

INSPECTION REPORT

STURMINSTER NEWTON HIGH SCHOOL

Sturminster Newton, Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113875

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Carrington

Reporting inspector: Ross Maden
2793

Dates of inspection: 7 - 11 October 2002

Inspection number: 250928

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 16 years with linked sixth form
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bath Road
Sturminster Newton
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C Whitfeld

Date of previous inspection: 11 November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2793	Ross Maden	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
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10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	Educational inclusion History	Sixth form co-ordinator
15079	Anthony Boys	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science	
15485	Roger Butler	Team inspector	Religious education	
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32211	Brendan Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
15407	Muriel Harrison	Team inspector	Geography	
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20913	Nicholas McKemey	Team inspector	Art and design	
31983	Debra Makin	Team inspector	Physical education	
12276	Terence Payne	Team inspector	Music	
15678	Jennifer Radford	Team inspector	Media Studies	

17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sturminster Newton is a community comprehensive school educating boys and girls in the age range of 11-16, with a linked sixth form. There are 711 pupils, including 54 in the sixth form, in the school, which is smaller than the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 9.4 per cent, is below the national average. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. The school has increased in size since its previous inspection. The school predominantly draws its pupils from local primary schools in the Sturminster Newton and surrounding area. 117 pupils are on the school's special educational needs register, which is below the average for a school of this size. Twenty-three of these pupils have statements of special educational needs, which is above average. Pupils' attainment on entry is in line with the national average. The proportion of adults with higher education in the catchment area is below the national average as is the proportion of children in high social class households. The proportion of children from ethnic minorities and of children living in overcrowded households is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. The school achieves high standards in nearly all areas of its work. Most pupils are well motivated and keen to learn. There are few problems of behaviour or absenteeism. Teaching is consistently good and most pupils are making good progress. The staff have high expectations. The school cares well for its pupils. There is a good partnership between the school and parents. The school is very well led and managed. It knows what it does well, where its weaknesses are and how to improve them. The school has made good progress since its last inspection. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE results at the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- The very high quality of relationships within the school.
- Teaching and learning are good and in almost a third of lessons it was very good or excellent.
- Very good leadership and management within the school.
- A curriculum, including a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which meets the needs of all pupils with very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

What could be improved

- Tasks set for pupils in some lessons could better meet their individual needs, as well as to developing their speaking skills and their independent learning skills.
- The whole school co-ordination of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in November 1996 there has been an improvement in standards achieved by pupils. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in national tests at the end of Year 9 has increased for English, mathematics and science. 53 per cent of pupils gained five A*-C grades at GCSE in 1996 and this figure increased to 66 per cent in 2001. In both 1996 and 2000 attendance was well above the national average. The improvements in the school's results have been recognised by the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) with a school achievement award in both 2000 and 2001. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The school has increased in size since the last inspection. In 1996 there were 480 pupils in the main school and this has increased to 657 in 2002.

In tackling the key issues identified in the last inspection report, the governors have made good progress. There have been improvements in the amount of time for humanities in Years 7 to 9. Information and communication technology now meets legal requirements in Years 10 and 11. The

time allocated for music has been increased but is still low in Years 7 to 9. Improvements have been made in the dining arrangements. The school is still failing to meet the full requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

In the 2001 National Curriculum tests the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above is well above the national average for English and science. Results are above the national average for mathematics. When compared with similar schools results for all three subjects are well above average. In 2002 the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 for English, mathematics and science was below that reached in 2001.

At GCSE results have improved consistently each year since 1997. In 2001 the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more grades A*-C was well above the national average as was the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G. The proportion of pupils achieving one or more grades A*-G was close to the national average. Girls' results over the last three years have been well above the national average and that for boys above. The trend in the school's average point score is broadly in line with the national trend and in 2002 showed an improvement on the school's 2001 results. In 2002 the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C was slightly below the 2001 results but there was an increase in the number of pupils gaining A* and A grades.

In comparison with similar schools the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C and five or more A*-G is well above average and the proportion gaining one or more grades A*-G was in line with the average. In 2001 the best results were in art and design, science, design and technology, English language and literature. There was relatively weaker performance in physical education. In 2002 the highest performing subjects were English literature, drama, art and design, physical education design and technology, agriculture and ICT. In 2001 the average points score gained by students in the sixth form was well below the national average. However, in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE most students met or exceeded their predicted targets.

The school exceeded its published targets in 2001 and 2002 for the proportion of pupils reaching five grades A*-C and for its average points score but in 2001 failed to reach its very high target for those gaining one or more grades A*-G. Most pupils are working at or near their capacity and are achieving well in terms of earlier attainment, value added measures and comparisons with similar schools. Pupils are achieving very well in design and technology in Years 7 – 9. They are achieving well in all other subjects in all year groups except for geography where achievement is satisfactory. However, pupils are underachieving in music in Year 7 to 9 and in religious education in Years 10 and 11 because there is insufficient time dedicated to these subjects.

Pupils' skills of reading, writing and speaking are all above average by the end of each key stage. Their numeracy skills are sufficient for them to access all areas of the school curriculum, with higher attaining pupils displaying confidence in using a range of number facts over several subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good, pupils respect their own property, the property of others and school property.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in school are good. Pupils relate well to each other and to staff.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. Lessons start on time. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory.

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.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Over three-quarters of lessons were judged to be good or better and nearly one-third judged to be excellent or very good. Only two lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and they make good intellectual and creative demands on pupils to take their learning further. Questions are used to consolidate, extend and verify what pupils know and understand. There are limited opportunities in lessons to develop pupils' speaking skills. Effective use is made of the time available and the pace of working is high. Relationships in the classroom provide a confident and positive atmosphere in which achievement flourishes. Teachers have high expectations and pupils maintain their concentration throughout lessons. The quality of marking of pupils' work is thorough and detailed. The best marking ensures that pupils know what they need to do to achieve the highest possible grades.

There is a consistent quality of teaching across all subjects and across all year groups. Planning of lessons does not always take into account the different needs of pupils within teaching groups. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is very good in Years 7 to 11. In English, and science teaching is good in Years 7 to 11. In all other subjects teaching is judged to be good overall with the exception of music in Year 7-9 and religious education, where it is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7-9.

Teaching of literacy is good overall but not yet consistently implemented across departments. Within English the teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are good. Teaching of numeracy in the subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory. In science, business studies and geography lessons, pupils use their experience of graphical work well, enhancing the presentation of their work and their understanding of the subject by appropriate use of bar graphs, line graphs, and pie charts.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum are good. The school has very good links with the wider community and with partner institutions, particularly in the sixth form. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The school is failing to meet the requirements of the Dorset Agreed Syllabus for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The arrangements for assessing and meeting the needs of all pupils are effective and this allows them to make good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory; that for their social, moral and cultural development is good. There is a lack of co-ordination at whole school level for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. Health and safety and child protection procedures are satisfactorily in place.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	There is a good partnership between the school and parents. Most parents are very supportive of the school. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide the school with very good leadership and management. In these tasks they are well supported by other senior staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body satisfactorily fulfils its responsibilities except that it is failing to provide a daily act of collective worship for pupils and in ensuring that requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11 are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The work of the school is rigorously monitored and evaluated by the headteacher and senior staff. The priorities for the school development plan reflect the evaluation of the school's performance.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its resources. Staffing and learning resources are good, but there are weaknesses in accommodation. The management of finances is very good. The school applies the principles of best value well – a good example of this relates to the contract for grounds maintenance.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has high expectations for children to work hard. • Children are making good progress. • The school is well led and managed. • Teaching is good. • Behaviour in the school is good. • Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • The school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right amount of work to do at home. • The school working more closely with parents • Being kept better informed about their child's progress.

Inspectors agree with the positive comments from parents. However inspectors judge that the setting of appropriate homework is very good. Inspectors judge that there are sufficient opportunities for parents to be actively involved in the life of the school. Parents are well informed about their children's progress.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 54 students in Years 12 and 13 at Sturminster Newton. They are part of a combined sixth form with Shaftesbury School with a total of 200 students. Students choose from an increasing range of AS, A level and vocational courses offered at one or both schools. Recent additions to the curriculum include media studies, textiles and performing arts. The ethnic composition of the sixth form reflects that of the main school. The sixth form increased in size in September 2002: there are currently 44 students in Year 12 and 10 in Year 13. Although students are expected to have 5 grade A*-C at GCSE in order to study a full AS level, the school is flexible about this. Standards on entry are below average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is cost effective and successful. Students learn well and most achieve results that match predictions related to their GCSE performance. They benefit from a growing range of courses and activities that enhance their experience and contribute well to their personal development. Teaching is good. There is a strong commitment to students' learning. This is clearly recognised by the great majority of students who value the support they receive. Leadership and management are very good. The main strengths and areas that could be improved are:

Strengths

- Teaching is good and students appreciate the effort that staff make to support students' learning. There is a very positive ethos for learning.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.
- Relationships within the sixth form are very good.
- The range of courses meets the needs of students. Students are also provided with good enrichment opportunities.
- Students benefit from very good pastoral care that contributes to the high standards in attitudes and behaviour.

What could be improved

- Improve the strategies for students to develop independent learning skills.
- Increase the support available for weaker students, for example, in biology more frequent assessment with short term academic targets would alert the teacher to problems more promptly.
- Increase the time allocation for mathematics and review the time allocation for other subjects in collaboration with Shaftesbury School.
- Reducing the time lost for some students at the beginning and end of lessons as a result of students' travelling between the two sites.

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	Good. Students achieve well given their prior attainment. They are taught very effectively. Students' understanding of basic algebra is high and gives them a sound basis for the more difficult work encountered at A-level.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Biology	Very good. Excellent relationships and subject knowledge, combined with very good teaching, mean that students make very good progress. Procedures for tracking progress need to be developed further to help those students who find the subject difficult.
Sports studies	Good. Teaching and learning are good. The energy and enthusiasm of many students in their practical work are strengths. The arrangements for monitoring students' progress are good.
Media Studies	Very good. Students are achieving very well in this new course because of very good teaching, high quality resources and an enthusiasm for the subject.
English	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Students achieve well relative to their prior attainment.

In other subjects work was sampled. Some very good teaching was seen in several subjects. Students studying geography, philosophy and ethics, business studies and performance studies are making good progress. All students spoken to were enjoying their courses. A wide range of enrichment activities, such as compulsory recreational physical education and an optional cycle ride to France, further enhances the personal development of sixth form students. Religious education is included in the general studies course taken by students in Year 12.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school provides very good pastoral guidance for its students. Students appreciate the support they receive. Tutors and teachers are caring and work hard to help all students to achieve their best.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The sixth form is cost effective and gives good value for money. There is a clear commitment to the improvement of standards and quality of provision. There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, as seen in the good range of courses offered. New courses have been introduced in an effective manner.

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"> • They are well taught and teachers are supportive and accessible. • They appreciate the range of courses and consider their induction into the sixth form is good. • They are treated as young adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In written questionnaires, a significant minority of students felt they received inadequate support and advice. • In written questionnaires, a significant minority felt that they were not well informed about their progress.

Apart from some written comments in the questionnaires, sixth formers conveyed strong and positive views on all aspects of school life. In interviews and discussions all students stated that they are strongly supported by their teachers. A very high percentage feel that they are taught well and challenged to do their best. The strengths identified by students are well founded. However, the team disagrees with the negative comments in the questionnaire on support, advice and progress, all of which are judged to be at least good. This follows further discussions with students and staff and an examination of records and other documentation.

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. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of abilities, but the overall pattern of attainment on entry is in line with the national average.
2. Pupils' results in national tests at the age of fourteen in the year 2001 were well above the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above was well above the national average for English. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above and Level 6 and above was above the national average for mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above was well above the national average for science and the proportion reaching Level 6 and above was above the national average. When compared with similar schools results for English, mathematics and science were well above the averages. Performance by boys exceeds the national average in all three subjects and there is a similar pattern for girls.
3. By the age of fourteen standards are above and often well above national averages, which indicates that pupils have made good progress in relation to their attainment on entry. Pupils are achieving very well in design and technology. Pupils are achieving well in English, mathematics, science, art and design, history, ICT, physical education and religious education. In all other subjects they are achieving satisfactorily except for music where pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. Pupils do not have sufficient time for music to reach satisfactory standards. Results in the 2002 national tests show a drop against the standards achieved in 2001.
4. Pupils' results in the 2001 GCSE examination were well above the national averages for the proportion of pupils reaching five or more A*-C grades and five or more A*-G grades. The proportion of pupils achieving one A*-G grade was close to the national average. Girls' results over the last three years were well above the national average and those for boys above. When compared with similar schools results for five or more GCSE grades A*-C and A*-G were well above the average. The proportion gaining one GCSE grade A*-G was in line with similar schools. In 2001 the best results were in English language and literature, art and design, science and design and technology. There was a relatively poorer performance in results for French and physical education.
5. Most pupils have continued to make good progress during Years 10 and 11. The school's progress has been recognised by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) by the presentation of a national school improvement award in 2000 and again in 2001. By the end of Year 11 pupils are achieving well in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology and history. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in ICT and geography. Pupils taking music are achieving at an unsatisfactory level as a result of the low levels they reached by the end of Year 9. Pupils, other than those doing the GCSE course whose achievement is very good, are achieving at an unsatisfactory level in religious education in Years 10 and 11.
6. GCSE results for 2002 show a dip in the proportion gaining five GCSE grades A*-C but an increase in the average points score gained by pupils. There was also an increase over the 2001 results in the number of pupils gaining A* or A grades. The school exceeded the published targets in 2001 and 2002 for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C and it also exceeded its targets for average point score.
7. The standards of work attained by pupils with special educational needs are at least in line with expectations for similar pupils in other schools and often better than this. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in their work and achieve well in relation to their previous results. There are no significant differences in the progress made by boys and girls or by members of different year groups or by pupils with diverse backgrounds. Pupils at different stages on the special needs register make progress at a similar rate to each other.

8. Standards of literacy are, overall, above expectations and assist most pupils' access to the curriculum. Technical accuracy, for all but the lower attaining pupils, is better than expectations in all years. Errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation, although present, are less frequent and sustained than expected. Writing skills are generally good and the majority of pupils are able to establish and maintain a reasonable level of accuracy in extended writing. Reading skills are also above expectations. Most pupils are able to read for meaning, fluently, and access new vocabulary using context. Their range of vocabulary is often wider than expected. Speaking and listening skills are also above average overall. Most pupils other than the lowest attaining have the language skills and often the confidence to speak in varying registers in an appropriate manner.
9. Pupils' numeracy skills are sufficient for them to access all areas of the school curriculum, with higher attaining pupils displaying confidence in using a range of number skills over several subjects. Lower attaining pupils need occasional support from their teacher.
10. There has been a significant improvement in test and GCSE results since the last inspection. For example in 1996 53 per cent of pupils gained five GCSE grades A*-C and this had increased to 66 per cent by 2001, a rate of increase much higher than the national trend.

Sixth form

11. In 2000 students' average points score at A-level was close to the national average. In 2001 it dropped to well below the national average. However, students' results met and often exceeded their predicted grades based on their performance in GCSE. Detailed analysis by the school indicates that, although some students start A-level courses with relatively modest GCSE results, their performance exceeds the predictions based on their GCSE results.
12. Many students study biology as their only science at AS level, and some of them have gained grades CC as a result of examination in the GCSE foundation paper: this means that they are less well prepared than usual for study of sciences in the sixth form. During their course, however, they make good progress, so that their results in AS and A-level are better than expected, with students gaining the full range of grades, and with a distribution broadly in line with the national expectation. Some students, however, fail to gain even the lowest grade of pass. Overall students' performance is as expected.
13. In mathematics students' achievements are good. The school is effective in enabling students to reach their full potential. The department ensures that all students are given every opportunity to succeed.
14. In sports studies three students took examinations in 2001; although none achieved the highest grades, results were on a par with students' capabilities, representing good progress. Those students starting the course this year have very varied backgrounds with some having little experience of examination level physical education. Group work opportunities are used effectively to allow students to work at different levels and to develop their ideas in discussion with others. The most capable initiate discussion, can use appropriate technical terminology and move on more quickly to discuss more complex issues such as the development of training methodologies. Progress is evident. Practical skills and understanding are good. Students play games skilfully, understand and can apply rules and manage their own activity safely.
15. In media studies students, are only a little way into their course, but they are already achieving very well. Most of the class made effective use of professional software to produce a short movie clip. Coursework notes and sketches show that students of different levels of attainment have a good grasp of camera techniques and the technical language used to describe them. Students are making steady progress in developing their analytical skills. Some higher attaining students achieve a very effective balance between description and analysis in writing about the skilful use of sound and movement in creating an atmosphere of tension and fear.
16. The standard of work of students currently studying English is average overall. There is a range of achievement which reflects the varying ability levels of the students. Subject specific

vocabulary is generally employed appropriately. Conceptual grasp of the material and the ability

to interpret and analyse language varies but is average overall. Year 12, who have just begun the course are able to engage with textual detail in 'The Tempest'. They show good research skills as they discuss aspects of the masque in relation to their study of 'The Tempest'.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good and they make very good progress as a result. Pupils interviewed, and those spoken to informally during the inspection week, confirm that they enjoy coming to school, and are well supported by staff. These views are confirmed by the positive comments in the parental questionnaire.
18. In a large number of lessons observed, pupils enjoyed their activities and showed interest and enthusiasm. For example in a very good Year 8 ICT lesson, pupils collaborated well to produce a desktop publication of high quality and displayed maturity and skill when discussing together the proposed layout. In a good Year 8 Drama lesson pupils worked well in groups to compose speeches and listened attentively to the safety instructions of the teacher before conducting mock sword fights.
19. Pupils have a good respect for the beliefs, feelings and values of others. Both in lessons and at recreation pupils were observed supporting each other. Older pupils offer help and advice to younger pupils and peer group relationships are strong.
20. The behaviour of pupils at school is very good. Pupils, teachers and non-teaching staff display a high level of co-operation and work well together. In many lessons observed pupils behaved very well, displayed enthusiasm and remained on task. The progress pupils make is enhanced as a result.
21. The school's aim is: *"to provide within a stimulating environment a broad and balanced curriculum which will develop to the fullest the potential of all pupils and ensure that pupils take increasing responsibility for their own learning"* is well understood by pupils and exemplified by their contact in daily life at school. Pupils know the high standard of behaviour expected of them and positively respond as a result. Although the dining room and some corridors are extremely cramped, pupils use them without jostling. At lunchtime pupils integrate well and, although they have limited time for eating, owing to the lack of space, they use the time well to socialise together.
22. Pupils treat their own property, other people's property and school property with the greatest respect and care. Computers are not misused, library books, videos of activities and artefacts are well looked after and the school is graffiti and litter free. Pupils and students have individual lockers and are therefore pleased that their own personal possessions can be secured.
23. No bullying was observed during the inspection week and pupils interviewed confirmed that incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour are rare. When bullying does occur staff deal with it immediately and appropriately.
24. On a very small number of occasions, in lessons where teaching is less focused and work is not matched to pupils' needs, behaviour is not good. A minority of pupils lack enthusiasm, work at a slow pace and are inattentive. The school has only a small number of fixed term exclusions (14 in the previous year) and only a very small number of permanent exclusions (3 in the previous year). These are only given for good reason and correct procedures are always followed.
25. Pupils' personal development is well promoted by the school. Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils interviewed formally and informally confirmed that the school is a very friendly, caring community. They feel well cared for and supported by staff.

26. Pupils are given ample opportunity to take on responsibility and are keen to accept it. The school council is a lively body where two pupils from each tutor group are elected; pupils are encouraged to debate items of interest to the school and make suggestions to senior management on improvements they feel should be made. Senior management takes the suggestions seriously and the school has benefited as a result. Each form elects a form captain who works with form tutors to maintain discipline and provide monitor duties. Senior students act as supervisors at break, lunchtimes and parents' evenings, and many pupils and students work hard to raise money for local charities. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided largely at lunch time, and these activities are well supported by pupils.
27. Attendance at 94 per cent is well above the average and improving. The school uses the electronic system of registration and the OMR (Optical Marking Recording system) of marking registers. Registers are marked accurately, neatly and fully comply with legislation. The school does not monitor attendance on a first day absence basis by office staff but gives form tutors responsibility for following up absences by letter. The vast majority of lessons start on time.
28. The behaviour and attitudes to learning of pupils with special educational needs are good throughout the school. There are some pupils whose behaviour can be challenging because of the nature of their special needs. They are well supported in the school and generally they do not disrupt the learning of other pupils in the same class because the teachers and support staff are effective in dealing with problem behaviour. The attendance rates for pupils with special educational needs are similar to those of other pupils.

Sixth form

29. Students interviewed had very positive views about the sixth form and the consortium arrangements with Shaftesbury School, which they thought worked well and effectively. They feel that they receive a very high level of support from all sixth form staff and their personal and learning skills were enhanced as a result. The 'connexions service' offers a high level of support and students receive good advice regarding careers and higher education opportunities from both 'connexions' staff who visit the school on a regular basis and sixth form tutorial staff. Further information is provided in the sixth form resources centre, which is well stocked with a variety of pamphlets and videotapes all of which are well used by students. Students feel that their views are valued and taken into account by the school. In the student questionnaire, a substantial minority of students felt that the school does not give helpful and constructive advice to them, that they were not well advised about future options and did not receive support and help if they had personal problems. Inspection findings do not confirm these views.
30. Sixth form students display very good attitudes to the school. They feel that staff go to great lengths to assist them and to offer them high levels of pastoral care and support. They enjoy and value sixth form life and have confidence that the school offers them high quality advice for their future academic needs. The confidence that the sixth form has in the school and the very positive ethos generated by the sixth form staff have a very good influence on the rest of the school.
31. The sixth form provides a good example and excellent role model for all other students. They have a very pro-active approach to their lessons and are highly motivated to achieve good examination results. They work very hard, come to lessons on time, pay close attention and complete course work promptly. Behaviour in all sixth form lessons is very good. All pupils demonstrate a maturity and dedication to their work and there have been no exclusions in the sixth form.
32. Students have very well developed study skills, they are proud of their school and the work they produce. The excellent support offered by sixth form staff is much appreciated by the students. Staff take much time to meet pupils regularly, discuss progress and help them work towards the grade they need for further and higher education.

33. Students know that they can rely on the school for professional and sensitive help if they experience personal problems. Students in turn offer the school a good level of support and help with supervision of pupils at lunchtime and break and acting as mentors to younger pupils.
34. Although the sixth form is small, the school is rightly proud of it and of its consortium arrangements with Shaftesbury School, which work well.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

35. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and has significantly improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is consistently good across all year groups. During the inspection of the 122 lessons seen in the main school nearly a third were judged to be excellent or very good and nearly three-quarters were judged to be good or better. Only two lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory.
36. The good teaching is having a clear impact on the quality of learning throughout the school and pupils are making good progress. Pupils enter the school with a pattern of attainment that is in line with national averages and as a result of good teaching pupils by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are achieving standards which are above the national average.
37. The quality of teaching and learning is very good for mathematics. It is good for English and science. In all other subjects teaching is good except for religious education and music in Years 7 to 9, where it is satisfactory. The good quality of teaching makes a major contribution to the significant levels of progress pupils make in the school. Teachers manage pupils very well and have very high expectations of them. Teachers' planning and the effectiveness of teaching methods are satisfactory. In many lessons the tasks set do not fully stretch all pupils and not all teachers set tasks to meet the wide range of abilities in their teaching groups. Good quality teaching leads to good levels of learning. Pupils acquire appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding, although skills of speaking are less well developed. Some teachers are good at developing pupils' skills in research and independent learning. However, this is not consistent across the school and in some lessons pupils are too over dependent on their teachers. Pupils concentrated well in lessons and, when given the opportunities, work well independently.
38. A feature of most lessons is the constructive purposeful relationship between teachers and pupils. This enables pupils to feel secure and confident enough to answer and ask questions. A feature of many of the very good and excellent lessons was the strong subject knowledge and expertise displayed by teachers. This was often coupled with a real enthusiasm for the subject, which rubbed off on pupils. Teachers' explanations were mainly clear and accurate and ensured that pupils worked purposefully and productively.
39. Several parents raised concerns about the amount of homework set. The inspectors' judgements are that the setting of appropriate homework is very good and most teachers follow the published homework timetable.
40. Most teachers mark pupils' work carefully and accurately. Many teachers, but not all, provide clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. The school makes very good use of setting targets for individual pupils based on the level or grade from assessment. Pupils are aware of these targets but are less clear as to what they need to do to achieve these targets. In art and design all pupils' work, which is on display, shows clearly the level of the work. Pupils find this very helpful in trying to improve their own standards of work.
41. Provision for literacy is good, though not yet consistent across departments. There is a well-considered literacy policy and some departments have their own policies. Subject specific vocabulary is encouraged by the display of key words in departments. Spelling and silent reading are regularly practised, sometimes in tutor time.
42. Errors of grammar, spelling and punctuation are often corrected thoroughly but this practice is not consistent across all departments. Most departments encourage extended writing, whilst others provide little opportunity for this. Drafting of work to encourage accuracy is well embedded in the practices of most departments, as is the encouragement to speak by providing oral situations such as role play, discussions, or question and answer sessions. Not all departments encourage pupils to read beyond the immediate information requirements of the course. The very well stocked resources centre is a valuable source for reading and research.

43. Teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall, with particular strengths in some areas. In science, business studies and geography lessons, pupils use their experience of graphical work well, enhancing the presentation of their work and their understanding of the subject by appropriate use of bar graphs, line graphs, and pie charts. For the most part they can interpret these graphs appropriately. They work fluently with numbers. Most subject departments do not have a departmental numeracy policy and development has depended on the enthusiasm of a member of each department for its success.
44. The co-ordinator for numeracy has written a whole school numeracy policy, which came into use across the whole school at the beginning of the current term. This policy sets out common principles for development of numeracy skills, which departments can incorporate into their own subject schemes of work. It also identifies opportunities for use of number and of mathematical ideas in all the major subjects of the curriculum. Although this policy has been in place for only a short time, it provides a good framework upon which all subject areas can build, for improvement of numeracy skills throughout the school.
45. There has been a significant increase in the use of ICT by teachers since the last inspection. Most subjects make good use of ICT to support teaching and learning, with the exception of art and design.
46. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good teaching in the learning support area. The special needs co-ordinator works well with her team of learning support assistants to provide appropriate learning programmes that meet the needs of the pupils. The pupils' individual education plans are well organised and contain suitable targets for improvement. The learning support area is equipped with a good range of books and equipment that are effectively used to help pupils to make progress in their learning. The learning support assistants are appropriately trained and work skilfully to support the teacher and pupils. They have good relationships with the pupils and their work is valued in the school. The teaching is purposeful and well adapted to the pupils' needs. The pupils are also taught well in the majority of subject lessons they attend. In a minority of lessons, the learning support assistants are less effective because they have not been fully involved in planning their work with the subject teachers. This is an area for improvement that has been recognised by the school and further staff training has been planned. In some mixed ability classes the work is not planned effectively to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. This area for improvement has also been recognised by the school.
47. At the time of the last inspection 21 per cent of lessons were judged to be excellent or very good and this has improved to 29 per cent. Similarly 91 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better at the time of the last inspection and this has improved to 98 per cent. The school has therefore made good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.

Sixth form

48. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Of the 22 lessons seen nearly all lessons were good or better and nearly half the lessons were judged to be excellent or very good.
49. A particular strength of sixth form teaching is the high expectations that teachers have of their students. Relationships between students and their teachers are very good as is the management of students. A further strength is the conscientious marking of students' work with teachers giving detailed comments to enable students to improve their work even further. The pace of learning is good as a result of well-planned lessons. Students work hard and are interested in the subjects they are studying.
50. Most students work well independently but there is scope for improving their level of skills of learning. Not all students, especially in English, have developed the skill of wider critical reading around texts, which is required for successful A-level courses. Similarly not all students have developed good note-making skills. In biology the planning of lessons needs to

take into account the wide range of students' abilities within the teaching group and there is lack of additional support for weaker students.

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

51. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good in all years. The curriculum is inclusive and provides a broad range of learning experiences, which are well suited to the aspirations and aptitudes of pupils. Planning is well developed and there is a broad and balanced curriculum to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have access to the whole curriculum. The legal requirements of the National Curriculum are met in Years 7 to 9 but in Years 10 and 11 the provision for religious education does not comply with statutory requirements. All other issues requiring attention identified in the last report have been resolved successfully.
52. Since the last inspection the time allocated to humanities and music has been increased and is now sufficient for the programmes of study to be taught effectively.
53. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have ICT lessons. In Years 7 to 9 all pupils follow a common core of subjects, including art and design, music and drama and those pupils who prove capable have the opportunity of taking up a second modern language, either German or Spanish, in Year 9. The amount of time for music in Years 7 to 9 is low and contributes to low standards in music. In Years 10 and 11 all students continue with their study of mathematics, science, modern languages, ICT, technology, physical education, social, personal and religious education. In addition pupils opt for a range of courses including the humanities, drama, a second foreign language, dance, rural and agricultural science and business studies. At present there is no central co-ordination of the provision for gifted and talented pupils.
54. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned and effective. The programme is closely monitored and evaluated. A number of outside contributors are used including the police, drugs counsellors and careers advisors. Sex and relationships education is delivered through religious education in Years 10 and 11, PSHE and science in all years.
55. Collaboration with feeder primary schools is effective and there are links with further education providers, particularly with the shared sixth form in Shaftesbury. There are numerous links with other local organisations and businesses.
56. The provision for careers education and advice is good. Careers advice begins in Year 9. All pupils receive advice on making choices and have careers interviews with the careers service. The school provides the opportunity for pupils to attend industry days where they can find out about a variety of careers and the school has close links with the local business community and rotary club who provide mock interviews for pupils. Pupils have access to computer software programs and a careers library, which can be used by all pupils individually or in whole class groups. All pupils have two weeks' work experience which is well planned, supervised and followed up accordingly.
57. There is a very wide range of extra curricular activities planned for all year groups. Overall provision is very good and most activities take place during lunchtime, which allows all pupils to participate. There are very high levels of participation across all years, especially for sports activities. More than fifty per cent of pupils regularly take part in some extra-curricular sport. There are visits to museums, theatres and galleries. In addition the school hosts visiting theatre groups and an artist in residence. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and residential trips at home and abroad.
58. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum as a result of the effective support they receive. The provision includes extra-curricular sessions, with a significant number of pupils coming to school early for extra tuition or attending the homework

support sessions at lunchtime. A very small number of Year 10 and 11 pupils are disapplied from modern languages courses in order to allow them to concentrate on improving their skills in English. This is done after full consultation with parents and staff and has helped these pupils to raise their standards in English.

59. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are very effective. Their progress is regularly monitored and their individual education plans are formally reviewed twice a year. The pupils' learning targets are modified as a result of this monitoring and review so that they continue to be based on the pupils' needs. All subject teachers have copies of the pupils' individual education plans so that they are aware of pupils' learning targets. The effective arrangements for assessment, monitoring and target setting have a very positive effect on the pupils' progress. The school has good links with its partner primary schools and all relevant information is shared so that the pupils with special needs can transfer smoothly into secondary school. There are also good links with further education establishments so that their needs can continue to be met after leaving the school.
60. The provision for pupils' personal development is good. However, the school has no policy for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and there is therefore no common understanding within the school of what the terms mean or how these areas are to be promoted within subject teaching and other aspects of school life. Neither the school, nor individual departments, monitors the success of what is provided in these areas. There are significant missed opportunities in some departments because of the failure to identify opportunities in planning.
61. The quality of the provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The school as a whole has successfully developed an ethos within which pupils can flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Religious education explicitly gives pupils the opportunity to explore values and beliefs and the way in which they impact on people's lives. Values and beliefs are also dealt with when they arise in other areas of the curriculum, for example in English and drama where they feature in some of the texts studied. History considers the importance of religious beliefs, for example in looking at the Reformation. Teaching styles employed within the school often emphasise the valuing of pupils' questions and giving pupils space for their own thoughts, ideas and concerns. A good example of this was seen in a Year 11 non-examination religious education class where pupils considered the emotions involved in bereavement, and appropriate ways of comforting a bereaved person.
62. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school offers clear moral principles in the school's 'Aims and Values' that are displayed in classrooms. Moral issues are discussed within a number of curriculum areas: dance, in a unit called 'Swansong,' deals with political prisoners, whilst physical education looks at questions of access to sport with reference to age, disability and race. History lessons involve consideration of the Nazi persecution of the Jews and pupils speak movingly of their visit to Dachau on a school journey; the morality of war is considered in a unit on Vietnam. There is some duplication of effort with issues of teenage pregnancy and abortion being dealt with in at least two departments, and Martin Luther King being studied within dance, drama and religious education; this situation points to the need for overall co-ordination of this area of work.
63. The school's provision for social education is also good. Collaborative and co-operative learning feature in the group work employed in many departments – a good example of team work being encouraged was seen during a rugby coaching session when a teacher explained the need for players to take responsibility for taking on another player's duties when he was unable to perform them (being at the bottom of a ruck). An elected school council takes up issues raised in form groups and reports back. The council has credibility with pupils having successfully campaigned around issues of importance to sections of the school community. There are many educational visits and residential experiences offered to pupils.
64. Pupils' cultural development is well provided for both within the curriculum and through the many, well-supported extra-curricular activities. Aesthetic appreciation is developed through art, dance, drama, music and English - theatre trips and a visiting dance group have enriched recent provision. Many subjects of the curriculum contribute to pupils' developing an

awareness and appreciation of diverse cultures. In music, pupils listen to reggae and African drumming and learn of their significance and English incorporates poetry and prose from a range of cultures. Religious education, particularly through a residential visit to Birmingham, allows pupils significant opportunities for positive encounter with people of diverse cultures.

Sixth form

65. Curriculum planning reflects the school's strong commitment to offer broad and flexible learning opportunities to meet the wide range of students' aspirations. In collaboration with Shaftesbury High School, the school has provided an increasing number of AS and A level courses together with GNVQ intermediate courses in ICT, social care and leisure and tourism. In addition students have the opportunity to follow Sports Leaders courses and take part in the Young Enterprise scheme. All students take general studies, which includes numeracy, communication and ICT key skills. This range of courses provides a good match for students' aspirations and responds to local needs. The needs of the gifted and talented are recognised with, for example, visits to higher education institutions and conferences.
66. Provision for extra curricular activities in the sixth form is very good, particularly in relation to sport. There are also many opportunities to pursue cultural interests and many students also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme' as well as in fund raising activities, outward bound weekends, activities weeks and community work, for example in local primary schools.
67. The PSHE and careers programme continues into Years 12 and 13. Students feel they are well supported through the pastoral system in the sixth form and the majority say they are given good advice and guidance in their choice of courses and routes for the future.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

68. The procedures that the school has to promote pupils' health, well-being and safety, are satisfactory. The designated child protection officers are well aware of their duties and have received appropriate training. They have arranged for cascade training for all other members of teaching staff, and non-teaching staff will shortly receive similar training. The school has a comprehensive child protection policy, which is linked to the procedures of the local area child protection committee. The school keeps good records of pupils on the 'at risk' register and the school referral system to the social services department is to be reviewed following the inspection. 'Looked after' pupils and pupils on the 'at risk' register are carefully tracked.
69. The school has satisfactory arrangements for first aid. There is an adequate number of first aiders, all of whom have appropriate qualifications. There is a dedicated first aid room and detailed records of accidents are kept.
70. The school has appointed a health and safety officer but does not have a governor responsible for health and safety. Regular health and safety audits take place but departments such as science and design and technology do not supply regular reports of their risk assessments. The fire alarm is tested regularly and regular fire drills are carried out and recorded.
71. The caring and supporting ethos of the school permeates all its departments. Pupils are able to learn well, with confidence, and the school provides a very good education support for its pupils. Staff know pupils well and relate easily to them. The pastoral system is effective and pupils know that they can turn to form tutors for additional advice and help if necessary. The form tutors move up the school with their own tutor group and as a result tutors know individual pupils well and gain their confidence. Time is made for individual discussion and each pupil receives a personal interview at least once per year with their form tutor, deputy headteacher and head of lower or upper school to discuss progress, achievements and/or difficulties.
72. The pastoral system of form tutors being line managed by heads of lower or upper school works extremely well and form tutors are well supported by their line managers, who meet regularly with them to discuss pupils' academic and pastoral progress.
73. All staff at the school work extremely hard to ensure that pupils in their care receive high quality mentoring and that their individual needs are met. The view of the overwhelming majority of parents that children are well looked after is confirmed by the inspection findings.

74. The well-structured PHSE programme is adequately timetabled and ensures that pupils' development is well promoted. The pastoral system works well, with good interchange of information between form tutors, subject teachers and head of lower and upper school. Pupils' progress is well promoted as a result.
75. The school has very good procedures for the monitoring and promoting of good behaviour and the elimination of oppressive behaviour. Pupils fully understand the reward and sanction system and the behaviour policy. Parents fully support the school in the operation of sanctions, and behaviour in the school is generally very good. When necessary, sanctions are consistently applied and the overwhelming majority of pupils and students respect school rules and adhere to them. The PHSE programme, adult example and the school ethos ensure that good relationships at the school are the rule rather than the exception. The inspection team was impressed by the courtesy shown to them by pupils who were eager to help them, show them around the school and explain their pride in school and their achievements.
76. Pupils interviewed during the inspection week expressed the view that any incidents of poor behaviour and bullying were immediately dealt with by the school.
77. The school has satisfactory procedures for the monitoring and improving of attendance. The electronic system of recording attendance, together with the OMR system ensures that the school is always aware of absentees and tracks them carefully. Form tutors are responsible for monitoring pupils' attendance and generating letters to parents for unexplained absences but the school does not have procedures for contacting parents on a first day of absence. However, form tutors are instructed to make the first day contact when they suspect or know of attendance problems. The school reports attendance figures to the governing body and attendance is well above the national average.
78. The special needs department works extremely well to support pupils. The SENCO (Special Education Needs Co-ordinator) knows pupils well and ensures that support staff have access to pupils' statements and identifies their needs. In most subjects they support staff well in lessons but in one or two lessons across the curriculum their work is not sufficiently directed to enable them to be entirely effective in their support of teaching staff.
79. The Individual Education Plans (IEPs) provided for pupils with special needs are of good quality. Parents are invited to annual reviews and discuss with tutors target setting for the following year. Teachers and learning support assistants are involved in preparation of IEPs, which have realistic targets for pupils to achieve.
80. The school's arrangements for monitoring the academic and personal development of pupils with special needs are very good and have a positive impact on learning. The effective use of individual education plans and the involvement of suitable outside agencies both help to ensure that the pupils' academic and personal needs are met. The student guidance unit offers further support to the small minority of pupils whose behaviour or poor attendance are likely to seriously affect their learning. Pupils are only admitted to the unit after full consideration of their learning needs and they are reintegrated into normal lessons as soon as is practical. This approach has achieved considerable success with some pupils who would otherwise have failed to benefit from their education.
81. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are, in the main, good. Marking is used consistently by all teachers and is both accurate and descriptive. Staff record pupils' progress and use information to assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning; and to develop the curriculum. Assessment is, however, sometimes not used as effectively as it might be to ensure the progress of higher achieving or gifted or talented pupils. Lesson planning, therefore, is sometimes impaired and does not always meet the needs of pupils with differing abilities. In physical education and design and technology, assessment does not sufficiently identify areas of weakness to enable pupils to improve.
82. Assessment is carried out when pupils enter school at Year 7 by a combination of Key Stage 2 Test Results and cognitive ability tests. This information is fed to all teachers who use it to set targets for the following year and to monitor pupils' progress. Progress is well recorded and all

pupils are given individual interviews where their work is discussed and future targets set. Achievement is measured and monitored by the school and pupils know and understand that their targets are to be achieved, but they are not always sure of what they have to do to reach them.

83. Parents receive two reports a year – interim reports give grades for effort, attainment and target setting and main reports give full details on a subject by subject basis, space for pupil and parents' comments and targets set for future development.
84. The progress towards developing an assessment policy, referred to in the previous report has continued and the school has taken the opportunity to improve and codify its assessment policy.

Sixth form

Assessment

85. Assessment in the sixth form is of a good standard. Sixth form tutors use GCSE results to predict minimum grades, which sixth form students should achieve. Parents and students are informed by the school what these grades are and students are constantly monitored to see whether they are performing at levels to achieve the predicted grades. Staff mentor students on a regular basis and students feel that the school gives them very good support to achieve their A-level targets.

Advice, support and guidance

86. The advice and support that students in the sixth form receive are of high quality. Students in Year 12 receive good induction by a well-structured programme, which gives them a very clear indication of life in the sixth form and the expectation that the school has of them for their work and behaviour. The PHSE programme includes citizenship, study skills and careers guidance advice given by the careers department; input by the Connexions Service staff ensure that pupils are made aware of the various options for their future. They are therefore able to make their correct choices for A-level courses.
87. A significant number of sixth form students, who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, feel that the school does not give helpful and constructive advice; they were not well advised about future options. An overwhelming majority thought the school helped them to settle down well and they were treated as responsible young adults. Inspection findings do not agree with the negative views but do agree with the positive views expressed. Advice and help given to students for their career guidance were good.
88. High quality career guidance is provided for students by both staff and the Connexions Service staff who attend school one day per week and conduct interviews with all students in a dedicated Careers Room. The school has a good range of resources, pamphlets and periodicals, which are prominently displayed in the well-equipped Library. Students interviewed confirmed that they feel that sixth form staff are extremely caring and supportive and they can readily turn to them for guidance and help when they need it.
89. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are very good. Students show maturity and an eagerness to achieve well. As a result they attend school regularly, are on time for lessons and make very good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

90. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive about the school and felt that the school works hard to support them. A minority felt that they did not receive sufficient information about their children's progress and that the

school does not work closely enough with them. Inspection findings confirm the positive views and do not support the negative views.

91. The school makes a substantial effort to offer parents a high level of support and gives them good information about their children's progress. If the school has a cause for concern, parents are contacted promptly and immediately consulted on any action taken. The headteacher and all staff at school are available to see parents, without appointment, if necessary. Parents are encouraged to visit the school at any time.
92. In Years 7, 11 and 12 the school arranges two parents' evenings a year and in Years 8, 9 and 10 one parents' evening is arranged. In addition, an extra evening is arranged for the parents of Year 9 pupils to discuss GCSE options and an extra evening is also arranged for Year 10 pupils to discuss coursework. The school further provides interim reports giving grades for pupils' efforts, attainments and target setting.
93. The school planner is well used by the school and some parents, to provide a valuable link and communication between parents and school. Staff monitor this planner well and respond very well to parental comments.
94. The view of the inspection team is that the homework policy is consistently applied, and in the main pupils receive appropriate amounts of homework, which is marked regularly with helpful and constructive comments.
95. The school provides good quality information for parents. The prospectus is professionally produced, attractively presented and contains all information that parents need. In addition, supplementary information is produced giving essential information to parents and a separate brochure is produced for Key Stage 4 students, giving them full and detailed information about the range of courses open to them and the marking policy of the examination boards.
96. Regular newsletters are produced which are well written and provide a wealth of interesting information on school activities, achievements of pupils and staff information. The governors' annual report to parents is very detailed and gives a deal of information to parents as well as all the necessary statutory information.
97. The Parent Teachers Association, to which all parents belong, is a lively body which, although it has only a small number of active members, is successful at arranging fund raising events which greatly benefit the school. During the past year the PTA has raised the sum of £3,000, which has been well used by the school to improve the dining facilities. In addition the PTA arranges a number of successful social activities such as raffles, jumble sales and so on. The school organised a sponsored walk, which the PTA supported. Their work is much appreciated by the school.
98. Due to transport difficulties, very few parents come into school to help but some help with external activities such as providing work experience places, mock interviews and help on local and residential visits. Consultation evenings are very well supported with the response sometimes being as high as 90 per cent.
99. The school has provided a three-part home agreement, which sets out very clearly the duties and responsibilities of the school, parents, and pupils for their successful education. In addition, parents are required to give written permission for their children to access the Internet.
100. The overwhelming majority of parents fully support the school and are pleased with pupils' behaviour, teaching and the very good provision the school makes for the pastoral care of its pupils.
101. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in their children's education. They are invited to attend the annual review of pupils' progress and take full part in discussion, review updates and target setting.

102. Parents have very positive views about the sixth form. They appreciate the high level of guidance and support offered to their children. Sixth form students are extremely complimentary about the school. They appreciate the fact that they are given a high level of responsibility and support, and are treated as adults. Students interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that they felt that the consortium arrangements with Shaftesbury School work very well and that they are well prepared for life after school.
103. The school makes great efforts to fully involve the parents of pupils with special educational needs. The information sent out to parents clearly explains the school's arrangements for supporting these pupils and emphasises the need for parental involvement in their education. Parents are consulted when writing individual education plans as well as when reviewing them. The school has a welcoming and open attitude to parental involvement and this results in a very positive response from parents.
104. The school has good links with its partner primary schools and all relevant information is shared, so that the pupils with special needs can transfer smoothly into secondary school. There are also good links with further education establishments so that their needs can continue to be met after leaving the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

105. The quality of leadership and management within the school is very good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide clear leadership for raising standards with a focus on improving standards of teaching and learning. In this task they are well supported by an experienced senior management team. A strength of this team is its presence around the school at the start and end of the school day and at lunchtimes. They are well known to pupils and students, and they have confidence to approach members of the senior management team if they have any concerns.
106. The quality of curriculum and pastoral leadership and management is good. The quality of leadership for English, mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages, special educational needs and history is very good. There is no unsatisfactory leadership from any staff who have posts of responsibility.
107. The very good management of special educational needs ensures that teaching staff have a good awareness of pupils' needs and all have access to the individual education plans of pupils in their groups, so that they can monitor progress effectively. The teachers' management of pupils with special educational needs is generally good. These factors help pupils to make good progress.
108. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. Members of the governing body give freely of their time and are both loyal and supportive to the school. The quality of information that governors receive is good. The governing body fulfils all of its statutory duties, with the exception of providing sufficient time for the teaching of religious education in Years 10 and 11 to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus, and of providing pupils with a daily act of collective worship.
109. The school's improvement plan appropriately identifies priorities for raising standards. One of the strengths of the school is the shared commitment by headteacher, staff and governors to improvement. The main priorities identified for 2002- 2003 are to develop a bid for specialist college status; to review the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and to develop teaching and learning for literacy, numeracy and ICT. Inspectors agree with the main thrust of the improvement plan that these are appropriate strategies to raise standards within the school even higher.
110. A further strength of the school is the high quality of monitoring and evaluation and the development of teaching and learning. The analysis of test results is very good and this is effectively used to set targets for individual pupils. Pupils are well aware of their targets but are less clear of what they have to do reach these targets.

111. The school's strategy for performance management and appraisal is very good. The policy for performance management, agreed by the governing body sensitively builds upon the good practice in monitoring and evaluation.
112. Overall staffing levels are good. The school has, in all areas of the curriculum sufficient staff to teach the National Curriculum. There is a good balance between experienced and less-experienced teachers within the school. The ratio of pupils to teachers is above the national average. However, the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom is low in comparison with other schools nationally as a result of taking on extra teachers to meet the increased numbers of pupils from 2003. The support for pupils with special educational needs is provided by a good blend of experienced teachers and learning support assistants who are deployed well and provide effective support in most lessons, particularly when they are involved in the planning of the lessons. The quality and performance of administration, clerical, technical and library staff provide good support for the efficient day-to-day running of the school.
113. Staff development is well organised. The induction programme and the support provided for teachers new to the school are appreciated. Full records of in-service courses attended by staff are maintained, including an evaluation of the impact of in-service training on teaching and learning. In-service training is matched to the needs of the school, departments and individuals. Staff have received training in ICT and most are confident in the use of computers.
114. The expenditure per pupil is just above the national average. Finances are managed effectively. The most recent auditor's report in June 2000 stated that the school is 'operating satisfactorily with adequate controls in place'. The governing body accepted seven out of the eight recommendations within the report. As a result of careful budgeting and increased pupil numbers, the budget deficit of £50,000 in 2000-2001 had been eliminated and replaced with a surplus of over £50,000 by the end of the 2001-2002 financial year. Specific grants, including those for Standard Funding and for special educational needs are spent effectively on the purposes for which they were intended. The school is effective in applying the principles of best value and particularly good value has been achieved since the school took over the grounds maintenance contract.
115. Overall accommodation for the main school is unsatisfactory. The increased number of pupils has increased the pressure on accommodation. The accommodation for ICT, special educational needs and the learning resources centre is very good. The accommodation for textiles and art is unsatisfactory and this is recognised by the governing body and the LEA and will be tackled by the next phase of the planned building programme. There are many temporary buildings on the site and it is reported that, in bad weather, movement between these buildings and the main site is difficult. Whilst improvements have been made in the accommodation for music, sound-proofing problems still remain to be resolved and there is a lack of appropriate practice rooms for individual instrumentalists. The arrival of buses onto an already overcrowded car park in the morning and afternoons creates particular challenges in ensuring pupils' safety. Supervision is good at these times but a long-term solution to this problem, as recognised by the governing body, is still required. Despite improvements in the dining hall since the last inspection, the space is too small for the number of pupils using it. Despite the cramped and overcrowded conditions and thanks to the high levels of supervision pupils are mature and act responsibly in the dining area. The existing buildings are well maintained by a dedicated site manager and her team of cleaners, many of whom are sixth form students.
116. The quantity, range and quality of resources to support teaching and learning are good and reflect the fact that the school spends above the national average on learning resources. The learning resources centre is an attractive area with a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. The area is popular with pupils at lunchtimes and, during lessons, many pupils are using the learning resource centre to research materials for their topics using either book or computer sources. The provision for ICT is very good and the ratio of computers to pupils is well above the national average. Resources for English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education are good. For all other subjects resources are satisfactory. The school has a good level of books and equipment for

use with pupils with special educational needs and these resources are used effectively to support learning.

117. Since the last inspection the school has continued to make improvements in the level of resources and accommodation available for pupils. The school continues to provide very good value for money as it did at the time of the last inspection.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

118. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision for the sixth form's future development. As well as a determination to raise standards, this acknowledges the need to increase its size whilst maintaining the supportive ethos and the quality of pastoral care, both of which are strengths of the current provision.
119. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Induction procedures for sixth form students are good. Transition from Year 11 into Year 12 is well managed. As a result of the guidance they receive, most students choose combinations of subjects which are relevant to their preferences and aspirations. The quality of sixth form provision is attracting an increasing number of students to stay on at the school.
120. Day-to-day organisation of sixth form life is very good although the school needs to review the current transport arrangements between Sturminster Newton and Shaftesbury; some lessons begin late whenever the bus is delayed. Arrangements to share and exchange information between the two schools are effective.
121. Financial planning, management and monitoring in the sixth form are good. Financial administration and monitoring are sound and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. Sixth form spending is complex, since all students are technically on roll at Shaftesbury School, but the principles of best value are successfully applied.
122. The sixth form is cost effective, gives very good value for money and does not draw resources away from the main school. It provides students with one or two years of valuable and worthwhile education and support.

Resources

123. Teachers delivering sixth form courses at Sturminster Newton are well qualified and experienced. The deployment of teaching staff is good across subjects. Performance management arrangements are very good, and staff development opportunities are very well targeted to need.
124. Sixth form accommodation is good, although students claim that heating arrangements are sometimes ineffective during cold weather. Sixth form classrooms are spacious and modern. The common room provides students with an effective space for social interaction and informal discussions. The school has recently provided a private study room with 10 up-to-date computers, where students have good access to the Internet. The library contains a good collection of books and other materials suited to sixth form needs – this includes a senior fiction section as well as a good range of careers materials. Existing learning resources are used effectively to support learning in subjects. Overall, the accommodation and resources used for sixth form courses are good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

125. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education the headteacher, staff and governors should:
126. Ensure that tasks set for pupils more accurately meet their needs and increase the range of teaching strategies by:
- Improving the use of the target setting data by teachers when planning their schemes of work and plans for individual lessons;
 - Identifying clearly for pupils what they need to do to reach their targets;
 - Ensuring that schemes of work and individual lesson plans for all lessons identify opportunities to;
 - Develop pupils' speaking skills;
 - Provide opportunities for pupils to develop their independent research skills.
(Paragraphs 37,40,42,81)
127. Improve the co-ordination of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by:
- Building upon the audit that has been conducted to identify further opportunities across departments to develop these aspects of pupils' personal development;
 - Ensuring that pupils receive their entitlement to a daily act of collective worship;
 - Increase the amount of time for religious education so that the requirements of the 'Agreed Syllabus' can be met.
(Paragraphs 60-64, 108)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the strategies for students to develop independent learning skills by:
- Increasing the amount of time students spend on background reading and research on tasks;
 - Reducing the dependency of students on their teachers to provide them with information
 - Develop students' skills in note-taking.
(Paragraphs 235, 248,250)
- (2) Increase the support available for weaker students by:
- Ensuring that tasks set for students in lessons reflect the wide range of abilities found in some teaching groups.
(Paragraph 230)
- (3) Increase the time allocation for mathematics and review the time allocation for other subjects in collaboration with Shaftesbury School.
(Paragraph 235)
- (4) Continue the efforts to reduce the time lost for some students at the beginning and end of lessons as a result of students' travelling between the two sites.
(Paragraph 120)

In addition the governing body may wish to include the following less important issues for consideration within the action plan:

- Raising standards in music in Years 7 to 9 by increasing the amount of time for music.
(Paragraph 206-213)
- Ensure that substandard accommodation is no longer a barrier to learning. (Paragraph 115)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	122
	Sixth form	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	4	32	52	32	2	0	0
Percentage	3.3	26.2	42.6	26.2	1.6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	8	11	1	0	0	0
Percentage	9.1	36.4	50.0	4.5	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form here as each lesson represents more than four 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	656	54
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	52	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	99	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	58	59	117

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	40	42
	Girls	53	47	51
	Total	94	87	93
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (76)	74 (75)	79 (76)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (47)	51 (51)	40 (52)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	42	37
	Girls	52	49	50
	Total	95	91	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (77)	78 (75)	75 (70)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	55 (50)	53 (53)	28 (20)
	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	55	53	108

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	32	54	54
	Girls	39	50	50
	Total	71	104	104
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (65)	96 (91)	96 (97)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	42.8
	National	39.0

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

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

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	7	8	15

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	7	8	15
	Average point score per candidate	10.4	12.3	11 (16.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.8)	17.7 (18.6)	17.4 (18.2)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	7	8	15	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	10.4	12.3	11			
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
656	17	2
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	38.52
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	455

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1,846,194
Total expenditure	1,735,834
Expenditure per pupil	2,716
Balance brought forward from previous year	-50,481
Balance carried forward to next year	59,879

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.97
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.03
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	700
Number of questionnaires returned	320

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	59	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	51	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	65	3	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	60	15	3	2
The teaching is good.	30	63	6	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	49	15	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	6	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	43	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	55	17	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	36	51	5	3	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	55	7	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	47	10	2	6

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 **very good**.

Strengths

- High standards of attainment in all years.
- Good and often very good teaching.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Commitment to further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- To further develop strategies for independent learning.
- To develop the systems of assessment, tracking and targeting which already exist.
- To improve the provision for gifted and talented pupils in lessons.

128. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests, results were well above average in relation to both the national average and the average for similar schools. 81 per cent of pupils achieved a level 5 or above. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. English results were the best of the three core subjects. In 2002, 71 per cent of pupils achieved level 5 or above.
129. The results of the 2001 GCSE English examination were well above average, with 76 per cent of pupils achieving the higher grades A*-C. The highest grades of A* and A were also above the national average. There was no significant difference in the performance between boys and girls overall, though girls achieved more of the highest grades. In 2002, 72 per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C.
130. In the 2001 GCSE English Literature examinations almost 77 per cent of pupils entered achieved grades A*-C. Girls achieved slightly better than boys overall. In 2002, 73.4 per cent achieved these grades.
131. Standards of work seen during the inspection are, overall, above average and sometimes well above average. Speaking and listening skills, both at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11, are above expectations. Most pupils speak clearly and fluently, using appropriate tone and vocabulary. Many are able to vary the register according to audience and circumstance. Some lower attaining pupils have difficulty maintaining such responses, but higher attaining pupils of all ages express themselves in a confident and effective manner, usually aided by the possession of an extended vocabulary. By the end of Year 11 some are able to argue persuasively and consistently. Listening skills are good throughout: pupils are able to maintain concentration well and absorb information.
132. Reading skills are above average, overall, by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Many pupils read widely and the majority are able to read effectively for meaning. Even lower attaining pupils are able to interrogate text for meaning successfully, with appropriate help; for example, a Year 10 group of lower attaining pupils were able to paraphrase speeches in 'The Taming of the Shrew'. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils are able to explore character, theme and style in a manner appropriate to their course and level. Sometimes pupils work above this level as when a middle band Year 10 explored a character in 'An Inspector Calls' from detailed textual clues. Lower attaining pupils can generally read text accurately although not always with fluency as their vocabulary is limited.
133. Writing skills are, overall, above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Sometimes they are well above average. For all but the lowest attaining pupils basic literacy skills are above expectations. There are generally fewer sustained errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar than might be expected in each year group. Most pupils can, by the end of Year 9, structure their work appropriately to purpose and write in a variety of styles. Sentence structures and

vocabulary are often manipulated to be appropriate to the style of writing. By the end of Year 11 these skills are further developed; original writing, in particular, is often mature and creative, demonstrating a definite sense of authorship. Analytical writing about literature is often detailed and perceptive, showing crafting skills beyond those expected; this is most apparent in Years 10 and 11, but occurs also in Years 7 to 9.

134. Progress is good both by the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress relative to their prior attainment. Pupils make good progress because teaching is good and pupils are keen to learn. They have positive attitudes to English, behave well in class, listen carefully, respond promptly and generally work hard. Written work is well presented and usually well developed and detailed. Some pupils, however, are too passive in class and do not take full advantage of the learning opportunities offered to them. Others lack confidence to test out their ideas orally in a whole class situation but will happily contribute when working in pairs or small groups. Much good collaborative work takes place.
135. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. A major strength of the teaching is the very good teacher-pupil relationship evident in most classes. Teachers know their pupils well and this enables the pupils to learn in a positive and supportive environment. Teachers' one to one help as pupils work on tasks in class is also a major strength; it makes the pupils feel valued individually and gives them confidence to succeed in the work. All teachers have good subject knowledge and plan well, making appropriate use of time and resources. Classroom management skills, although entirely unobtrusive, are very good and enable pupils to learn in a calm and orderly environment. Most teachers have good questioning skills, which enable pupils to develop and refine their ideas. Marking is of a good quality: it is thorough and detailed, encouraging and positive, but always points pupils towards what they must do next to improve. Learning support assistants are well briefed and focused. Very occasionally the pace of a lesson may be slower and unvaried and the material lacking in challenge.
136. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear dedication to high standards linked to a determination for further improvement. The team of committed teachers works very well together. There are good, clear schemes of work which are linked well to the National Strategy. Regular departmental meetings are held and official monitoring of teaching and learning takes place on a structured basis. Systems of assessment and the use of data for tracking, predicting and targeting are, on the whole, good but could be developed further. A clear development plan underlines the department's dedication to further improvement. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities, including theatre trips, which provides a very valuable contribution to pupils' personal, social and cultural development.
137. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards of attainment are now higher at both key stages and progress is better. Standards of teaching have been maintained at the high standards reported in the last inspection.
138. In order to improve further the department should explore ways in which to further develop independent learning strategies in the classroom in order to counter the passivity of some pupils; to refine still further its systems for tracking and assessing pupils' progress; and consider additional focus on the provision for gifted and talented pupils in all years in lessons.

DRAMA

139. Overall, provision for drama is very good. In the 2001 GCSE examinations 14 pupils were entered for drama and all achieved grades A*-C. This was well above the national expectations in the subject. In 2002 19 pupils were entered of whom all but three achieved grades A*-C. In the current Year 11 there are 21 pupils of whom most are expected to achieve grades A*-C.
140. Standards in Years 7-9 are overall in line with expectations but with wide variations in ability as the subject is taught in mixed ability groups. In Years 7-9 pupils work well on developing spatial awareness in movement in Year 8 and discussing some of Shakespeare's plays in Year

9.

Year 9 pupils are able to speak lines of Shakespeare, out of context, with varying degrees of success, some using rhythm and tone to good effect. These lessons are part of a well-planned scheme, which develops skills sequentially.

141. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average or above in the lessons seen. Pupils are able, for example, to work systematically and creatively to devise and construct improvisations and tableaux using movement and sound productively. Most are able to analyse the work of others and deconstruct elements of a performance. Some higher attaining pupils in drama achieve very good empathy with character.
142. Progress in all years is good and better in Years 10 and 11. In the first three years classes are relatively large and, though behaviour is good, not all pupils approach drama tasks with equal seriousness and commitment. Those who do try hard achieve well. In Years 10 and 11 option groups the commitment and interest of the pupils are much more obvious. They work well together, try hard, are good at collaborative tasks and have considerable understanding of the terminology and the purposes of drama. Most are prepared to revise and refine their performances and projects over time.
143. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. Lessons are well planned and time and resources are used well. A Year 10 group were given a very good introduction to the use of masks before they were allowed to experiment with them. Good classroom management allows lessons to proceed in a calm and positive way. Lessons are pitched at a high but achievable level of expectation. In consequence, pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn and work hard to achieve this. Generally the pace of lessons is good so that pupils maintain interest and motivation and good learning results. In Years 10 and 11 there are very good teacher-pupil relationships, which create a very positive learning environment. Very occasionally more instruction is needed for pupils in the earlier years to enable them to succeed in tasks. Pupils learn well because they are interested and actively involved.
144. The department is well led and managed. There are clear schemes of work, a sound marking policy and an appropriate departmental development plan. Resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory, although the lack of adequate soundproofing between the music and drama rooms causes unacceptable noise levels at times. As at the time of the last inspection, the curriculum is appropriate, though the head of department wishes to review the provision for Years 7 to 9 and improve its focus in some areas. Assessment is well developed; pupils' self-assessment is a particular strength. The range of extra curricular activities, including the school production, which involves pupils from Year 7 to Year 12 and the well-attended drama club, is valuable as was the input of professional dance performers. Drama makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal and social development, enhancing self-esteem, developing confidence and enabling pupils to work well together in a collaborative and positive manner. The high standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The progress of pupils and their attainment at age 14 and at age 16.
- The quality of teaching in many lessons.
- Relationships among pupils, and between teachers and pupils.
- The use of marking and assessment to ensure that pupils always know what they have to do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in mathematics to enhance understanding.
- The development of pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of

145. Pupils' levels of attainment when they come to the school are closely in line with the national average. Throughout their first three years in the school they make good progress, so that those who were 14 in 2001 were above the national average. National comparative figures were not available at the time of writing, but the number of pupils reaching Level 5 in 2002 was slightly lower than those achieved in 2001. Pupils' results at age 14 are also consistently above average in terms of the number of pupils reaching Level 6 and above. In most years a few pupils gain Level 8 though, as yet, none has achieved exceptional performance. When compared with those in schools in similar circumstances, pupils' results at age 14 are well above average.
146. Pupils continue this good progress in Years 10 and 11 so that by the time they take their GCSE examinations they are working at levels which are well above what is expected for pupils of this age, with the number of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the top five per cent nationally for schools in similar circumstances. However, the number gaining the highest grades, A* and A, is slightly lower than might be expected, and improvement of the results for higher attaining pupils has already been identified by the department as an area for improvement.
147. The results in mathematics have broadly followed the national trend over the last four years. Random variations mean that in some years the results have been lower, but in the longer term the trend has been upwards. No national data are available for the year 2002, but results for both 14 year olds and 16 year olds have been similar to those in previous years.
148. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' exercise books supports these conclusions. The department is very good at ensuring that work set is appropriate for the ability of pupils so that all can experience success, whilst challenging those who can achieve highly. Virtually all the work seen demonstrated the good progress that pupils make, with clear gains in understanding and a corresponding ability to undertake more complex work. This was true whether in a top set in Year 10, who were coming towards an understanding of vector geometry, or a Year 7 group working with multi-cubes to increase their understanding of square numbers. The standard of presentation in pupils' mathematics books is high, homework is set regularly and marking is well up to date. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good.
149. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are always constructive and appropriate: pupils recognise this and are keen to please their teachers. Only rarely do pupils forget themselves and disturb the flow of the lesson.
150. The best lessons were characterised by excellent class management and a single mindedness of purpose in which the atmosphere for learning was near ideal. Pupils were fully engaged with what they were doing. Teachers were confident and accurate in their explanations, with an excellent awareness of pupils' common misconceptions, ensuring rapid gains in understanding. Support by the teacher for those experiencing difficulty was superb. For example, in a lesson on highest common factors, a starter activity reinforced the idea of a prime number in pupils' minds before moving on to the procedures for finding prime factors. Logical presentation, excellent pace, and well judged examples ensured that all pupils made excellent progress.
151. In lessons, which were good, rather than excellent, pupils still learned well, but explanations tended to be less tightly focused on the learning objectives and more pupils needed support when attempting to solve problems. Those waiting for the teacher's attention sometimes allowed their minds to wander and learning became less effective as a result. In all lessons seen, support for those with special educational needs was at least good, and some impressive work was seen with classes most of whose members had special educational needs. For example, a game of mathematical bingo, with prizes, was used to capture the attention of a group of Year 10 pupils, whose interest was maintained throughout the lesson. The excellent relationships between the teacher and his class, both collectively and as individuals, was a particular strength, and one which was reflected in many lessons. Taken as a whole, teaching during the inspection week provided an impressive insight into the richness and variety of

experience that is mathematics. However, the approach to the subject sometimes failed to make these broader aspects clear to pupils who were quite rightly engaged in the detailed learning appropriate to the particular lesson. Further consideration of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements through lesson plans and informally as opportunities arise in lessons would make a material difference to pupils' understanding of the place of mathematics in our lives, and the contribution that the subject has made to our progress over many centuries.

152. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is not only an excellent mathematician, but she is also a skilled manager who has created a very good ethos for learning in the department, which draws well on the many and varied strengths of her staff, and makes the best use of the available resources. This is a particular strength in a department, which operates from rooms spread throughout the school. This means that there is no central area which pupils can identify with the subject, or where good work and information about progress and attainment can be displayed. The head of department has created good departmental policies, including excellent procedures for tracking the progress of pupils, setting challenging but achievable targets, and monitoring progress towards them.
153. Resources for teaching mathematics are generally satisfactory. However, the use of ICT should be developed further to support the requirement to use ICT in all subjects across the curriculum, and to provide further and different opportunities for independent learning, as the need arises during lessons. The department has rightly identified in its development plan the attainment of really high grades for the most able pupils as a priority and observation of pupils in lessons suggests that they are already meeting with some success. However, further progress is possible, and the ready availability of appropriate technology and software would provide the stimulus for learning at the highest level that these very able pupils need.
154. At the time of the last inspection, many strengths were noted in the mathematics department and in its contribution to the academic ethos of the school. It is a significant achievement that virtually all these strengths have been further enhanced in the intervening years, with the result that the department continues to serve its pupils very well indeed.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The standards attained in external tests and examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Pupils behave well and have good relationships with their teachers.
- There is a high proportion of practical work.
- The assessment of pupils' work is good.

Areas for improvement

- The range and style of teachers' questions are often too narrow to encourage good discussion and explanation of scientific ideas.
- The department development plan is not sufficiently focused on specific measures to maintain and improve the quality and standards in the subject.
- The schemes of work need to be completed so that learning objectives and outcomes are clear for all pupils.
- The laboratory displays need to include more good examples of pupils' work.

155. The standards attained in the 2001 national tests for Year 9 pupils were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. The results in the 2002 tests were very similar to 2001 but there was an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades (level 6 and above). In both years there were no pupils gaining the lowest grades. The girls' results were slightly better than the boys' but the difference was not significant. The results have improved over the past five years at a rate that is broadly similar to the national rate of

improvement. The standards of work for pupils in Years 7-9 observed during the inspection were above average overall. For example, in one lesson observed, a group of higher attaining pupils in Year 8 were able to identify the key factors that would lead to a fair test when comparing the conductivity of some common metals and they could predict the outcomes and explain their reasoning. In another lesson, Year 9 pupils showed good knowledge of the chemical reactivity series and were able to effectively carry out practical work on constructing cells, explaining their findings in terms of the reactivity of different metals.

156. The standards attained in the GCSE science examinations in 2001 were well above the national average for pupils gaining A*-C grades and above average for A*-G grades. The results for 2002 were below those for 2001 although they were still above the national average and they were in line with the expected results, based on the past performance of these pupils. The GCSE results have improved steadily over the past five years and fewer than average pupils gain the lowest grades. The results for boys in 2001 and 2002 were above those for girls, although this is not a consistent pattern over the past five years. The results gained by pupils who took the rural science GCSE option were in line with predicted results and slightly above their results in the science GCSE. The standards of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 observed during the inspection were above average. For example, a group of Year 11 pupils showed very good knowledge of the factors likely to affect the rate of a chemical reaction and they understood the idea of mass being conserved during a reaction. They were able to apply their knowledge to new situations when planning practical work. Year 10 pupils seen in one lesson were able to explain the energy changes taking place in various devices and then identify the main changes and record them in diagrammatic form. Another Year 11 group showed good understanding of their work on the function of the kidneys and the breakdown of amino-acids.
157. Pupils throughout the school achieve well and make good progress in relation to their past results. Many pupils who come into the school with average results in science are attaining above average results by the end of Year 9 and well above average results by the end of Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs are expected to make progress at the same rate as other pupils and this is usually achieved. Observation of work during lessons and in pupils' books shows that some lower attaining pupils are able to achieve good standards in their work. For example, one group of Year 10 pupils showed good understanding of the extraction of iron by reduction in a blast furnace and were able to explain the reaction with a word equation.
158. The pupils behave well in science lessons and they have due regard for safety procedures when carrying out practical work. They generally apply themselves well to the work set and they show interest in the subject, cooperating well with each other when carrying out group work. In the minority of lessons where the pupils' behaviour is not up to this standard, the teachers take effective action to deal with any problems that occur.
159. The quality of teaching is good overall. The teachers have good subject knowledge and they relate well to their pupils, maintaining good order by planning interesting lessons and using effective teaching methods. This includes a high proportion of practical work, which helps to maintain pupils' interest and motivates them to learn. In the most successful lessons the learning objectives are made clear to the pupils so that they understand what they are trying to achieve. In a minority of less successful lessons the objectives are not clear or there is not enough thought given to meeting the wide range of learning needs in a group. In some lessons the teachers' questioning does not give pupils enough opportunity to think for themselves and discuss and explain their science work. This is an area that could be improved in order to raise standards even further.
160. The quality of pupils' learning is good in a high proportion of lessons. The pupils respond well to good teaching and as a result they make good progress in their learning. They concentrate well and work productively because teachers manage the time well and conduct lessons at a good pace. The good teaching helps the pupils to learn well and make good gains in their knowledge and understanding.
161. Leadership of the department is good and there is a clear focus on maintaining and improving the high standards already achieved. This focus on standards and quality is not fully reflected

in the departmental development plan and this is an area that could be improved. The day-to-day management of the department is very good. The science staff are well deployed to make the most of their strengths and this has a positive effect on the standards achieved. There are effective arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and the staff have access to suitable training.

162. Assessment of the pupils' progress in science is good. Regular tests and assessments are used to monitor learning and set targets for improvement. The pupils and their teachers know what they are aiming at and how much they can expect to improve. This focus on setting learning targets helps pupils to achieve high standards.
163. The schemes of work are not yet fully developed for some year groups and they do not always make sufficiently clear what the learning objectives and expected outcomes are for each topic. This is an area that needs further improvement. The staff are well supported by an experienced and effective science technician, who makes a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the department and plays an important role in ensuring that health and safety requirements are met.
164. The resources for science teaching, including computer equipment, are good. Computers are used in appropriate ways to enhance the teaching of science. The science laboratories are well kept and offer a good standard of accommodation. They are only just adequate in number for the amount of science taught but this will be improved once the new laboratories are built. The science accommodation provides a pleasant learning environment although the display of pupils' work could be improved. The science standards and provision have continued to improve since the last inspection and the issues raised have been addressed. This represents good improvement overall.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of expressive and imaginative work.
- The use of sketchbooks.
- The stimulus art history provides for practical studies.
- Planning of the schemes of work for Years 7 to 11 is thorough and progressive.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computer aided art.
- The teaching of basic art skills in Year 7.
- Providing greater challenge for the most talented pupils at GCSE.
- Extending skills in the making of ceramics.

165. Curriculum planning and assessment have underpinned substantial improvements in attainment in all Years since the last inspection, with painting becoming a major part of learning. From Year 7 through to Year 11 pupils build on their achievements and most have a positive attitude to learning. Their work is now celebrated in high quality displays around the school with levels and grades clearly indicated to support self-assessment. Art is still mainly sited in an old 'Horsa' building but the school is about to provide new accommodation. This should enhance access to ICT in art.
166. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations and improving each year. From Year 7 pupils are able to tackle increasingly complex tasks, using sketchbooks productively for homework, research and experiment. The progress of lower attaining pupils is affected by weak skills in using line, tone, texture and basic perspective drawing. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the art historical context of their work.

167. GCSE results for Year 11, in 2001, are substantially above the national average and in line with the pupils' performance across their other subjects. In Years 10 and 11 pupils investigate and use a wide range of media. In their sketchbooks they amass substantial collections of research, visual ideas and, often exquisitely imaginative, colour studies. In GCSE coursework, for example in the Year 11 'Water' project, there is complex, sensitive and expressive development of lines, colours and textures. Pupils in this age group can discuss their art using precise technical terms. Higher attaining pupils, however, have unfulfilled potential to attain at the very highest level.
168. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learning is most effective when tasks are as challenging as the Year 8 session, initiated by an excellent teacher demonstration, with pupils drawing fruit using bold brush strokes. One boy who had previously expressed very low confidence in using paint made good progress in this lesson. The teacher has secure knowledge of the subject and a particular strength in art history. Three-dimensional work is imaginative but opportunities for developing skills in ceramics do not extend to glazing.
169. Schemes of work are frequently reviewed and modified in the light of assessment. Assessment, monitoring and target setting are continuous with full pupil participation.
170. The art area is well managed and the provision of art materials, books and videos is good. Although planned for in the curriculum, the use of art specific ICT is extremely weak and at present pupils do not have access to work in digital, animation or time related media within the art area. Extra curricular and cross-cultural activities include a lunch-time art club and week-end extension with a visiting artist for Year 11.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The consistently high level of pupils' achievement at the end of the Year 9 as well as in GCSE examinations over recent years.
- The increasing and sometimes excellent use of ICT in the teaching of design practices for pupils and the use of projectors and white boards.
- The high level of expectations by teachers of pupils within the subject.
- The leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The task of achieving A* grades at GCSE in all of the subject's courses.
- Using the wealth of data to identify more accurately the future targets for pupils.
- Identifying more clearly tasks to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils.
- Increasing the overall level of two-dimensional design skills and identifying a common approach for the various subjects within the department.

171. Pupils coming into the school at the age of eleven have average design and technology skills and their progress throughout years seven to nine is very good overall. Over the past four years pupils have performed consistently well in the tests at the end of year nine and grades are well above the national average. In this time, approximately ninety per cent of pupils have achieved the level of the national average or above and this represents very high attainment. Basic skills and processes are taught effectively overall and this contributes considerably to the good results achieved. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils are achieving at these levels or slightly below and this is consistent with the timing of the inspection early in the school year. Pupils with special educational needs show similar rates of progress to those of other pupils. GCSE examination results for the past four years generally show a very high level of attainment. Results for textiles and resistant materials courses have been consistently very high in this time with A*-C grades between 81-95 per cent of the sizeable entry and very high when compared with the national average. Results in graphics and food are more variable and there have been occasional years where results drop significantly, although overall they are high. The progress therefore throughout years ten and eleven is good.

172. Teaching was found to be variable in quality between satisfactory and very good in Years 7 to 9 and judged to be good overall. This influenced the level of achievement significantly. In Years 10 and 11 the situation is similar and the teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. The majority of the teaching at this key stage is good. Significant features mark out very good lessons within the department. In one food technology lesson with a group of Year 9 pupils, the lesson pace was consistently high for almost one and three-quarters hours and the emphasis on high quality skills in food preparation was commendable. In another lesson, where pupils were modelling product design ideas, the pupils were shown basic skills on the computers and they were very adept in using these to show their significant design ideas on the screens. Both were representative of the high quality teaching and learning which take place within the department. In the past four years, where very good external results were obtained within textiles, it was clear from inspection evidence that the high quality teaching contributed highly to this success. Pupils with special educational needs often receive well-targeted support in many lessons and this occurs in most cases.
173. The attitude of pupils towards learning is at least good in the vast majority of lessons; this helps to further the good or high quality teaching. In the best lessons pupils were seen to have individual control of their design ideas and the utilisation of the techniques they require for production of artefacts or products. The increasing use of ICT in the production of design work in two dimensions is helping pupils' design developments in a very effective way. Learning follows a similar pattern to teaching where high quality learning follows that of teaching. Teachers within the department use assessment techniques in an effective way. Greater use needs to be made of assessment for pupils in order to allow further and higher challenge for the individual. Clearer identification of those pupils with great ability in the subject should be sought. Most teachers form good relationships with the pupils and lessons have a harmonious quality about them. This is seen at its best in graphics, textiles and food. In some other lessons it was observed that the pupil-teacher relationship was not of such good quality.
174. The rooms which are part of the design and technology faculty are variable in their quality and suitability for design and technology lessons. Generally somewhat small for the large groups of pupils they accommodate, the facilities are pushed to their limits in order to cope. Food, resistant materials and textiles suffer to the greatest extent. New facilities are already planned for textiles; a welcome improvement. The opportunities currently offered for high quality graphical work is limited and these normally mean drawing on a pitted work-surface of a practical room. The increased opportunities that a specifically designed graphics facility would bring are quite clear.
175. The faculty has been managed particularly well. Systems are very well organised and show a purposeful and considered approach. Monitoring and evaluation of the faculty's work is exemplary and this is clear in the records of the pupils studying within the subject. The management structure of the department has been recently altered and the hand-over completed remarkably well. Staff meet regularly and share a common understanding of the tasks that lie ahead.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good classroom management and high standards of behaviour.
- Good developments in the use of ICT.
- Good pace and timing of activities in lessons.
- Well-organised and well-managed department.

Areas for improvement

- Develop teaching styles and resources to improve pupil participation in lessons and develop the full range of their abilities.
- Monitor and improve marking to ensure it becomes a useful learning tool.
- Use monitoring and assessment data to identify the reasons for the recent fall in GCSE standards.
- Tackle the issue of gender imbalance in Year 10 and 11 teaching groups.

176. The standards of work seen in this inspection are satisfactory in both key stages. By the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 5 or above in 2001 was the above national average. In 2002 the number decreased. In both years the boys' results were significantly lower than the girls'. For lower attaining pupils in Years 7-8 there are weaknesses with literacy, presentation and with completing the work set. All these factors are affecting standards. For higher attaining pupils there is good achievement. All pupils produce satisfactory graphs and satisfactory to good map and diagram work. Pupils' achievements in work seen are satisfactory overall by the end of Year 9 and very good for higher attaining pupils.
177. In 2001, by the end of year 11, the number of pupils gaining grades A*-C at GCSE was above average for both boys and girls. This is good achievement compared to the average achievement of pupils on entry to the school. Results in 2002 however are significantly lower for boys whilst the small number of girls continues to do well. Work seen in Years 10-11 shows satisfactory to good numeracy and ICT skills. Overall, literacy improves in Years 10-11 but the spelling of subject terms continues to need attention. There is good extended writing from higher attaining pupils, and good, well-planned, coursework helps to develop independent learning skills, but there is insufficient development of pupils' individual writing overall. Oral responses from pupils in all years are limited and pupils need more encouragement to develop their participation in most lessons.
178. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 7-9 and Years 10 –11. In all lessons the quality is at least satisfactory and often good. All lessons have good pace and timing. In good lessons pupils are actively involved in learning through good teacher questioning which helps them to develop their own ideas on landscape changes. In one very good Year 9 lesson the pupils were orally involved in developing explanations for the features of a river meander. They wrote their own definitions and made good use of an aerial photograph, tracing and labelling the features for themselves. There was silent absorption on this latter task. The lesson had excellent timing and good teacher support for all the activities.
179. The use of photographs and group work in another Year 9 lesson stimulated good discussion and enhanced pupils' understanding of development issues around the world. A Year 10 lesson on volcanoes provided interesting and enjoyable information through teacher led questioning. Lessons were less good when too much information was given to pupils both through teacher explanation and too much copying. In these lessons insufficient oral response and individual writing were required from pupils. Most lessons would benefit from the use of a greater variety of resources to motivate pupils including more resources for lower attaining pupils and more use of maps and atlases. The marking of pupils' work misses the opportunity to provide more constructive help and consistent checking of pupils' progress. The use of ICT as a teaching tool is developing well and now needs to be extended to all pupils. Good, well-planned fieldwork and some homework activities, for example, 'Weather' diaries and enquiry projects promote an interest in places and in the natural world and help to develop pupils' individual learning.

180. In all classes behaviour is good to very good. Pupils listen well, concentrate on their work and cooperate well with each other when asked to do so. They show respect for their teachers and other visitors in and around the classrooms.
181. Leadership of the department is satisfactory and teaching is carried out by knowledgeable and committed geographers. The accommodation is widely separated but classrooms are well organised with displays of useful maps and pupils' work. Recent good pilot developments in the use of ICT will benefit pupils in Years 7,8 and 10 and enable them to use ICT for geography lessons and homework this year. The schemes of work have been developed and assessment procedures and record keeping are good. There is a useful handbook but some policies, guidelines and development planning need a sharper focus to ensure good implementation. Both marking and teaching styles need to be addressed to further encourage and challenge pupils of all abilities.
182. Marking remains a weakness from the last inspection. Since the last inspection, timing in lessons is much improved and learning objectives are now explained to pupils at the start of lessons. The schemes of work have been rewritten to include skills teaching but a timetable is now needed to ensure ICT access, and the assessments used need further clarification.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- In all years standards are above average.
- Teaching is good with many very good features.
- Enthusiastic and well-behaved pupils.
- Most marking is of excellent quality.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils need more opportunities to develop their speaking skills.
- Teachers need to share some of the best practice in marking.

183. Teachers assessed end of Year 9 standards as above average in 2001 and again in 2002. Inspection evidence shows that these standards are being maintained. The percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A*-C and grades A*-G in 2001 and in 2002 was above average. The proportion of pupils who achieved A* and A grades in these years was well above average. Inspection evidence also confirms that standards are above average.
184. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of historical events, people and concepts are good, and they place these in chronological order accurately. Pupils are beginning to work with sources of historical evidence to generate description and explanation. The department has worked hard to improve pupils' skills, particularly in extended writing. In Year 7, for example, pupils showed a good understanding of the reasons why William won the Battle of Hastings and are being well taught to write essays explaining these reasons. Average and higher attaining pupils write well; by the end of Year 9 they write logically constructed evidence confidently. Students with below average abilities work hard to write accurately and at length. This was evident, for example, in a Year 9 lesson where pupils wrote newspaper articles on the Tay Bridge disaster. All pupils showed enthusiasm for this task, particularly when thinking of eye-catching headlines for the article. All students use a very effective range of methods of recording their knowledge and understanding, including more formal extended writing and clear diagrams. These skills provide a good foundation for the GCSE.
185. Pupils make good progress from Years 7 to 9. This is evident from the way in which pupils increasingly show independence in following lines of enquiry and use their knowledge to analyse and explain events and changes. Written work is increasingly structured and sustained. It shows increasing attention to detail. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress as those of their peers.
186. GCSE pupils plan their written work and use specialist vocabulary well. They do this well because teaching is so good. Pupils use their good understanding and knowledge of a range of historical facts, situations and characters to form sensible opinions and evaluations. They build effectively on skills covered in Years 7 to 9. They make good progress in lessons and over the two years of the course. This was evident in a Year 11 lesson when pupils studied Hitler's early life and then wrote CVs based on what they had learned. They showed a good understanding of how sources of historical evidence can be used to construct historical interpretations. GCSE pupils have good organisational abilities; this is the result of good teaching.
187. Pupils enjoy their history lessons. They settle quickly to their tasks, present their work with care and are prepared to work hard. They are developing a lively sense of historical curiosity, evident for example in a Year 8 lesson when a pupil wanted to know whether Tudor couples exchanged wedding rings. Although pupils readily ask and answer questions and volunteer to read aloud, their skills in speaking at greater length are less well developed. Behaviour in lessons is very good. The only incident of poor behaviour appeared to be untypical.
188. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with many very good features. Pupils learn well as a result. There is no evidence of any unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers plan

lessons carefully and deliver them enthusiastically. As a result, pupils show interest and work at a fast pace. In a Year 7 lesson on 1066, pupils were totally engaged by a story involving the gruesome death of one of Harold's soldiers. Similarly, in Year 9, the teacher motivated pupils by asking them to guess how Prince Albert got rid of the sparrows causing damage in the Crystal Palace. Questions are used effectively to motivate and to enable pupils to share ideas and become more confident learners. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, expecting them to think hard without being spoon-fed with ideas; pupils respond well to these expectations, forming and justifying their own ideas.

189. This is a very well managed department. The specialist history room has been developed as an effective learning environment with impressive displays of artefacts, pupils' work and other materials. Other rooms, however, are scattered and primarily used for teaching other subjects. There are very good procedures in place for the assessment of pupils' work. Marking is often excellent; there is scope for sharing this best practice with other colleagues in the department. Departmental documentation is very thorough. Teachers are committed and work well as a team. The department has made good progress in all the issues identified in the last inspection report. It is well placed to develop the subject at A-level.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning in ICT.
- Pupils and teachers have good access to computer resources.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- The enthusiasm and creativity of teachers in developing learning experiences which make the best of new resources.

Areas for improvement

- The development of schemes of work and lesson plans that identify appropriate tasks for all abilities.
- The development of a range of exemplar work for use by all teachers of ICT.
- To further develop assessment practices.

190. Standards of work seen during the inspection for pupils in Years 7-9 are above average. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above average for pupils following the short course GCSE and for those on the full GCSE course.
191. Test results for GCSE exams in 2001 were broadly in line with those achieved nationally. This was the first year of examination for pupils in ICT. In 2002 there was a significant increase in the number of pupils entered for examination in ICT courses and a significant increase in the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades for the full course. Achievement is satisfactory for most pupils when progress from the end of Year 9 is considered. Five Year 10 pupils were entered one year early for GCSE in 2002. Two pupils achieved A*, one pupil achieved an A grade and two pupils achieved B grades. Achievement for these pupils is very good. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Three Year 11 students passed AS level early with grades of C or D.
192. In 2001 teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in Year 9 showed an increase on the previous year and the proportion of pupils obtaining level 5 and above is well above the national average. Achievement at the end of Year 9 is very good when the low attainment levels on entry are considered.
193. Attitudes and behaviour seen during the inspection in ICT lessons were good. Pupils have a positive attitude to work, which is supported by close attention to detail by teachers in applying school behaviour and uniform policies. Pupils are excited by much of the work they undertake

and this supports the effective development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT.

194. Overall teaching and learning are good in ICT lessons. Teaching and learning were good or better in most ICT lessons and all teaching was at least satisfactory. A well-organised programme of work for pupils in Years 7 and 8 ensures that pupils have the basic skills in ICT to enable them to be more independent and discerning users of ICT both within the subject and across the curriculum. In a well-planned Year 7 lesson, pupils used presentation software to develop a presentation about them. The teacher made good use of a projector, which displayed the teacher's computer screen. The teacher used well-targeted questions to different pupils to test their understanding of his demonstration before the pupils tried it for themselves. The teacher also made effective use of the white boards to show pupils the sequences of actions for specific tasks. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported in the class by learning support staff who worked with the teacher to help pupils in completing the activities. Individual education plans were well used in the planning of the lesson to keep the possibility of disruption to a minimum. Higher attaining pupils, however, were not stretched fully and were overused to help other pupils in the class to complete their work. In a well-planned Year 8 lesson pupils showed their active involvement by asking relevant questions before proceeding excitedly to the computers to address the activity. All pupils, including some lower attaining pupils with individual education plans, completed the activity. Pupils were happy to communicate how they had completed the task and express their pleasure at their success. In a Year 9 lesson for low attaining pupils, exercises were selected for pupils to work at their own pace, copying information from sheets onto the computer in line with set criteria. The pace of work was slow and pupils were not fully challenged and in many cases repeated work from previous years.
195. In a well-planned Year 11 lesson, skills in the use of databases were identified as requiring development to ensure the effective completion of a project. A good, short-focused task was developed to help pupils understand how databases were used and how they were designed. The teacher created good quality help sheets to assist in the understanding of the database structure; the teacher also possessed the required expertise to help pupils overcome difficulties as they progressed. The teacher used good questioning techniques to draw out pupils' new knowledge and understanding and organised a targeted input to a group of pupils who were ready to progress further than expected. In another well-planned Year 11 lesson pupils were developing critical skills in the analysis of Web sites so that they could be more effective in the development of their own. The teacher had prepared access to a good interactive web site, which enabled the pupils to respond to questions. The teacher had also prepared good hard copy materials in the event of a computer system failure. Pupils were keen to discuss what they had seen and express preferences, likes and dislikes. They were also very constructive about features that were not liked, but they could appreciate how they might suit some audiences.
196. Good use is made of ICT resources outside of curriculum time. In computer rooms and the learning resources area, pupils can go into their own work area of the computer system and continue to work on tasks started in a lesson or to produce homework. One computer room is designated a homework club room at lunchtime and has a member of the support staff in attendance. A member of the technology staff was seen helping sixth form students to scan clothing before it was taken to pieces. These pictures were saved in the pupils' folders on the computer system to be used later in the presentation of coursework.
197. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good. ICT is planned to support most areas of the curriculum. It is effectively used in business studies to support teaching and learning, such as creating pie charts to indicate changing patterns in gross domestic products by industry. In technology, computer aided design software (CAD) was seen being used to design three-dimensional objects. It was also used effectively in the development of pupils' understanding of 'control sequences', to perform tasks, and to investigate cause and effect. Good use of ICT was seen in a science lesson where data-logging equipment was used for heat experiments. The physical education department use appropriate ICT equipment in the completion of summer project work. In religious education pupils have used the Internet to both find information, and to select information from specified web sites. The English department are

using selected web sites and publishing software effectively. The mathematics department are using web sites for mathematics revision exercises. The history department uses databases with pupils. The modern foreign languages department use specific software that is linked to text-based study, which allows support and extension of the languages curriculum. The department also use the Internet to develop reading skills and word processing for coursework.

198. Leadership of the ICT department is good. A vision of how ICT should be developed as a discrete area and its use applied across the curriculum is being implemented. The school timetable has been modified to support the delivery of ICT from September 2002 and the level of computer resources now exceeds the national average. Management of the department is good as it allows the staff to be creative within a framework of experiences. This is regularly reviewed to make the best use of resources as they develop. The department expects to review the Years 7-9 ICT strategy materials and use them where appropriate. There is a collective commitment to the successful development of ICT for the benefit of all pupils. This commitment provides significant capacity for ongoing development. Staff have identified a number of items within their 'standards fund' development plan, one of which is to include the 'ICT in science' and 'ICT in technology' experiences within their assessment practices.
199. Since the last inspection, developments within the department have been good. Pupils are achieving well above the national average at the end of Year 9 and all pupils have the opportunity to do certified ICT courses in discrete curriculum time by the end of Year 11. Some pupils have the opportunity to take exams early and progress to higher-level courses. The school is now meeting its statutory requirements for the teaching of ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Standards attained in French and German are above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very positive and their behaviour is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in speaking and responding.
- Increasing the opportunities for pupils to use languages for themselves, independently of the teacher, to gather and give information.
- Further develop the use of assessment to plan more effectively for pupils' progress in lessons to ensure all pupils achieve their potential.

200. By the end of Year 11 standards of work seen in French and German are above average. In GCSE examinations in 2001 the proportion of candidates attaining grades A*-C was slightly below the national average in French but the proportion of pupils entered for examination was very high compared to national figures. Girls performed better than boys and all pupils performed better in other subjects than they did in French. However the average points score was higher than the national average. In 2002 the proportion of candidates attaining A*-C grades in GCSE examinations was significantly higher than in 2001, continuing an improving trend over the last four years. In 2001 GCSE standards are above average. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above was broadly in line with the national average for both boys and girls. In teacher assessments in 2002 the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 and above was significantly higher than in the previous year. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Overall this represents good achievement in relation to prior attainment. In work seen during the inspection the skills of listening, reading and writing were very well developed, the skills of speaking and responding less secure. Pupils in Year 8 attain standards well above average in lessons and are making very good progress in French.

201. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils respond promptly and appropriately to questions and instructions in French and German, higher attaining pupils interpreting more complex or unfamiliar language for others. All pupils identify the main points and specific detail from short extracts of speech at near normal speed, higher attaining pupils needing less repetition and guidance to do so. All pupils have a very good understanding of grammar and higher and average attaining pupils identify patterns and apply them successfully for themselves in speech and writing. The majority write at length and in detail about their family, town and leisure activities in the past and present, lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs by following a model or by filling in gaps. The majority identify specific detail from a range of short texts and higher attaining pupils are beginning to make inferences from what they read. Pupils describe events in the past and present and express their opinions and preferences, giving reasons for their views. Pupils beginning their study of Italian and German in Year 9 make good progress increasing their vocabulary and range of structures and using the language in simple dialogues to exchange information. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in modern foreign languages in relation to their ability.
202. By the end of Year 11 pupils increase their range of vocabulary and structures in both French and German, deal successfully with longer texts and extracts of speech and are able to transfer language effectively from one context to another. They write and speak in detail about their school, holidays and work experience, higher attaining pupils linking their ideas successfully and often writing imaginatively and with humour. Writing is well presented and usually accurate, displaying a very good knowledge and understanding of grammar in both languages.
203. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better and more than a third very good or excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and an excellent command of the languages they teach: they therefore provide excellent role models for their pupils. They use the target language very effectively to conduct activities and, as a result, pupils' listening skills are very well developed. Language used is well matched to pupils' previous experience and capabilities and teachers regularly check to ensure all have understood. Teachers use question and answer very effectively to enable pupils to respond successfully and extend their range of structures and vocabulary. In a Year 7 French lesson, for example, pupils rapidly identified how to change the structure used to answer in the first person to the third person, used it themselves in response to questioning and to explained how it worked. Similarly, because of the very clear presentation of new language, in a Year 9 German lesson pupils quickly identified and applied patterns in counting and then in the language needed to tell the time. Teachers provide appropriate resources and very well sequenced activities, which enable pupils to build very effectively upon previous learning. In a Year 11 French lesson the teacher guided pupils in describing their work experience through very effective use of the board to organise suggestions from the class, clarify grammar and support their learning. Pupils moved quickly from following the models provided to making up their own sentences using past tenses. Objectives are clear, usually shared with pupils, and teachers review progress at the end of each lesson, identifying and effectively reinforcing key words and structures. Pupils are given the opportunity to work informally in pairs to practise new language but this is often restricted to rehearsal; opportunities are missed to enable pupils to use the language to gather and give information, using more than one skill. Where activities are mainly teacher led pupils' opportunities to use the language themselves are decreased and speaking is hesitant. Games are sometimes used to practise new language and where this happens pupils rapidly increase in confidence and competence. Information communication technology is used effectively to support and extend learning. A Year 9 class, for example, used a site on the Internet to develop reading skills. Provision for pupils with special educational needs in lessons is very good and these pupils progress appropriately because of the effective support they are given.
204. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Teachers manage pupils very effectively and pupils respond very positively. Behaviour is usually very good; pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other and want to do well. All pupils are keen to contribute to class oral work and evidently enjoy their learning. When asked to work as individuals or in pairs they organise themselves well and concentrate on tasks set.

205. The department is very well led and managed. The head of department has a clear idea of the way forward and priorities in development planning are clearly focused on raising standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and has resulted in a good level of consistency across the department. Assessment data are analysed effectively to set targets and identify underachievement but, as yet, it is not used to plan in detail for the progress of groups of differing ability within lessons to ensure that all pupils, especially the higher attaining pupils, achieve their potential. Resources are adequate but the lack of sufficient textbooks for Year 8 classes restricts the range of activities that can be provided both in class and for homework. The subject curriculum is enhanced by trips and exchanges to France and Germany and by the opportunity to learn Italian to further develop language learning skills in Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs are regularly withdrawn from French lessons; this hampers their progress in French.
206. Good progress has been made since the last inspection; standards have risen significantly across Years 7 to 11, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and there has been a considerable improvement in accommodation for the subject. The department works very well as a team, regularly shares ideas and has a very good capacity to improve further.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Pupils show positive attitudes towards their practical work and behaviour is mainly good.
- Relationships are good.
- The range and quality of ICT are good.
- Teachers of music are committed, enthusiastic and hardworking and provision is improving.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, especially those of boys, are below average; performing, composing and listening skills are underdeveloped.
- The time allocated to music in Years 7 to 9 is too low.
- Pupils sing insufficiently.
- Learning is too keyboard based; pupils make insufficient use of their own instruments in classroom work.
- Accommodation for music is poor and impacts on standards.

207. Pupils enter the school with variable musical experience, related to the quality of their musical education in their previous schools, interests, and level of home support. Some pupils enter with above average experience but most pupils enter with average attainment in music. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average and overall achievement is unsatisfactory. Most pupils are working at about level 4 but some talented pupils attain higher levels. In recent years, GCSE examination results have declined and are now below average when compared with all schools.
208. Pupils sing irregularly and insufficiently after Year 7, so that the National Curriculum is not fully taught. They do not sing enough as a class in GCSE work; this is a weakness as pupils do not experience or enjoy an appropriate range of repertoire and develop their music reading skills. Most pupils keep good time when playing instruments but have insufficient experience of instruments other than keyboards and little opportunity to use their own instruments in class. Performing skills and music reading skills are unsatisfactory. In composing, some pupils have imaginative ideas but only the most musically experienced know how to use devices and structures to develop pieces confidently. Most pupils listen respectfully to examples played in recordings and to each other when performing but the technical vocabulary they use in appraising is limited; their general musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structures and well known pieces of music is below average. Despite satisfactory progress in lessons, achievement over time is unsatisfactory partly because of the lack of adequate teaching time (a point made in the last inspection report) and the poor

accommodation. At all levels, the attainment and achievement of girls is higher than that of boys. Pupils with special educational needs are making the same level of progress as their peers.

209. In GCSE work, standards in Year 11 are below those expected but are broadly average in Year 10. There is a very wide range of attainment in these small groups. In both, performing skills average about grade 3; in Year 11, one pupil is working for grade 7 but others are still at elementary stages and about half of the group are at a disadvantage as they receive no instrumental tuition. Similarly, most pupils are disadvantaged by not taking part in the extra-curricular opportunities offered. The most musically experienced show good understanding of devices and structures in composing and create imaginative and effective compositions, but many find the work difficult because of their lack of basic skills and weaknesses in earlier teaching. Computers and other new music technologies in the department assist learning and pupils are now developing satisfactory skill in creating music using them. Pupils listen well to recorded extracts and to each other but vocabulary used in appraising is too limited and general musical knowledge is poor in Year 11 although it is broadly average in Year 10. The attitude of pupils is very variable so that overall achievement in GCSE work is unsatisfactory in Year 11 but satisfactory in Year 10.
210. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in years 7 to 9. Teaching is good and learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Most teaching and learning are satisfactory and there is good teaching in some lessons including all work seen in GCSE work. Teaching is energetic, confident and successfully links performing, composing, listening and appraising, as seen in a composing lesson in Year 7. Instructions and objectives are clear so that pupils understand them. Major weaknesses in schemes of work include the lack of sufficient singing in lessons and the over reliance on keyboard work. In the best lessons, expectations are high with lessons matched to the needs of different levels of pupils but higher attaining pupils need to be stretched more at all levels. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make similar progress to the other pupils. Lessons have clear structures and are well organised; pupil management is good so that sessions are orderly, relationships are good and pupils are usually good humoured and work well. They enjoy practical work but dislike writing in music, a point the department is taking on board. Lessons start briskly and maintain a good pace so that pupils remain focused but there is insufficient use of visual aids such as OHP, illustrations or classroom display. Assessment of pupils is supportive and shows them how they can improve but insufficient use is made of homework to extend pupils' learning at all levels. Most pupils are attentive and work productively when they are interested; they are supportive of each other, keen to answer questions and the most enthusiastic involve themselves in opportunities offered by the department and musical opportunities outside school.
211. The music teacher is committed, enthusiastic and hardworking; from a low base, he has made many positive changes in improving provision and involving more pupils in music making. There is some monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance; but this needs strengthening. Documentation is being revised and the music development plan is appropriate. The department has a satisfactory assessment scheme and is learning to use the new National Curriculum Levels effectively to assess work. There is increasing use of data to establish the needs of pupils. The contribution of music to pupils' personal development, including the use of music in assembly, is underdeveloped but under review. There are inadequate links with primary schools but there are plans to develop these. There is no technical support for music, which imposes pressures. Music accommodation is poor: the main room has no storage, little natural light, work is affected by the lack of adequate soundproofing between the music and drama rooms and there are insufficient practice areas for group work. Keyboards are of good quality but there is a need for additional keyboards, bass tuned percussion instruments to enhance creative work, music for singing, playing and the library and an OHP.
212. Eighteen girls and 12 boys receive instrumental lessons from two visiting teachers; this is less than five percent of the school's population, a below average number. It was only possible to see work in guitar tuition, where teaching is good. The progress of pupils is satisfactory in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition. However, achievement is lessened by lessons that are too short and pupils do not have practice books to encourage

them to practise. The curriculum insufficiently supports instrumental tuition and tuition makes little impact on the quality of pupils' musical experiences in the classroom. Monitoring of pupils' progress and teaching needs strengthening.

213. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is limited by there being only one music teacher and pupils' attendance at these is low. Disappointingly, and unusually, sixth form students make no contribution to these. The activities include choir, samba band and a new woodwind ensemble. The school promotes a carol festival and a joint performance with local primary schools is being planned.

214. Since the last inspection, standards have deteriorated and despite an increase, adequate teaching time is still not given in Years 7 to 9. Assessment and ICT facilities in music have improved. The numbers involved in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities declined but are now increasing again. More recently, the department has begun to move forward again with the potential to improve further with the full support of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The focus on planning, performing and evaluating strands of the National Curriculum.
- The quality of teaching and the commitment of staff to improve further.
- The positive attitudes of many pupils, their behaviour and support.

Areas for improvement

- The contribution of assessment in identifying strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work and the use of this information in curriculum planning.
- The balance of curriculum time allocated to Years 7- 9 and the place of GCSE dance in the curriculum.

215. In GCSE examinations 2001, standards in physical education are below national averages and below expectations in relation to the capabilities of pupils. Results for dance were better than those for physical education.
216. Overall the standards achieved by pupils by the age of 14 are in line with national standards. Standards achieved by pupils in Years 7 and 8 are significantly higher than those elsewhere and are above average. In games they work with confidence and enthusiasm, handling equipment efficiently and safely and demonstrating a wide range of techniques, which they apply appropriately in games play. In dance, pupils copy accurately, can repeat complex movements, remember lengthy sequences of actions and co-ordinate their movements to unusual rhythms. All pupils make good progress including those who have particular educational needs. In Year 8, despite many pupils' struggling with complex gymnastic moves they produce very good, imaginative sequences. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas, discussing progress as they work and encouraging pupils to observe each other to improve quality. Pupils listen carefully to each other's views and practise and refine their work independently of the teacher. They recognise the quality produced; for example one boy described his gymnastics as 'packed full of goodness'. Despite similar teaching methods being adopted in Year 9 pupils are less responsive to the challenges and expectations. They lack experience of badminton and struggle with basic techniques, showing little variety in play or perseverance when they find aspects difficult. Several are inattentive when the teacher speaks to the whole group and a small minority misbehave. For many, there is only limited interest in learning skills and principles of play wanting only to 'just play a game'.
217. Standards reached by pupils by the age of 16 are in line with national standards. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils continue their physical education through the core programme, with additional opportunities for further study to GCSE level. Attitudes between years vary, with Year 11 pupils and those doing examination courses more responsive and better motivated than those in Year 10. An example is the response of Year 10 pupils to badminton where progress is limited by lack of interest in learning skills, rules or principles of the game. In contrast, standards achieved in the core programme in Year 11 are above average in rugby and girls' football. Boys prepare warm up and skill sessions for the rest of the group, showing knowledge and understanding of play. They appreciate each other's efforts, are keen to recognise achievement and supportive of weaker players. One boy, for example, thanked the session leader with 'thanks Rich, that was really good'. Girls show good skills in football and a very good understanding of the use of space in attacking and defending play. Current GCSE groups produce standards on a par with expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of dance form and structure and produce practical dances of good quality although lack of

movement vocabulary limits the range of actions in gymnastics. Written work varies in quality, the best examples being detailed and thorough. Overall pupils are achieving at a satisfactory level in Years 10 and 11.

218. Overall teaching and learning in Years 7 –9 are good. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Pupils participate regularly, respond positively to teachers' expectations, concentrate on tasks and try hard to produce of their best. Teachers care about the progress of pupils across the ability range, making time for those who struggle and extending the more talented. They encourage pupils to observe each other and comment on performances, improving pupils' use of technical terminology and increasing their understanding and recognition of work of good quality. Good relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils enable lively discussion in for example, planning tactics or dance choreography. Only on occasion when pace is slow do pupils lose interest and does behaviour deteriorate. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject, lessons are well planned and delivered in a lively manner, pupils respond enthusiastically both within and outside the curriculum. Attendance at GCSE dance, which takes place, in part, out of school time, is very good and large numbers support the wide range of good quality extra-curricular activities. Teachers work as a very effective team; they accommodate imbalances in the curriculum and give generously of their time to provide breadth and depth of opportunity.
219. Leadership and management are good. Recent appointments to the department are already making an impact on the attitudes of pupils. The new head of department is aware of departmental strengths and has good plans to build on these in the future. There remain issues regarding the curriculum and assessment, where there is a need to refine the system to more accurately reflect the national curriculum, identify weaker aspects and devise strategies for improving standards. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good** in Years 7-9 and **unsatisfactory** in Years 10-11.

Strengths

- Very good results in GCSE examinations.
- The leadership of the department ensures a clear direction to the work and development of the department and promotes high standards.
- Good relationships, attitudes and behaviour result in a good working environment.

Areas for improvement

- Effective assessment and target-setting procedures are currently not in place.
- Planning, both of lessons and for the department's development.
- Setting tasks which meet the needs of the wide range of pupils' abilities.

220. Results in the GCSE examination have been consistently very good over recent years. In 1991 the school obtained results for grades A* - C significantly better than the national average. In 2002, the school's results for A* to C grades were broadly similar to those of the previous year. For pupils who do not take the subject to examination level standards in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory because of the subject's being allocated less than half the time it needs to adequately cover the demands of the locally agreed syllabus. This means that pupils are leaving the school with significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Standards at the end of Year 9 are satisfactory, work in exercise books is neatly presented and often reveals good levels of understanding and a capacity for original thought, as do class discussions and responses to teacher questions.
221. Pupils sitting the GCSE examination almost all achieve well in religious education and there are examples of outstanding achievement. A pupil in the most recent examinations achieved a B grade when her attainment in core subjects at the end of Year 9 would have indicated an 'F' grade as her most likely result. High achievement at GCSE is apparent across a broad range of

pupils with perhaps only the higher attaining pupils not achieving as highly as they might do - whilst the department consistently produces an impressive number of A and B grades, no pupil has obtained an A* grade in the last three years. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, not following the examination course, achieve considerably less than is expected by the local agreed syllabus. The lack of time given to the subject is compounded by a policy that homework is not set for non-examination subjects, and there is an attitude among pupils that, whilst religious education is interesting and the lessons well-taught, it is not a subject that commands their commitment and best efforts. Pupils' achievements by the end of Year 9 are good in respect of the majority of pupils. It is clear that pupils come into the school with a wide diversity of prior experience of religious education, some good, but with many pupils having serious gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The religious education department is successful in compensating for deficiencies and ensuring that by the end of Year 9 most pupils have reached the standard anticipated by the local agreed syllabus.

222. Pupils' behaviour in religious education classes is always satisfactory and is more often good or very good. Pupils respond well to the tasks set and work productively and cooperatively. There may, however, be a significant difference in the attitudes of boys and girls to the subject. Several year seven girls, when asked to rate the popularity of religious education as compared to other subjects, said it was between their second and fourth favourite subject. Boys in the same classes, when asked the same question, said it was their seventh or eighth favourite subject. This attitude, amongst Year 7 pupils, may account for the significant disparity between boys and girls among those who choose religious education at GCSE (and at A-level).
223. The quality of teaching and learning within religious education is almost always at least satisfactory with much good and very good teaching. Both teachers of religious education are highly qualified and the subject benefits from excellent levels of specialist subject knowledge. The subject has responded to recent initiatives with particular attention now being paid to the development of basic literacy, and information and communication technology skills. The subject has included in its most recent development plan a commitment to investigate ways in which numeracy can be developed within religious education. The department utilises a wide range of appropriate teaching strategies, with good use being made of whole class teaching, groupwork and individual research - often utilising the Internet and CD ROMs. Class management is almost always satisfactory and is usually good or very good. Good relations are maintained within lessons and work usually proceeds at a brisk pace. In a minority of lessons, time is wasted at the beginning in giving out books and taking the register, leaving pupils without anything to be doing in that time. Assessment is currently under-developed, except at GCSE where practice is very good. Planning is another problematic area within religious education. It is apparent from the quality of lessons that much detailed planning has been done. However that planning is in no way reflected in the individual lesson plans produced by teachers. The departmental handbook sets out the scheme of work in terms of coverage, but there is then no record of planning activities between that and an inadequate lesson planning sheet that fails to distinguish between learning intentions and learning outcomes, fails to deal adequately with the particular needs of different pupils, and makes no reference to opportunities to support the acquisition of basic skills or to contribute to pupils' personal development.
224. The subject is led, within the school, by a teacher who combines the highest level of subject knowledge with a sustained enthusiasm for developing the subject within the school. On a regular basis he has succeeded in supplementing the resources within the department by successfully bidding for additional funds from external bodies. He has developed an extensive programme of visits to ensure that pupils from this rural environment have opportunities of meeting members of faith communities; examples of this are that Year 8 pupils visit a synagogue and a mosque in Bournemouth and GCSE pupils go on a residential visit to Birmingham. The subject leader has taken an important initiative in instituting a weekly meeting between the two members of the department for discussion and mutual support and development. As with lesson planning the subject's development plan needs to be more specific, more detailed, and more tightly focused on improving standards.
225. The last inspection report was generally positive, describing good and very good features to teaching and good use being made of information technology. These positive features are still

apparent. In addition it is no longer true that “girls are more reluctant to contribute to discussion than boys”, and examination results have improved in line with the good progress that is now being made in lessons. The school still fails to meet statutory requirements in relation to those Year 10 and 11 pupils who do not take religious education as an examination option.

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.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Geography	2	100	74	0	11	3	1.5
General Studies	8	75	N/a	25	N/a	2.1	N/a

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
English	4	100	92	25	30	5	5.3
Mathematics	3	66	87	33	43	4	5.8
Business Studies	7	100	92	14	32	4.4	5.5
Ethics	6	100	N/a	0	N/a	2.6	N/a
Sports Studies	3	100	92	0	25	5.3	5.1
ICT	4	100	86	50	23	5.5	4.6
Biology	5	80	88	20	34	4	5.3

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Land and Environment	2	100	N/a	100	N/a	0	N/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

226. The focus was on biology and mathematics. There was no teaching of physics or chemistry in the sixth form at the school.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The quality of relationships and ethos for learning.
- The implementation of the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching.

Areas for improvement

- The use of short and medium term targets, and monitoring of progress towards them, to improve the achievement of all students and especially of those who find the work difficult.
- The quality of departmental documentation.

227. At the start of the AS level course, the level of attainment of students in science is below average. Many students study biology as their only science at AS level, and some of them have gained grades CC as a result of examination in the GCSE foundation paper: this means that they are less well prepared than usual for study of sciences in the sixth form. During their course, however, they make good progress so that their results in AS and A-level are better than expected with students gaining the full range of grades, and with a distribution broadly in line with the national expectation. Some students, however, fail to gain even the lowest grade of pass, and the department needs to consider what action should be taken to enable these students to gain at least a grade E. The number of students entered, and their qualifications on entry to the course, has varied significantly over the last few years and it is impossible to identify trends reliably.

228. In lessons, and from scrutiny of work, students' performance is broadly as expected. At the beginning of Year 13, for example, they understand the principles of inheritance and can reliably predict the products of various genetic crosses. They understand how being able to make genetic predictions is important in our lives. They understand well how the structures of organs support their function, and that biological ideas can be applied in a variety of contexts. At the time of the inspection, Year 12 were only four weeks into the course, but they had already assimilated the standards required for study at advanced level, and were working towards the production of work which demonstrated those standards. These students showed a good level of understanding of the idea of an enzyme extracted from potato promoting the production of starch from glucose monophosphate, but were as yet unable reliably to understand the experimental procedures used to demonstrate the process in the laboratory.

229. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Three lessons were seen during the inspection, of which one was outstanding, one very good and one good. In all these lessons the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and an infectious enthusiasm for biology made a material difference to the quality of learning. In the best teaching, in a Year 13 lesson on genetics, this security helped the teacher to present the material in a logical, measured way and provide excellent support for students of all abilities. In turn, the excellent relationships she has with her students gave them the confidence to ask for clarification where needed.

230. In the Year 12 practical lesson referred to above, which was good rather than excellent, the late arrival of some students caused the explanation to be curtailed in order to leave enough time for the experimental exercise. Some students failed to grasp the full significance of what they were doing, and the investigation became an exercise in following a recipe, rather than a task designed to reinforce the theory and provide an insight into the discovery process. However, the teacher's excellent understanding of her students' problems, and the warm relationships

and atmosphere of mutual respect and trust within the group, meant that she was able to focus on the nature of the task to remove any misunderstanding immediately the next lesson began. This reinforced the main objectives of the lesson well, turning what might have been a weakness into a strength.

231. Day-to-day management of the subject is very good. Lessons are well planned and fulfil the requirements of the awarding body specification very well. The curriculum is well planned, with appropriate fieldwork undertaken in the area around the school when appropriate. Practical work is well supported by the excellent laboratory staff. Assessment in lessons is regular, thorough and accompanied by excellent feedback to students. However, more formal assessments take place only at fairly long intervals and, although most students gain a good grasp of their own progress from these tests, those who find the demands of A-level study difficult to cope with tend to fall by the wayside. More frequent assessment, with associated short term academic targets would alert the teacher to problems more promptly, as they arise, enabling her to remove misconceptions more quickly. Accommodation for the subject is good and the subject is well resourced. However, sixth form biology comes under the broad umbrella of science, and much of the formal documentation is under-developed in the light of changes over the last few years, and contains insufficient explicit reference to sixth form work.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is always at least good.
- Students enjoy the subject and find it useful to add to their qualifications for applications to university.
- Students good understanding of basic and more difficult algebra is helping them with many A-level topics.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocation is inadequate to teach the syllabus properly.
- A lack of a sixth form handbook.
- All work should be clearly marked either by the student or teacher.

232. The inspection covered two courses, AS applied mathematics, including pure 1, statistics 1 and mechanics 1, and A-level mathematics, which adds to these modules pure 2, pure 3 and mechanics 2. The application of number, leading to the key skills qualification, is not taught yet.
233. This is a small but successful mathematics department. The students for whom it caters, although they have gained GCSE grades A* to B, are not always natural mathematicians. However, because the numbers of students entering these examinations is so small, it is not sensible to compare these results against national standards. At A-level, in 2001, two thirds of students gained A to E grades and one third gained the higher grades A or B. In 2002, results improved. All students passed A-level and half gained grades A to C. Students taking AS level in 2001 achieved a cross section of results but several did not pass. In 2002, results improved with the majority of students passing all modules. Students' achievements at both levels are good. The school is effective in enabling students to reach their full potential. Fewer females take this subject than males. In 2002/2003, there are no female candidates in Years 12 and 13. The department ensures that all students are given every opportunity to succeed. In a lesson in Year 12, students understood well how to calculate the equation of a straight line given a point and a gradient or just given two points. They struggled a little when the teacher introduced the general form, possibly prematurely. In another lesson, students understood well the use of the factor theorem and could divide competently quite complex expressions. Their basic algebraic skills had been well rehearsed. They were reluctant to use a negative value for 'x' when trying to find a factor by substitution. In Year 13, students manipulated various trigonometric identities with skill. All were successful up to a point but some became confused as exercises became more difficult.

234. Teaching is, at least, good overall. Students learn well at both levels. Teachers have high expectations and students are keen to meet these. The pace of lessons is often brisk. Students respond well to this but occasionally need to revisit the topic to consider some of the earlier stages. Lessons are structured sensibly and teachers ensure that the learning is evaluated at the end of lessons. Teachers' knowledge is good; they convey difficult concepts in a logical and systematic way. Students respond by concentrating hard and gaining considerable skills with ease. When a student struggles with a concept, teachers give individual attention to deal with any misconceptions. Marking is sometimes thorough but is not always visible. Whether teacher or student marks the work, it is essential that a symbol is used to say whether the work is correct or incorrect. Failure to do this may lead students to revise incorrect work at a later date.
235. Students enjoy mathematics. Some confess that, although they find it useful, it is hard work. Most wish to use their A-level to pursue places at university on mathematics related courses, for example, business or computing. They can talk well about the topics they are studying and can explain terms such as 'function' and 'polynomial'. They are, generally, satisfied with the course where they feel they are encouraged to think independently. As a consequence, many can contribute well to proofs involving trigonometrical equations.
236. Leadership is very good. The department is well managed. It has made good progress since the last inspection. Teachers are highly competent and completely committed to improvement. There is insufficient time for the teaching of mathematics to meet the requirements of the syllabus. They seek to introduce more ICT into the department but need training to do this effectively.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

237. The focus was on Sports studies.

Sports studies

Overall, the quality of provision in sports studies is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and the high expectations of teachers.
- The energy and enthusiasm of many students in practical tasks.
- Arrangement for monitoring students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of informed debate and discussion within groups.
- The limited range and confidence in using technical terminology.

238. There are currently opportunities for in depth study at AS level and a recreational programme which offers a wide range of activities for further practice supporting AS level study, opportunities to improve general fitness or to try different activities in preparation for life-long interest in physical activity. A very small group of three students took examinations in 2001 and, although none achieved the highest grades, results were on a par with students' capabilities representing good progress.
239. Those undertaking the AS level course this year have very varied backgrounds, with some having little experience of examination level physical education. At this early stage teachers work hard to consolidate learning, providing basic information and developing ideas and concepts sequentially so as to involve all students. They use detailed questioning and probe for in-depth responses very effectively, challenging students to consider wider issues in oral work. They expect students to develop research skills and provide a good range of resources to support wider reading. Group work opportunities are used effectively to allow students to work at different levels and to develop their ideas in discussion with others. Although whole class work lacks any form of debate or interjection from students, they are more confident and

can identify key components of fitness and training in these smaller groups. The most capable initiate discussion, can use appropriate technical terminology and move on more quickly to discuss more complex issues such as the development of training methodologies. Progress is evident. Written work is limited at present and answers lack sufficient detail to match examination requirements. However, good diagnostic feedback through marking, combined with individual interviewing, provides students with information on where they need to improve and how that improvement might be made. More detailed teacher-produced exemplar materials together with displays of work from previous years are effective in promoting required standards. Practical skills and understanding are good. Students are skilful in games play, understand and can apply rules and manage their own activity safely. Year 12 students take an active part coaching lower school students as part of the extra-curricular programme. Students are encouraged to access training in use of fitness equipment available at the local leisure centre, enabling them to begin to devise their own training schedules as required within the examination syllabus. The majority work effectively on a range of cardio-vascular warm up activities, strength and endurance tasks.

240. Coursework is well structured with good supporting materials and resources. Teaching is very well prepared, delivery is dynamic and teachers have high expectations of students. Lessons have pace, clear focus and very good plenary sessions, which consolidate learning and prepare students for forthcoming work. Students are expected to research topics in preparation for lessons and, although some do not, as yet, give this aspect their full attention there is a clear understanding that this is an expectation if students are to succeed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

241. The focus was on media studies.

Media Studies

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

Strengths

- The new course has got off to a very good start because of careful planning.
- Students respond very well to the very good teaching.
- Students benefit from very good resources, especially in ICT.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough emphasis is laid on explaining to students how they can improve their coursework grades.

242. There is very good provision for media studies in the sixth form. No examinations have yet been taken in the subject, because it was only introduced in September 2002. There are currently thirteen students in the option group in Year 12, including students from Shaftesbury school. Students are only a little way into their course, but they are already achieving very well. This is a direct result of the very good teaching, students' own interest in the subject, and regular access to high quality resources. For example, in one of the lessons seen, students were putting the finishing touches to a practical piece of coursework for assessment. Most of the class made effective use of professional software to produce a short movie clip. Coursework notes and sketches show that students of different levels of attainment have a good grasp of camera techniques, and the technical language used to describe them. In their essay writing, students are making very good progress in shaping their arguments and providing a range of relevant supporting data. Students are making steady progress in developing their analytical skills. For instance, in discussing the horror genre, most students are prompt to offer examples of strengths and weaknesses in particular films, and can explain the main themes of a film such as 'The Sandman'. Some higher attaining students achieve a very effective balance between description and analysis in writing about the skilful use of sound and movement in creating an atmosphere of tension and fear.

243. The strengths of the teaching are a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, effective lesson planning and purposeful pace of work, together with very good relationships within the classroom. Teachers also give their students good support in the development of practical skills, and assess their work regularly. Consequently, students learn very well. However, although students are given positive encouragement to work independently, and are well aware of the standards expected of them, they are not always given enough detailed information about the ways in which they can improve their written work and thus raise their grades.
244. The subject is very well led and managed. The course has been resourced very well and planned very carefully. Students benefit both culturally and socially from the monthly cinema visits, which enable them to make critical evaluations of recent film releases.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

245. The focus was on English literature.

English

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Very good student-teacher relationships.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Develop independent learning strategies.
- Develop note-making skills.
- Encourage wider critical reading around texts.

246. Only four candidates were entered in 2001 for A-level English literature. One achieved a grade B and the remainder grade D's. The overall points score was below the national average but because of the small number of candidates it is impossible to make valid statistical comparisons. In 2002, 13 candidates achieved grades C to E. There are currently seven students in Year 13 and 25 in Year 12. Most of those who begin the course complete it. Analysis shows that in most years some value is added to students' achievements during the time they study English.
247. The standard of work of students currently studying English is average overall. There is a range of achievement, which reflects the varying ability levels of the students. Work on 'The Tempest', 'The Handmaid's Tale' and poetry demonstrates detailed, thoughtful responses. Subject specific vocabulary is generally employed appropriately. Conceptual grasp of the material and the ability to interpret and analyse language varies but is average overall. Year 13, are able to engage with textual detail in 'The White Devil'. Year 12 students show good research skills as they discuss aspects of the masque in relation to their study of 'The Tempest'.
248. Students in both years demonstrate qualities of serious application. They work hard and are clearly interested in the texts they are studying. Some, however, in both years are rather too passive and do not demonstrate sufficiently qualities of independent thought and opinion nor the confidence to express their ideas to their peers and teachers. Others have mature and well-considered views on characters and themes and express themselves well. The best of the written work is fluent and of a good standard; students at this level are able to explore language in some depth. There is a reasonable range of work, especially for Year 12 students, who are at an early stage of their course. There is also evidence that students use information and

technology skills in their work, in part to produce their well-presented essays but also to research, for example, the masque tradition and mythological references.

249. Learning is good overall. However, not all students participate fully in lessons, in part because of the lack of active and independent learning methods in lessons.
250. Teaching is very good overall. A major strength of the teaching is the very good relationships between students and teachers, which enable learning to take place in an environment of confidence and security. Teachers' very good subject knowledge allows students to gain accurate mastery of the ideas in the texts they study. When teachers involve students fully -as in a lesson exploring the masque and mythology in relation to 'The Tempest' – learning is at its best. Some good collaborative group work was seen in the inspection week. Lessons are well structured with clear learning objectives and a variety of activities. Marking is thorough and detailed. It provides encouragement but also sets targets and sometimes grades. In discussion there is an expectation that students will engage with the text at an appropriate level and in appropriate language. Teachers employ good questioning skills to help students refine and develop their understanding.
251. Note taking skills need further development to enable students to extract maximum benefit from the good teaching they receive. More critical reading around texts would also be of benefit in widening students' responses. Further development of independent study techniques would encourage students' powers of analytical thought and interpretation.
252. The subject is well led and managed. The teachers of A-level work well together and are mutually supportive. There is a strong focus on improving the performance of students. Data is now being used to consider value added to achievement and assessment and tracking is in place. Resources are good and are used well. Numerous theatre visits and other extra curricular activities enhance students' experience of the subject.