaching which still persist, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory overall.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers show secure and competent subject knowledge to support learning;
- There is some good practice in reinforcing learning;
- Overall classroom management and relationships with pupils are good;
- Teachers show secure and competent subject knowledge to support learning;
- There is some good practice in reinforcing learning;
- Overall classroom management and relationships with pupils are good.

Areas for improvement

- The range and variety of independent learning activities is not yet extensive enough;
- Tasks are not always tailored to meet the range of needs of the mixed attainment groups;
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning.

Standards and achievement

149. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments in the last two years show that pupils attained below the national expectation, but achieving satisfactorily compared to their prior attainment on entry to the school. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C and the proportion gaining a least a G grade have improved since the last inspection, and show a consistently rising trend, but the A* to C grade figures are still below the national average. Girls gain better results than boys.
150. In work seen during the inspection, standards were below the levels expected of pupils nationally, but taking into account prior attainment, pupils show a satisfactory level of achievement. In Year 7, pupils have a carefully sequenced learning programme to develop their skills of historical interpretation and analysis. They are able to identify characteristics of change and continuity in relation to Roman Britain and contemporary developments. This task, however, lacks challenge for the higher attaining pupils, whilst lower attaining pupils require more background information. In Year 8, boys and girls consider the impact of Puritan rule on seventeenth century England. Pupils' learning in this lesson was reinforced by a focus on their group activity, providing more opportunity for independent learning and building confidence. Pupils reported back to the whole class. The pace was brisk, teacher expectations were clear, pupils of all levels of attainment made good progress and gained in knowledge. Higher attaining pupils gained an empathetic understanding of the place of children within that society. In the majority of lessons seen, pupils require more access to a

wider range of learning resources, including video clips, maps and charts. In Year 9, pupils studying the development of attitudes of British people to German people during World War One found tasks and worksheets undemanding, with work being focussed on description rather than analysis and historical interpretation.

151. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, most pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress and gains in their factual knowledge. Only one group of pupils takes history each year. Recruitment in the present Years 10 and 11 is stronger than the previous two years. Attainment is improving, but there is an over reliance upon a restricted range of teaching and learning styles. Attainment is supported by clear reference in class to assessment objectives, and pupils understand these requirements.

Quality of education

152. The quality of teaching is largely satisfactory. Occasionally it is good and on other occasions it is unsatisfactory. Overall, there is improvement in the range of activities for pupils to work independently. However, time for discussion is not always sufficient, and the over usage of just one or two teaching methods at times constrains pupil performance and progress. Sometimes, these serve to limit pupils' response and creativity. Teachers have secure and competent subject knowledge. Schemes of work are well prepared, but in some cases the underpinning lessons do not match the range of learners' attainment. Where teaching is good, pace and expectations are high, with opportunities for independent investigation. When teaching is less effective, teacher expectations and assignments are less demanding and challenging, with few opportunities for extended spoken answers or presentations. In a Year 10 lesson on prohibition, the higher attaining pupils were insufficiently challenged by the acceptance of short answer responses.
153. When pupils are actively engaged in learning, their interest is sustained and they make better progress. In Year 11, a lesson on the economic recovery of Germany in the 1930's enabled students to evaluate options, but other tasks were simply low level copying exercises which were not an effective use of the teacher's or pupils' time. Project work on an individual basis showed independent working, and supportive teacher input both in content, ongoing assessment and in feedback to the pupils. Year 11 pupils are keen to know how to improve their work and to attain a higher-grade performance. Better progress is made in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 because teaching is more focussed. Teachers do not always reinforce learning by writing key points on the board, or requiring pupils to write the points down in their exercise books. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and those pupils who have English as additional language is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

154. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. Priorities for improvement are consistent with the school's objectives and are aimed at improvement, but the departmental development plan lacks specific action and resource implications. Accommodation is good, and the department is well resourced. At present, little use is made of ICT to enhance whole class teaching and to support pupils' learning. The department follows well the school assessment procedure. Assessment and feedback procedures are more detailed and effective in Years 10 and 11 than they are in Years 7 to 9. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development in investigating the historical perspectives on racism and the social and cultural manipulation of minority or disempowered groups within society.

155. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in using and interpreting source documents. GCSE results have improved, and there is also a rising trend in recruitment to the subject at GCSE level. Assignments and assessment outcomes, which promote active and independent learning activities, create greater pupil interest and responsiveness.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning overall is good or better;
- A positive new management structure is enhancing progress;
- Resources are appropriate and of good quality;
- Legal requirements are now met.

Areas for improvement

- A team approach to developing schemes of work and lesson plans is needed;
- Assessment procedures need improving;
- Class sizes exceeding the number of computers is not always dealt with appropriately.

Standards and achievement

156. The level of prior attainment of students has improved in recent years but is still below the national average. Achievement overall, including that of the pupils who have special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, is satisfactory at each key stage. The improvement in attainment at the end of Year 9 is significant for the school, but is still below the national average. Teacher assessments indicate that 51 per cent of pupils obtained level 5 or above, when the national average is 66 per cent. All pupils in Years 7, 8, and 9 now have discrete ICT lessons each week and are using ICT well in a range of other subjects such as mathematics, English, design technology and science. The discrepancy between the number of computers in each teaching room (20) and the size of classes (30+) is hindering learning to some extent.
157. Year 7 pupils produce multimedia presentations using text, images and sound and are sensitive to the needs of the audience. Year 8 pupils publish presentations and design web sites. They present ideas in a variety of ways, using a range of software techniques. They show flexibility in using the facilities of a range of software packages. They are able to explain and demonstrate how they have formatted and edited documents. Year 9 pupils use ICT to manage a project, demonstrating their familiarity with software and explaining the role of ICT. Year 9 pupils now follow the modules of a GNVQ course to give them an opportunity to obtain an external qualification.
158. The attainment at the end of Year 11 has also improved again but remains below the national average. In 2001, 41 per cent of the 17 pupils entered gained A* to C GCSE grades with the national average being 52 per cent. No students gained above a grade B. In 2001 the school changed to a GNVQ course for all Year 10 pupils and based upon their progress in the early modules selected a group to complete the full GNVQ. Fifty five pupils out of the full year were entered for the final assessment and 80 per cent obtained a grade. However, 95 per cent of those gaining a grade only achieved grade C. This GNVQ course is delivered with the assistance of other subjects – mathematics, English, design & technology and science. The coursework is monitored and assessed by the ICT co-ordinator to ensure consistency, but the other departments develop the modules of work.

159. Year 10 and 11 pupils are able to format and edit documents to suit the needs of a particular audience. They appreciate the importance of presentation and can demonstrate a range of skills in using the facilities of software packages. They are also able to identify the various components of computer systems and classify them as appropriate. They manage their own learning and coherently explain how they are using the technology.

Quality of education

160. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Teaching overall is good with more than half the lessons observed being good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject and prepare well for lessons. They generally set constructive activities, which challenge pupils and allow them to extend their skills in the use of ICT. With all year groups teachers identify tasks suitable for the age of the pupils and provide extensive worksheets to ensure that concentration does not wander. Pace of lessons is always good and homework is often used to enhance classroom teaching and learning. Teachers manage students with care and ensure a good learning classroom environment.
161. Pupils generally take advantage of the activities given to them to increase their knowledge and expand their use of ICT. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils planned a Powerpoint presentation on their family and lives. They were able to mix text with graphics and use various levels of animation. Year 9 pupils used ICT to produce the minutes of a meeting from notes included in the worksheet. They appropriately formatted the printout using headings and numbering. In a Year 11 lesson a school based website was used to enhance the learning of the structure of computer systems. Pupils accessed the site and summarised the information discovered in table format choosing suitable software. However, in some lessons teachers missed the opportunity to discuss previous progress. Some activities in Year 9 did not improve the students' skill in using the more advanced features of the software where it was appropriate.
162. Behaviour is good and pupils respond well to planned lessons. They pay attention and keep to task when working on the computers. In Years 7 and 8 they show great enthusiasm for the work, but by Year 9 they need to be set challenging tasks. If the task is not very challenging then attention wanders and it was noticeable that the girls were more ready to maintain attention to task than the boys. Pupils are prepared to co-operate with each other where appropriate. They generally have respect for the teachers, school, equipment and each other and show a friendly approach to everyone. They freely discuss their work and are able to explain what they are doing and how they use the facilities of the software. They work independently and are willing to experiment and find out new techniques for themselves. In Years 10 and 11, pupils show much independence in managing and presenting their coursework. They contribute to class discussion and concentrate with enthusiasm. They fully explain the task they are undertaking and demonstrate how to effectively use the software to advance that task.

Leadership and management

163. The Department is well managed by a strategic director for ICT plus an ICT co-ordinator. The shared responsibility and the recognition of individual roles has promoted the progress of ICT. There are clear strategies for the continued expansion of ICT, which if realised will be to the benefit of the school and pupils. The balanced deployment of teaching staff is a positive move to ensure wide experience. There is now a need to build on the good quality teaching and create a team approach to further the development of the schemes of work and lesson plans. The latest schemes of work and assessment procedures should ensure that the progress made in recent years is maintained.
164. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in the number of computers in the school. The resources are now good with two dedicated ICT rooms, an ICT Graphics room and satellite units around the school, with good hardware and a range of appropriate software. However, each of the rooms only has 20 computers when class sizes are generally over 25. This is undesirable and may compromise the good quality teaching and learning. The school should address this issue and create strategies to improve the situation.
165. The extensive resources are managed by two hard working technicians, whose further development would be helped by attendance at appropriate courses.
166. There has also been improvement since the last inspection in the use of ICT across the curriculum. Inspectors observed some good examples of the use of ICT in lessons. A number of departments use ICT effectively such as mathematics, English, science and particularly design and technology. Staff have participated in nationally funded training and most departments would like to develop and extend their use of ICT. However, this enthusiasm is frustrated by a lack of technology in some departments such as music, history, art and geography.
167. The current management of the cross curricular ICT is good. A strategic decision was taken to deliver ICT through the core subjects and others. This has been co-ordinated well and pupils are able to use the skills they learn in ICT to support and enhance their work in these other subjects.
168. There are a number of good examples of the use of ICT in an extra curricular context. A group of Year 9 pupils have volunteered to act as reviewers of teaching material on the Birmingham Grid for Learning website. Another group of pupils was using very clever software to design a model car for a formula 1 project sponsored by a famous car manufacturer. This was assisted by the City Learning Centre which was also used by a group of religious education pupils to design logos for religious societies.
169. The progress made since the last inspection is good, but there are still areas for further development.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory, although there are some strengths.**

Strengths

- Hard work and determined leadership has pulled the department through a period of considerable difficulty;
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are generally good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' lack confidence in the skills of listening to and speaking the foreign language;
- In some lessons, too much is done by the teacher and not enough by the pupils;
- ICT is used insufficiently to improve pupils' learning;
- The requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 10 to 11 are not met for the majority of pupils.

170. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2001 suggested that pupils' overall level of attainment in French was in line with the national expectation. However, over the last two years the department has been disadvantaged by the absence of two of the three members of its permanent staff for varying lengths of time. Their many replacements were not always specialist teachers, and this resulted in a significant lack of continuity and motivation for many pupils. The skills of listening and speaking in particular were very adversely affected. These were areas noted as needing improvement in the previous report. The rate of progress in Years 7 to 9 has therefore been unsatisfactory for many pupils who have suffered from the lack of continuity, owing to the absence of their specialist teacher. Aural and oral skills in particular are very weak.
171. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' overall standards of attainment in French are below average. In a class of higher-attaining pupils in Year 9, which had had a variety of different teachers over an 18-month period, standards are well below average. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language is weak. They lack confidence in their oral work and require much support from their teachers. Responses to questions are too short. Achievement in these two skills has been unsatisfactory. However, pupils in Year 7 who have just begun to learn French are making satisfactory progress: in one lesson a boy asked for help in French. In their written work, pupils write about leisure pursuits and where they live. They copy reasonably accurately, but they are less accurate when they write independently. Few pupils complete corrections or redraft their work in order to improve its accuracy.
172. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examinations in French in 2001 was significantly below the national average. All pupils attained a grade in the range A* to G, which is above the national average. In the examinations in 2002, girls' performance improved over the previous year, whilst that of boys dropped by ten per cent. It is a fitting testament to the sustained and dedicated work of the head of department that the levels of attainment in 2001 were sustained in the examinations in 2002 at the end of a very difficult year with many different teachers. The modular courses provide pupils with a good guide as to how well they are doing: the points-score system shows them by how much they need to improve. For the majority of these pupils, this represents good achievement.

173. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Year 11 is below average. There are only two small groups in Year 11, one in French and one in German. In French, pupils understand some of the questions asked by the teacher and they can extract information from conversations that they hear on cassette. They understand the past tense and can use it correctly in replies to questions. They are less confident when they meet basic questions in a new context, for instance when they talk about food and drink in a topic on healthy eating. In their written work they use the perfect and future tenses, but not consistently accurately. In German, pupils can extract basic information from cassettes, but their understanding is limited. Oracy lacks confidence and responses are short. In their written work, pupils use the perfect tense, but there is confusion between strong and weak verbs. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the classes. Learning support, when it is present, is good. In some lessons, additional material is provided to assist certain pupils. Progress is similar to that of other pupils.
174. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are generally good. This was the judgement in the previous report. Pupils work co-operatively with each other in many lessons, either in pairs or in groups. Occasionally, pupils can be too passive when they are not challenged sufficiently. The adverse effects of different teachers in the past were obvious in a class of Year 9 pupils: many of them are unused to listening exercises and do not respond appropriately. Some pupils, particularly boys, show disaffection and inattention.

The quality of education

175. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to good: overall, it is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and use the foreign language reasonably appropriately in lessons. All lessons begin with revision and objectives are shared with the pupils, usually orally and in writing. This helps pupils to focus on what has to be learnt. Teachers' planning is sound: lessons include different activities and different skills, so that pupils' interest and concentration are maintained. However, some pupils find it difficult to maintain their concentration for the whole 70-minute lesson. Teachers use different methods to help pupils learn – paired work, reciting in chorus, guessing games and flash cards. Not all lessons end with an assessment of what has been learnt by the pupils in the lesson. Teachers make good use of resources, and homework is set regularly.
176. When the teaching is unsatisfactory, too much is done by the teacher and not enough by the pupils. Opportunities for pupils to read aloud or to work in pairs are missed. Pupils do not consolidate what they have covered in the lesson in writing. Too much time is spent on one activity, so that pupils lose their concentration and productivity is low.

Leadership and management

177. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has worked very hard, and against the odds, to ensure that standards were maintained as much as possible during the absence of the other two specialist teachers. The allocation of curricular time to French in Year 7 is below the national average. The requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 10 to 11 are not met for the majority of pupils. Although all the teachers have completed their ICT training, the department's access to computers is very limited. Resources for improving pupils' interest, such as flash cards of good quality, pupils' whiteboards and markers, games and songs, are limited.
178. Owing to the school's inability to recruit and retain specialist teachers during the prolonged absence of two members of staff, the majority of the department's limitations, as specified in

the previous inspection report, have not been rectified. Improvement has therefore been unsatisfactory.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good for all pupils;
- The use of assessment and monitoring of pupil's progress is good;
- The department makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of sufficient accommodation, which restricts the development of ensembles and instrumental group work;
- There is a lack of suitable information and communication programs and equipment to support learning, especially in Years 7 to 9;
- The department is still under resourced; lacking sufficient percussion instruments, sound system and reference books.

Standards and achievement

179. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments in 2001 showed that pupils were attaining above the expected standard. However these results are over generous and the assessments in 2002, based on more structured assessment, shows attainment in line with national expectations. Girls' results are slightly higher than those of boys. These results are confirmed by work seen during inspection and in recordings of pupils' work. Pupils can follow and interpret graphic scores and sing confidently two or more part songs. They can perform rhythmically maintaining individual parts within ensembles. Year 8 pupils, when learning about Reggae music, work hard in pairs to perform a riff pattern with accompanying chords. Most pupils can identify notes on the keyboard, but they do not use correct finger technique; this means that their playing lacks fluency. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 9 class work in small groups developing a Calypso rhythm using orchestral and percussion instruments. They improvise well and extend the basic melodic line over a choral ostinato. However, for the majority of pupils they are unable to extend and develop musical ideas beyond the basic task set by the teacher.
180. Standards at GCSE were just below average standards in 2001 with 63 per cent of pupils attaining A* to C grades. More pupils achieved A* to C grades in 2002. Despite the A* to C grades still being less than expected there has been significant improvement in grades achieved in the last three years, with boys and girls achieving similar results. Compared with other subjects pupils achieve well in music.
181. In lessons and work seen, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those pupils who have English as an additional language, achieve well. The positive and determined attitudes shown by the majority of pupils, means that progress in lessons is good. Pupils sing confidently and compose with a good understanding of melodic lines. Their pieces have a clear harmonic structure using chords carefully but unadventurously. Lower attaining pupils find difficulty in extending their pieces and applying musical knowledge to

their work. Pupils use information and communication technology to help their compositions but are limited in this respect by the lack of variety of programs available.

Quality of education

182. The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection there were examples of very good teaching. Teaching has significant strengths that have a very positive impact on both pupils' attitudes and the quality of their learning. The lessons link musical activities so that pupils' musical skills and knowledge are developed systematically. Lessons have clear objectives, which support pupils' learning. Lessons are well prepared and with a clear understanding of pupil needs. Interest is sustained, and very clear teacher demonstrations ensure pupils know what they have to do. Expectations are high and all pupils are given activities that challenge them sufficiently. Despite the cramped and limited accommodation, pupils move around sensibly and work well in pairs and groups. However, because of the lack of practice rooms, at times during practical work noise levels are high. This said, pupils generally remain on task. There is a consistent approach by the department to the development of literacy and numeracy. The well-designed project notebooks provide good information for pupils as well as a reference bank for revision. Pupils review and evaluate their work regularly. Their written work is marked carefully and homework used to reinforce learning. During a lesson for Year 11 pupils, clearly structured worksheets led pupils through the composition process using Bhangra music as a stimulus. Questioning during the lesson ensured that pupils gave clear musical reasons for their answers and the whole lesson was consolidated with a short listening task to finish.

Leadership and management

183. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear vision and determination to improve further. Teachers work well as a team, but do not have regular opportunities for department meetings. Examination results and pupil progress are analysed and monitored carefully. However, the accommodation and resources are still unsatisfactory. The limits and restrictions of available accommodation, mean that instrumental provision is limited and practical work is all done in the classroom or dining room. There are too few un-tuned percussion instruments and there are very few music books in the library.
184. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Much has been achieved since the appointment of the head of department. Standards have improved, as has the quality of teaching. Pupils' attitudes are more positive and the increase of extra curricular groups with regular performances has raised the profile of music within the school. An after-school keyboard club enables pupils to develop their personal keyboard skills. The choir has a good reputation performing regularly throughout the year. Pupils work hard during rehearsals and are familiar with the repertoire. Music lessons and extra curricular activities contribute to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was evident in the choir's rehearsal of 'O Happy Day', sung with great enjoyment, including confident solo parts from male pupils. Their vocal improvisations were received by spontaneous applause from the rest of the choir.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good across the school;
- Standards are improving, particularly among examination candidates;
- The leadership and management of the department are having a major positive influence on the progress being made.

Areas for improvement

- There are too few opportunities for pupils to comment on their own work and that of others;
- Accommodation is inadequate;
- The department does not have a permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the GCSE course.

Standards and achievement

185. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessment in 2001 showed that pupils were attaining just below the national average, with boys attaining at a slightly higher level than girls. In lessons and other activities seen during the inspection, standards overall are in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils perform competently in a number of different activities. During the inspection these included football, netball, trampolining, gymnastics, basketball and dance. Standards in one gymnastic lesson in Year 8 and one basketball lesson in Year 9 were below average, reflecting a lack of prior experience in the case of the former and a particularly low attaining group in the case of basketball. A number of individual pupils in Years 7 to 9 attain above average standards, with 41 pupils having been identified as gifted and talented in the specific context of physical education.
186. In the 2001 GCSE examination, 17.6 per cent of pupils entered gained the higher A* to C grades. All pupils achieved A* to G grades. Although the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades was well below the national average, most pupils achieved better grades in physical education than in their other subjects. All but one of the 17 pupils were boys. The results in 2001 were below those of the three previous years. Staffing instability and poor motivation by some pupils were contributory factors in these results. However, in the most recent examination, albeit from a relatively small entry of all boys, the percentage of pupils obtaining the higher grades rose significantly to 54.4 per cent. The appointment of a new head of department, a more systematic and structured approach to the delivery of the GCSE course and the acquisition of additional and relevant resources, all contributed to this very good improvement.
187. It was possible to observe only one theory lesson involving GCSE pupils in Year 11. Overall attainment in work seen, including pupils' files, is average for the course. Teacher's records show that most pupils are reaching average standards in terms of their practical performance. Some individual pupils in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards in football, basketball, cricket, trampolining and softball. Pupils on the register of special educational needs, who are fully integrated into all physical education lessons, make at least satisfactory progress in all age groups. In the one lesson seen in Year 7, where a learning support assistant worked alongside the teacher, her input made a positive contribution to the progress made by pupils in developing their co-ordination and motor skills.
188. In relation to their previous attainment, most pupils in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well. Pupils come to the school from a large number of different primary schools and pupils in Year 7 are adjusting well to the requirements of the department. The majority of pupils are enthusiastic in their approach to physical education and they are interested in what they are doing. The

level of participation is now very good throughout the school, a clear improvement on the situation described at the time of the previous inspection. Whilst the majority of GCSE pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress, the achievement of non-examination pupils is only satisfactory. This is because pupils are timetabled to receive only one lesson of physical education each week. The department has plans to extend the curriculum for older pupils by offering them the option to study for the Junior Sports Leaders Award.

Quality of education

189. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and in one third of lessons seen it is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. This is an improvement on the position stated at the time of the last inspection. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good which contributes to the progress being made. Pupils understand the objectives of all lessons clearly and this also helps them with their learning. Pupils respond very positively to the teaching they receive and learning is good as a result. In response to the good teaching, pupils behave very well in lessons. Even when their attainment is below average, they show a ready willingness to work hard in order to improve and so make progress. Pupils in Year 11 are following the examination course work with commitment and maturity. One or two pupils in the Year 10 GCSE group lack the self-discipline necessary for a course of this nature. Although examples of differentiation feature in some lessons, in a small number of lessons the tasks set are not always suitable for all pupils. In some lessons there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to comment constructively on the work of others.
190. Three members of the department, supported by two other colleagues, provide as many extra curricular activities as is possible in the time available, both at lunchtime and after school. During the inspection, activities involving trampolining, football, gymnastics and basketball took place and were well attended by younger pupils. The school competes against other schools in football, basketball and rounders, although it is not possible to field teams in every age group. Inter-form competitions are planned to begin shortly. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to develop their skills further through very good links with local clubs. These include Warwickshire Cricket Club, Birmingham Bullets and the Sport Pursuits Football Foundation. During the inspection an outside coach worked very effectively with a group of Year 10 pupils in a timetabled basketball lesson. The involvement of such coaches is having a positive impact on standards.

Leadership and management

191. The head of department, who has been in post for just two years, is showing very good leadership and management. Much has been achieved in a relatively short time and he has the commitment and capacity to build on that progress. He is being well supported by his colleagues. Five full time specialists, four of whom have joined the school since the time of the previous report, now staff the department. Whilst this is clearly a very positive step, three of the teachers have other whole-school responsibilities which reduce the commitment that they can give to physical education, particularly in respect of extra curricular activities. The problems relating to the curriculum that were identified in the previous inspection have been rectified. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements. New schemes of work have been introduced. Assessment procedures have been completely revised. Extra-curricular provision has been extended. Standards have improved. Examination results in 2002 are the highest ever achieved by the department. The overall improvement since the last inspection is very good, against a backdrop of inadequate accommodation.
192. There have been some improvements in facilities through the school's own efforts. Outdoor provision has been extended in the one small grassed area available,

enabling some track and field events to take place and rounders pitches to be marked out. The hard courts have been resurfaced and a retaining fence erected. Both changing rooms have been renovated. Impressive displays, including a 'word wall' serve to stimulate interest in the subject as well as contributing to standards in literacy. However, indoor and outdoor provision remains inadequate. There is only one smallish gymnasium. The school has no playing fields of its own and teachers have to work hard within existing constraints in order to deliver the National Curriculum effectively. The school's application to build a much needed sports hall is currently under consideration.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good at both key stages;
- RE contributes significantly to the social, moral and spiritual development of pupils;
- There is growing evidence of a widening range of teaching styles and learning opportunities for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work are underdeveloped;
- Opportunities for extended writing are too few;
- Guidance for group tasks and homework assignments are not clear enough.

Standards and achievement

193. Standards achieved by the majority of pupils by the end of Year 9 are as expected by the Local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. The progress and attainment of pupils was better in relation to Attainment Target 1, Learning about religion, and there is some underachievement in terms of the way pupils expressed beliefs, values and viewpoints in their written work. GCSE examination results in the recently introduced short course for RE show an improving trend and are above the national average for both A* to C grades and A* to G grades.
194. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards by the end of Year 9 are as expected for this age group, and pupils' response to learning is positive. Listening and reading skills are incorporated well into lessons. Pupils respond well to religious and cultural diversity. In one Year 7 lesson observed, pupils were challenged to consider the nature and existence of God, building upon the previous week's theme of God the Divine Creator. Pupils from a diversity of religious backgrounds contributed confidently, and the class reflected on the variety of experiences shared. Pupils in Year 8 are developing an imaginative and tactile expression of religious experience through ICT, to design and produce religious symbols and themes within a textiles project. Opportunities to develop understanding and learning are underdeveloped and less challenging for higher attaining pupils, because of a narrow range of written tasks, which lack structure and clear guidance. By the end of Year 9, the progress of lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, is better than that of higher attaining pupils.
195. Pupils are courteous and polite, co-operate on tasks, and mix well across religious and ethnic groups. Behaviour is well managed, pupils are encouraged, and relationships between pupils and teachers are good.

196. In Years 10 and 11, standards at GCSE are above the national average for pupils following the recently introduced short course. This is an improvement in provision since the last inspection, and all pupils now have one lesson per week of religious education. In work seen during the inspection, the majority of pupils' attainment in the general provision is just below the expectations of the Local Agreed Syllabus. Following the Agreed Syllabus, pupils encounter and explore religious teachings on contemporary moral and social issues, such as racism and integration, or marriage and the family. In Year 10 groups, pupils use role-play to portray and explore personal experiences of racism. Extension materials are available for the higher attaining pupils; some lower attaining pupils express opinions without evaluation. Pupils enjoy these lessons, but the lower attainers need more guidance and reinforcement in their learning, whilst written tasks are sometimes insufficiently challenging for the higher attainers. The lack of challenge in some tasks limits religious understanding and the opportunity to develop literacy skills.
197. The standards of pupils following the short course match the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus, and achievement is good in relation to pupils' previous attainment. In a Year 11 class, focussing on the religious concept of the sanctity of life, the teacher began with a Powerpoint presentation, supplemented by notes to enhance pupils' learning. In mixed gender groups, pupils considered the religious, social and ethical implications of terminating pregnancy without embarrassment or unease. Learning styles were supported by the use of foetal models, which helped to improve the learning and understanding of pupils. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds contributed their understanding from their own religious tradition.

Quality of education

198. The overall quality of teaching is good, with just the occasional lesson where it is unsatisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Staff work to well-prepared lesson plans, which are adapted as pupils progress through their assignments. Schemes of work, under the leadership of the recently appointed head of department, are under review, and are being rewritten to focus more properly on results and to incorporate a wider range of teaching styles and learning opportunities. Where the teaching is good, planning is efficient, pace is brisk, and teacher expectations of pupils are clear. When teaching is less effective, guidance to pupils is unclear, and there is too great an emphasis on teacher input rather than pupil participation, and too much direction by the teacher resulting in fewer opportunities for independent learning. Across all year groups, some tasks are insufficiently demanding and do not develop written skills and opportunity for reflection.
199. The department makes an effective contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, and the curriculum creates opportunities for pupils to explore sensitive issues such as racism, intergenerational conflict and cultural diversity.

Leadership and management

200. The recently appointed head of department is making good progress in reviewing and monitoring the progress of the department. Leadership is supportive, given that a number of non-specialists teach a number of lessons. Schemes of work are underdeveloped, but are under process of review and reworking to address a wider range of learning styles. Two innovative projects have been put into place to raise pupils' aspirations and skill levels. The first involves a joint ICT project with the design department to design and produce religious artefacts, and the second prepares a smaller group of pupils for participation in the RE quiz organised by the Local Authority; both contribute to the school's provision for gifted and talented pupils.

201. The department follows the school assessment policy, but the quality of assessment is variable. Almost every piece of work seen during inspection had been marked, an achievement in itself in teaching religious education. Some members of the department extended to the school's system to incorporate a record of improvement targets set for the next assignment, which also provided summative and formative comments. The department makes effective use of its budget, and has created an attractive base room for its specialist accommodation. Artefacts are displayed prominently, and serve as a focus for the religious traditions represented in the school and the local community. Pupils are encouraged to develop ICT key skills in the production of their projects and additional support for learning is given during the lunch break by the head of department.
202. Since the last inspection there have been satisfactory improvements in both provision and attainment in Years 10 and 11, especially through the introduction of the GCSE short course.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Overall the quality of provision for Business Studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Good progress has been made since the last inspection;
- The teaching overall is good;
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils;
- The department makes effective use of information technology in its work.

Areas for improvement

- Work is insufficiently matched to pupils' attainment in some cases;
- There is insufficient extension work for the gifted and talented pupils;
- Some visits to places of business help with the pupils learning but there are not enough of these.

Standards and achievement

203. In Years 10 and 11, pupils in the past few years have studied for the GCSE in business studies but now most pupils follow the GNVQ course. In year 2000, about 40 per cent of the pupils gained the higher grades of A* to C in the GCSE exam. Around 82 per cent gained the grades A* to G. No pupils were entered for examinations in year 2001. In year 2002, 36 pupils were entered for GNVQ examinations. Two pupils gained distinctions, ten pupils gained merits and two pupils gained pass grades. The standard of work seen during the inspection, in lessons and in pupils' folders is at least in line with what would be expected at this stage. In some instances the standard is above this. This reflects the fact that more academically orientated pupils are now choosing to study the subject as an option. The pupils have a good basic knowledge and understanding of the ways in which businesses are organised and structured. They also have a good basic grasp of how businesses are financed and operated. As yet their direct experience and knowledge of the working business world is limited. The pupils knowledge and understanding of the local contexts in which many businesses operate and their knowledge and understanding of how businesses operate in a national context is continuing to develop. They are confident in the skills of research, particularly in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). The pupils are confident in their written skills. Their verbal skills are also strong and they can express themselves well in a range of situations. In this respect their general communication skills are good and they can readily participate in group and team activities – a quality which is particularly important in the business environment.

204. There are no business studies classes in Years 7 to 9.
205. Overall the achievement of the pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. In terms of some of the work seen during the inspection some achievement is good as the teachers work hard in their attempts to raise standards and to ensure that the pupils make good progress from the levels at which they arrive in the school. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and those pupils who have English as additional language is satisfactory. In some classes more work aimed at those pupils who find the work difficult, and more extension work for higher attaining pupils and the pupils who are gifted and talented, would be helpful. There is no significant difference between the achievement of the boys and the girls.
206. Pupil response is very good overall. Pupils are well behaved and they concentrate well on the work in hand. They show an active interest in their work and participate keenly in written work and in the discussions. They also respect other people's views and opinions. They happily participate in group-work as well in work which is tailored more to the individual pupil. Overall, the pupils have a very positive outlook on the work that they do in business studies. This is reflected in the fact that many more pupils are now choosing it as an option in Years 10 and 11 and more pupils are going on to the sixth form to study it.

The quality of education

207. Overall the teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. In one in three of the lessons seen it is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Lessons are consistently well prepared, both in terms of the content and in terms of the methods to put it across. The lessons always have a clear sense of purpose and the teachers are well able to motivate the pupils and keep them working. Learning consequently is always at least good. High expectations and a fast pace ensure that the best is made of the time available. In the best lessons, the aims and purposes of the work is clear not only to the teachers but also to the pupils themselves and the blackboard/whiteboard is effectively used not only to introduce the lessons but also to consolidate the learning during the lessons. The best lessons are also characterised by less teacher talk and where the pupils have the opportunity to put into writing the main points of the verbal presentation by the teacher. Some teaching is insufficiently matched to pupils' differing attainments in particular classes and some lessons have inadequate extension work to keep the higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented fully occupied. This put some restrictions on their learning and also results in some loss of interest and motivation. Representatives from various businesses make effective contributions to the teaching. Some visits to places of business help with the pupils learning but there are not enough of these. Homework is set and contributes significantly to the lessons. Assessment is an ongoing and active part of the department's work. The teaching makes a significant contribution to learning in supporting and strengthening their literacy and numeracy skills. This is done, for example, through its glossary of important words and the use of figures and numbers in the finance component of the courses. The department makes extensive use of ICT in its teaching, particularly in the setting of research projects and for the general gathering of information.

Leadership and management

208. The department is well led and managed. The staffing is very good and the accommodation and resources are also very good. The department has a well developed range of documentation. Progress since the last inspection has been good. A reorganisation of the department has meant that a significant number of issues which were raised last time have

been effectively addressed. Particularly, a lot of the courses are now more accessible to the pupils and this is having a positive effect on the uptake of pupils who wish to follow a business studies course. The department makes a significant contribution to the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. In this respect, the department has an active policy in supporting the pupils not only academically but also socially and in helping them develop the necessary skills to operate effectively in a business environment.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. The latest year for which national comparisons are available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Sociology	1	100	63	-	7	1.0	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
Biology	2	50	88	-	34	2.0	5.3
Physics	1	-	88	-	40	-	5.7
Sociology	6	83	86	-	35	3.0	5.3
History	2	50	88	-	35	2.0	5.5
English Literature	9	67	95	-	37	2.2	5.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

209. Mathematics and biology were inspected in detail and work in both chemistry and physics was sampled. In the chemistry and physics lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good. Teachers are very effective in using a tutorial approach, involving students at all stages in the development of the lesson. Year 12 students in chemistry have sound understanding of the work covered so far on atomic structure. They use computers well to access information and are developing sound independent learning skills. Year 13 students in physics displayed good understanding of their work in electronics and responded well to the challenge of investigating the rate at which capacitors charge and discharged in different circuits.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- There is good teaching from knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers;
- Students are committed and are making good progress;
- Effective use of ICT is taking place.

Areas for improvement

- Sustained success at A level has not yet been demonstrated;
- Recruitment and retention of students on A level courses is low.

Standards and achievement

210. Over the last few years the numbers entering for A level mathematics have been very low and there has been limited success. It is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with national averages, particularly as the department has had a policy of allowing students who do not have high grades at GCSE to attempt the A level course and this has resulted in many withdrawing during Year 12. There were no A level candidates in 2001 but four students gained Advanced Supplementary (AS) grades from C to E. The unvalidated results for 2002 indicate that the numbers at A Level and AS level are rising and should continue to do so next year on the basis of the number currently studying mathematics in Years 12 and 13.
211. Work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of work was of a good standard and indicated that students are coping well with the demands of the course and progressing well. Year 12 students have only recently begun on the course but have a good awareness of the language of statistical sampling and are able to manipulate algebraic fractions and to solve simultaneous linear and quadratic equations. Year 13 students show a good understanding of the chain rule for differentiation. They know how to differentiate standard functions and can apply these techniques in a Mechanics lesson about acceleration. They can manipulate trigonometric equations.

Quality of education

212. In all the lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory, most of it was good and some was very good. Teachers display a good command of the subject and approach the work in a

vigorous and pacy way. Presentations are interesting and students respond well, volunteering ideas and attempting exercises with determination. The work in students' files is generally well organised and shows a pride in their work. There are excellent relationships between teachers and students. Good use is made of ICT, in one lesson to demonstrate the intersection of quadratic and linear graphs and in another showing a number puzzle on an interactive whiteboard, which generated a lively discussion among the students. Homework is set regularly and is carefully marked by the students and the teachers.

Leadership and management

213. There is good leadership from the recently appointed Head of Department, but she has not yet had time to address the important issues relating to mathematics in the Sixth Form. These are: to improve recruitment and retention of students, to track students' progress to demonstrate effective added value, to demonstrate good results at A Level and to consider the course options at A level which at present have to be balanced against student choice and staff expertise. There has not yet been clear improvement since the last inspection.

BIOLOGY

Provision in biology is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and the resultant learning very secure as a result;
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and are developing well their ability to research a topic and present it effectively to their colleagues;
- Very good use is made of ICT by both teachers and students;
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- External examination results.

Standards and achievement

214. The numbers of students studying for A level biology have been low in recent years with mixed levels of success from year to year. In 2001 two students gained D grades and two were unclassified. In 2002 one student achieved grade C and the other two grade D.
215. The introduction of the new Advanced Supplementary (AS) examination has led to an increase in the number of pupils studying biology in Year 12 but the retention rate into Year 13 is no higher than in previous years. The school's own analysis shows that satisfactory value is added to students' achievement during the time they study biology.
216. The standard of work of students presently studying biology in the sixth form is above average overall. There is a wide range of achievement reflecting the minimum starting point of a GCSE grade C, whilst other students start the course with higher grades, but the standard of work seen is never less than satisfactory. Year 12 students are only a little way into their course but they are already demonstrating a sound grasp of the detail of the various ways by which substances cross biological membranes. They are able to make effective use of ICT and other audio visual equipment to demonstrate to the rest of their group the results of their recent research.

217. The smaller number of students in Year 13 have understandably higher levels of knowledge plus a better understanding of the concepts being taught, along with an ability to apply existing knowledge to new problems presented to them. Their multi media presentations and discussion of individual mini projects surrounding the topics of oral contraception, female infertility and in vitro fertilisation were of an above average standard. This reflects the progress this 'small but quality' group has made since beginning their course in September 2001. The quality of students' written work generally reflects the standard of work seen in class. There is a good range of work, including independent work such as lesson notes, presentation preparation, answers to past examination questions, and short essays. Where appropriate it is well graded in such a way as to be helpful to the student.

Quality of education

218. Teaching is very good overall. Its principle features are the teachers' secure command of their subject and their thorough planning, which differentiates so well that students are often given individually tailored assignments geared to their levels of attainment. Imaginative use is made of resources, especially ICT, and of a good mixture of whole group and one-to-one tuition. Above all, the teachers expect that students will be conscientious and trustworthy enough to do much of the work outside of class time and will prepare sufficiently well to feed it back to their colleagues in a form that prevents the other students having to research this particular aspect of a topic for themselves. The sensitivity with which some sections of the contraception topic were handled in a multicultural group, was matched by the skill with which other students' joint presentations were challenged so positively and helpfully that the points for development were easy to absorb without any loss of 'face'.
219. Learning is very secure, the result of the very effective teaching strategies. Students are organised and encouraged to carry out ongoing research on their current topics in a variety of suitable texts and from internet sites of proven worth and usefulness.

Leadership and management

220. Work in the subject is very well led and managed. There is a clear commitment to build on what has already been achieved, with a focus on doing the best for students and continuing to improve their performance. The progress of students is well documented and students receive regular feedback on their achievement. The same two experienced members of the department who jointly lead the whole science department in a very successful job share are responsible for both the teaching and the day-to-day management of the subject. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively, mostly informally. Resources are good. ICT is particularly well used to prepare and present lessons. There is a shortage of laboratory accommodation in the science department overall, but the small audiovisual room is used well as a base for many sessions.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Work in the manufacturing course was sampled. In the lesson seen, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Pupils were making good progress and achieving well.

BUSINESS

Overall, the quality of the provision for Business Studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good;
- There are good relationships between teachers and students;
- Good use is made of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Good use is made of ICT;
- More extension work is needed for the higher attaining students;
- Insufficient visits are made out to companies and businesses.

Standards and achievement

221. The students over the past few years have studied for GNVQ and AVCE qualifications in business studies. Limited national data is available to make accurate comments about the standards of attainment made by these students and in any case the numbers are small. The attainment, however, over the last four years has varied between below and in line with the general standards expected. The standards very much reflect the prior attainment of the student intake. The standard of work seen during the inspection in the lessons and in their folders is in line with the standards expected at this time. The students can talk meaningfully about a range of business issues. These include issues about human resources, the competitive business environment and marketing. The students have an adequate knowledge and understanding of the ways in which businesses are organised and structured. As yet their direct experience and knowledge and understanding of the working business world is limited. The students have a good knowledge and understanding of the local contexts in which businesses operate and they are continuing to develop their knowledge and understanding of how businesses operate in a national context. They are competent in research skills, particularly in the use of ICT where they use the equipment with ease to search for and access information relevant to their project work. Their written work is of a good quality and they can express themselves verbally in a confident way. In this respect their general communication skills are good and they can readily participate in group and team activities – a quality which is particularly important in the business environment.
222. Overall the achievement of the students in Years 12 and 13 is satisfactory. There are no students with special educational needs in sixth form business studies. The students who have English as an additional language are making good progress. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and of girls.
223. The response of the students is very good overall. The students are well behaved and they concentrate on the work in hand. In the main they are able to sustain this concentration, though this suffers if the teaching is too ‘wordy’ or where they have insufficient opportunity to formalise their learning in written form. The students show an active interest in their work and they participate well in written work and discussions. They are respectful of each other and of the environment in which they work. They also respect other people's views and opinions. They happily participate in group-work as well as in more individualistic learning. Overall, the students have a very positive outlook to the work that they do in business studies and readily turn up for voluntary extra sessions to complete their work.

Quality of education

224. Overall the teaching in the sixth form is good. The lessons are consistently well prepared both in terms of content and in terms of the methods used to put them across. The lessons

always have a clear sense of purpose and the teachers are well able to motivate the students and to keep them working. Learning consequently is always at least good. High expectations and a fast pace ensure that the best is made of the time available. The most effective teaching is where the aims and purposes of the work is clear to the students themselves, as well as to the teacher, and where the black/white board is effectively used not only to present what is being taught but also used to consolidate the learning during the lessons. Some lessons are insufficiently differentiated for the different levels of attainment within the classes and some lessons do not have adequate extension work to keep the higher attaining students and those who are gifted and talented fully occupied. This puts some restriction on the learning for these groups of students. At times it also effects their motivation and interest. Representatives from various businesses contribute to the learning. Visits out to business also do the same but there are not enough of these. Homework is set and it contributes significantly to the learning in lessons. Assessment is also an ongoing and active part of supporting and strengthening their learning. The teaching makes a significant contribution to the students` literacy and numeracy skills. This is done, for example, through glossaries of important words and the use of figures and numbers in the finance component of the course. The teaching includes extensive use of information technology in its work.

Leadership and management

225. The department is well led and managed. The teachers are well qualified and the accommodation and resources are very good. The department has a developed range of documentation which includes a development plan and policies on spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision, as well as equal opportunities. Progress since the last inspection has been good. A reorganisation in the department has meant that a significant number of issues which were raised last time have been effectively addressed. A lot of courses are now more accessible to the pupils and this is having a positive effect on the uptake of pupils who wish to follow a business studies course. The courses are also attracting more pupils who are academically orientated. The department makes a significant contribution to the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. In this respect the department has an active policy in supporting the students, not only academically but also socially and in helping them to develop the necessary skills to operate effectively in a business environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

226. Work in ICT was sampled during the inspection. In the lesson seen the quality of teaching and learning was good. A new ICT course has been introduced in the sixth form and is the most heavily subscribed. It is an on-line course and students have the opportunity to plan and manage their own learning and progress. The quality of the resource material will give plenty of opportunity for students to achieve well.

SOCIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in the light of their GCSE results;
- Marking is good and students are given realistic and helpful guidance on what they need to do in order to improve;
- Students are very positive in their approach to learning;
- Management is good and gives the subject a clear sense of direction and purpose.

Areas for improvement

- Students in Year 13 have only three periods of sociology per week. This puts additional pressure on both the teacher and students in their efforts to meet the full course requirements;
- There are currently too few opportunities for students to use information and communication technology to help them with their work.

Standards and achievement

227. At A level in 2001, five of the seven students entered obtained pass grades. Although none of the students achieved the higher A-B grade, their results represent good progress in the light of their previous GCSE results. The results in 2002 were very similar and were broadly in line with those predicted. In the most recent AS modular examination, five of the six students obtained pass grades with three achieving the higher grades.
228. The standards of attainment observed during the inspection were broadly similar to those shown in the recent results for the three Year 13 students who are continuing with the course. The work of Year 12 students, whilst still at a very early stage, also holds the promise of at least satisfactory standards. The students who studied the subject at GCSE level are showing positive signs of being able to build on their existing knowledge. Year 13 students have a good theoretical understanding. Two of the students use appropriate terminology with confidence. In discussing aspects of religion and secularisation they are comfortable in referring to the likes of Durkheim, Malinowski, Wilson and Parsons to support the views they express. Their mature approach shows evidence of good background reading and of independent research. They also demonstrate a sound understanding of aspects such as 'liberation theology' and they are able to place these in a sociological setting. The quality of their written work is good.
229. Several Year 12 students, who are still in the very early stages of the AS course, understand the significance of different methods of sociological research. They can distinguish between participant and non-participant observation, although they are less confident when commenting on the specific disadvantages of the former. Several students in both groups are content to remain passive and let others do the talking, unless they are asked direct questions by the class teacher.

Quality of education

230. The quality of teaching is good and in some lessons it is very good. Meticulous planning is evident in all lessons. Learning objectives are very clear and are shared with students. There is a calm, relaxed atmosphere in lessons that is helping students to develop their self-confidence. The teacher adopts a number of different strategies to maintain interest. In discussions all contributions are valued. Questions are used perceptively to challenge students to think in greater depth and to exchange ideas in order to increase their knowledge and understanding. Students are positive in their approach to the subject. They are anxious to do well and they apply themselves conscientiously in lessons. Homework is set on a regular basis and serves to reinforce and extend students' learning.

Leadership and management

231. The subject is very well managed by a teacher who has sole responsibility for its delivery. Documentation is of a high standard. There is a clear commitment by the teacher to do what is best for the students. They spoke appreciatively about the level of support that they receive and about the guidance given in marked assignments which helps them to improve. All lessons are taught in the Learning Resource Centre making it easier to gain access to books and other resources. The teacher has identified the need to provide more opportunities for students to access information and communication technology. One constraint at present is the fact that curriculum time has been reduced to only 3 periods per week for students in Year 13. This puts additional pressure on both the teacher and students in their efforts to meet the full course requirements.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH

Overall, provision for English is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good;
- The quality of marking and assessment is good;
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject;
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies for developing independent study are under-developed;
- Techniques for note making and research skills need more emphasis;
- More extended writing is required on some texts;
- Wider reading around set texts should be encouraged and guided.

Standards and achievement.

232. GCSE A level results in English literature were well below average in 2001 with nine candidates achieving grades ranging from C to U. Boys achieved higher grades than girls. Most of those who started the course completed it. In 2002, thirteen candidates achieved grades ranging from B to E. These results were an improvement on the 2001 results. Results over the last few years have been variable, largely dependent on the levels of attainment of candidates opting for the subject. The numbers taking the subject have generally been small.

There are currently sixteen students in Year 12. This is the highest number to take the subject. The school's analysis shows that in most years, 2001 being the exception, some value is added to students' achievement during the time they study English.

233. The standard of work of students currently studying English is average overall. There is a range of achievement which reflects the varying prior attainment levels of the students. Essays by Year 13 on texts such as 'King Lear', 'The Handmaid's Tale' and the poetry of Philip Larkin demonstrate detailed, thoughtful responses. They employ suitable subject specific vocabulary. Conceptual grasp of the material and the ability to interpret and analyse language varies but is average overall. Year 12, who have only just begun their course, are nevertheless able to discuss with some perceptiveness aspects of theme and character in 'The Handmaid's Tale'.
234. Students in both years demonstrate qualities of serious application. Work in Year 13 shows interest and commitment, whatever the attainment level of the student. These students are well able to engage in mature and sometimes quite sophisticated discussion with the teacher and their peers, for example, when considering Iago's methods and motivations in 'Othello'. The best of their written work is fluent, persuasive and of a high standard; students at this level are able to explore language in some depth and, for example, interrogate text for metaphor and symbolism. There is a good range of work including lesson notes, additional internet notes, question sheets, presentations and detailed responses to small sections of text. The number of essays set on texts, however, is not consistent. There is also some evidence that students use ICT skills in their work, in part to produce their well presented essays.

Quality of education

235. Teaching is good overall. A major strength of the teaching is the very good subject knowledge of the teachers which enables students to gain clear mastery of ideas in the texts. There are very good student-teacher relationships. Teachers use good strategies for making texts interesting; for example, a study of Keats' ode was prefaced by general thoughts about autumn linked to what the students already knew about the Romantic poets. These methods empower students to learn actively. The independent study elements in lessons encourage students to work with each other. Good collaborative learning was seen in the inspection week. Lessons are generally well structured, with clear objectives and a variety of sections to maintain interest and motivation. Marking is thorough and detailed. It provides encouragement but also sets clear targets and provides a realistic grade. In discussion there is usually a high expectation that students will engage with the text at an appropriate level and in appropriate language. Teachers use questioning well to enable students to explore their own ideas fully. Students in both years have positive attitudes and work with a well-sustained level of concentration.
236. Learning is good. Students are encouraged to explore texts for themselves but with close guidance from their teachers. Note taking and independent research skills need further development by teachers to enable all students to extract maximum benefit from the good teaching they receive. Further development of independent study techniques will encourage students' powers of analytical thought and interpretation. Additionally, more emphasis should be given to wider critical reading around set texts, although some students do already have quite copious internet notes in their folders.

Leadership and management

237. Work in the subject is well led and managed. The A-level teachers work well together and are mutually supportive in developing the new syllabuses. There are very good schemes of

work for each text. Teaching and learning are monitored frequently though informally. There is a good focus on improving the performance of students; data is well used to analyse and predict outcomes. Students' work is carefully assessed and targets are set for improvement. Progress is tracked well throughout the two years and students receive regular feedback on their progress. Resources are good and are well used. ICT is used well to assist in the presentation of interesting lessons. There are some theatre visits which are of value to the students in their studies.