

INSPECTION REPORT

MOULTON SCHOOL

MOULTON

LEA area: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Unique reference number: 122055

Headteacher: Mr John Woodhead

Reporting inspector: Mr Brian Rowe
1695

Dates of inspection: 04 – 08 November 2002

Inspection number: 251142

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pound Lane Moulton Northamptonshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Denny
Date of previous inspection:	13 January 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Moulton School is a mixed comprehensive for pupils aged 11 - 18 years, situated in Moulton, which is on the northern boundary of Northampton. The majority of the pupils live in the immediate area or nearby villages. Currently, the school is at full capacity and is regularly over-subscribed. Many of the children live in an area that is economically advantaged, but pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Overall, unemployment in the area is average. There are currently 1272 pupils on roll, of which 190 attend the sixth form, making it larger than an average sized secondary school. The proportion of boys (648) is similar to girls (624), but varies between years. Only about 30 pupils come from minority ethnic groups, a very much lower proportion than average. Currently all of them are fluent in the English language. There are no refugees or pupils from a traveller background. About 3 per cent of pupils receive free school meals and this proportion is well below the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry is above the national average. About 7 per cent of the pupils have been placed on the special educational needs register, of whom eight have been assessed to have a high level of learning difficulty. These proportions are well below average when compared to other secondary schools. Nine pupils have statements for special educational needs; this is also below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Moulton School is an improving and effective school that provides its pupils and students with a good quality of education. By the time pupils reach the age of 16 they attain academic standards that are above the average for all schools nationally and close to average for schools with pupils of a similar background. The overall standards in the sixth form are well above average. Pupils' attendance rates are above average. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are good and the vast majority develop positive relationships with their teachers and other pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form is very good. The sixth form is cost effective. The headteacher provides positive leadership that has ensured the school has made good improvement since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Overall, standards are well above average throughout the school.
- Pupils achieve particularly high standards in science and history in Years 7 to 11 and modern languages, music and religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching ensures pupils achieve well in most subjects.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the substantial majority of pupils are good.
- It ensures pupils come to school regularly and develop positive relationships with each other and staff.
- It provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- The overall attainment of boys and a small proportion of pupils, who underachieve in Years 10 and 11.
- Improving the behaviour and attitudes to school of a small minority of pupils, who lose motivation as they move through school.
- Enhancing the effectiveness of management throughout the school.
- Improving the overall level of resources, especially the number of computers in school.
- The overall provision to support the pupils with special educational needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvements since the last inspection in November 1997. Most of the recommendations identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed, with the exception of support for pupils with special educational needs and providing daily collective worship. The school has also made improvements in many other important areas, including: improving the quality of teaching and learning; raising academic standards; increasing attendance rates and developing systems to assess pupils' and students' progress. The school has also been successful in gaining a number of prestigious awards that include: Science College Status; The Schools Curriculum Award 2000; The Sportsmark Award and Investors in People Award. Several substantial building projects have been completed, considerably improving the accommodation.

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				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	n/a	

Pupils' attainment as they enter school is above average, indicating many of them are capable of achieving very high standards. The above table shows that in the 2002 GCSE examinations, pupils' performance was well above the national average and average compared to similar schools. The 2002 results indicate an increase of standards on previous years. The quality of pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates that attainment in the current Years 10 and 11 matches the 2002 results and is above the national average. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good progress, but there are a small group of pupils, who underachieve through poor attendance or failing to complete their examination coursework. From 1997-2002, girls outperformed boys to a greater extent than national trends. The school's overall trend of performance during the last four years has been similar to the national trend of improvement. In many subjects, pupils' attainment is currently above national averages. In English, science, history, German, music and religious education, standards are well above this level. In art and design, design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils' attainment is close to national averages.

In Years 7 to 9, pupils effectively build on their knowledge, skills and understanding gained at primary school and their progress is good. The results of the tests taken in 2002 indicate the overall standards were well above national averages and average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher grades in English, mathematics and science is also above average. The quality of work seen during the inspection confirms these results. From 1997 to 2002, the girls outperformed boys at a much greater extent than national trends. During this period, the school improved pupils' attainment at a faster rate than the national trend. Attainment is well above expectations in history and German. In ICT, French, and music, attainment is above expectations. In all the other subjects, pupils' attainment is close to national expectations. In religious education, standards are above the local requirements. The implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is satisfactory, resulting in standards of literacy and numeracy that are above average by the age of 14 years. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of good teaching and effective support. The school has set realistic academic targets for both 14 and 16-year-olds based on their previous test and examination results. Sixth form students taking two or more GCE A/AS courses achieve well above the national average. The school has achieved this high level of attainment for the last three years. There is no significant difference between the results of male and female students. Most students achieve well in their chosen subjects and gain results in line with those predicted from their GCSE examinations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils demonstrate a good work ethic and a determination to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The school is a socially harmonious community. Behaviour in lessons was rarely less than satisfactory and on many occasions very good. Oppressive or bullying kinds of behaviour are rare and handled well by staff.
Personal development and relationships	The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is good. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, pupils are confident and articulate young people, who express their feelings and concerns in a logical manner. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good.
Attendance	Above average. Attendance levels have improved since the last inspection.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

During the inspection, the overall quality of teaching was good in all years and has improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good in most subjects and is the main reason why pupils are making good progress and achieving well. During the inspection, teaching was especially effective in history, modern languages, physical education and music. In mathematics, teaching was satisfactory, but not as effective as in other subject areas. Generally, teaching is effective because teachers have a high level of subject expertise and manage the pupils well in class. In some subjects, teachers' expectations are very high, but the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. A relatively small group of pupils are disruptive in lessons. Many teachers deal with this situation well and keep the pupils working on task, but some teachers lack the behavioural management skills to cope with their negative response. Although an improving area, the school does not yet have a consistent approach to using assessment information to match the tasks set to challenge all pupils and help them understand how to improve their own performance. Overall, the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science is good. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are helping to strengthen provision for English and mathematics throughout the school. Few subjects make good use of ICT to further pupils' learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly and this guides them in their future learning. Overall, homework is used well to support the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, but there are some inconsistencies between classes. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well and generally provide work at an appropriate level. There is too little co-ordinated support for teaching pupils, who use English as an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers pupils a good range of subjects that cover all the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the provision for cross-curricular ICT is a weakness. The school has made an effective start in implementing citizenship and the National Key Stage 3 strategies for literacy and numeracy. There is a very good programme of activities available to pupils throughout the lunch break and after school. The variety of courses offered to sixth form students is good, but the school fails to meet its obligation to teach them religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. The targets on individual education plans are too general to be of use for subject teachers to plan for specific needs. There is a lack of clarity about procedures to be followed in cases that might require referral to the local education authority or other agencies.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is unsatisfactory for the few pupils with English as an additional language as the school has no designated co-ordinator or the necessary systems to support and monitor the progress of pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal development. It has good arrangements for promoting moral and social development. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. Opportunities for pupils to develop their appreciation of the richness and variety of multi-cultural Britain are more limited.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Moulton is a caring school. The good relationships between staff and pupils make a significant contribution towards the quality of support that pupils receive. The procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are good. The school uses the assessments well to build a profile on all the pupils, place them in appropriate ability groups and to set them targets for improvement.

There is a lack of cohesion in the co-ordination of educational inclusion and overall, this aspect of the school's work is underdeveloped. Parents have a positive view of the school and it is a popular choice in the community. Relationships with parents are strong. They receive good information about school life. The school makes them feel welcome.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides positive and successful leadership that has ensured good improvement since the last inspection. He is supported well by hard-working senior colleagues. However, some senior staff teach a high proportion of lessons and this reduces their capacity to fulfil all their management tasks. Many features of management are effective, but some important aspects require further development. There are significant shortcomings in the leadership and management for pupils with special educational needs and the overall co-ordination is unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	In many respects, the governors are providing good support for the school, but have not ensured the Code of Practice for special educational needs is fully in place, religious education is taught to the sixth form students, adopted a policy for racial equality or provided for daily worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring by the headteacher and senior staff has improved since the last inspection. It identifies many of the strengths and areas for development and these are recorded in the school's plan for improvement. However, the monitoring arrangements by heads of departments are still not sufficiently regular and rigorous. Consequently, the governors and senior managers have not fully developed the school into a self-evaluating institution.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources and additional funds. It correctly applies the principles of achieving value for money to all major purchases.

The school has sufficient qualified staff to teach the National Curriculum and to meet the needs of pupils. Overall, learning resources are unsatisfactory as the provision for ICT is poor. This is due, in part, to a shortfall of funding as the number of pupils increases each year. The accommodation is good and further improvements are planned.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school sent out 1270 questionnaires of which 267 (21 per cent) were returned. Twenty nine parents attended a meeting prior to the inspection to express their views about the school.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Children make good progress. • The teaching is good. • The school has high expectations of the pupils. • They feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • Providing more information about their children's progress. • The school working more closely with parents. • The range of activities outside of lessons.

The inspection team agrees with the above positive views expressed by parents. They do not agree with the views concerning the range of activities outside of lessons, homework and the information provided about children's progress. In each of these aspects, they found the provision to be at least satisfactory. The school works hard to involve parents in their children's education.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM MOULTON SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this larger than average sized 11-18 comprehensive school has 190 students and is growing. It offers a good range of AS and Advanced Level courses. At present, only one vocational course is offered and this is within the area of business. However, as part of partnership arrangements with other local schools and colleges, students have access to a broader range of vocational, AS and Advanced Level courses. About 60 per cent of the students, who completed their Year 11 studies at Moulton in July 2002, are continuing their education in the sixth form and a small, but increasing, number enter it from other schools. Most students entering the sixth form pursue AS and Advanced Level courses, although a few follow a mixture of vocational and AS. Entry to the sixth form is open to all students, who gain five or more GCSE A*-C grades. Students, who do not achieve the entry criteria, may still enter the sixth form if there are appropriate courses available to help them improve on the grades achieved at the end of Year 11 and if they are committed to further study. The majority of students remain in the sixth form until the end of Year 13, following which over 80 per cent go to university or some other form of further or higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is cost effective and provides good value for money. The overall standards achieved over the last three years have been consistently well above national figures because teaching is very good and students have very positive attitudes to their work. The range of courses offered meets the differing interests and aptitudes of the great majority of students. Good provision is made for students' personal development, including their social and moral development. Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are less well developed. Teachers are committed to their students and care for them very well. Students receive satisfactory support in relation to the next stage of their education, training or employment. The continued growth in numbers of students entering the sixth form reflects the overall high quality of provision.

Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form, both past and present, have been major factors in promoting high standards.
- Supportive teachers, who foster good relationships with students, which is reflected in the very positive attitudes displayed by the students to the school.
- Teaching and learning, particularly in business, French, history, and psychology.
- Procedures for monitoring and supporting the personal and academic progress of all students.

What could be improved

- Greater consistency in the use of performance data, by departments, to predict more accurately final examination results for individual students.
- Development of key skills within subject areas, particularly in relation to literacy, numeracy, communications, working with others and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Forward planning in relation to accommodation, resources and examination courses to ensure that the school can meet fully the demand for places from pupils currently in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum in relation to the teaching of religious education to ensure the school meets statutory requirements.

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
English	Good. Standards achieved in the AS and Advanced Level examinations are average. Students make satisfactory progress from average standards achieved at the end of GCSE courses. The school structures teaching very carefully to provide support for students in meeting the demands of the subject. Leadership and management are good.
Mathematics	Good. A level results are above the national average and have improved in recent years. Most students complete the A and AS level courses and gain a pass grade. Most students achieve results as expected based on their attainment at GCSE. Students are taught well and throughout the course they gain a good understanding of mathematics and are well prepared for higher education.
Chemistry	Good. Results at A level for the last two years have been above average, although the numbers taking the examination are small. In 2000 and 2001, the results were above average, which was an improvement on 1999 grades. Results for the new AS courses for Year 12 students are satisfactory. Teaching is good, as are leadership and management.
Biology	Good. Good leadership and management provide effective support and guidance. Teaching and learning are good. As a result, the 2002 A level examination results have improved from those gained in 2001. Current attainment is average and students make satisfactory progress in relation to their results at GCSE.
ICT	Good. A level examination results over the last three years have been consistently good and show an upward trend. Students achieve well during the course, attaining results that are above the national average. The majority of students perform at a level that exceeds predicted achievement based on GCSE performance. This can be attributed to the very positive attitudes displayed by students and the good teaching they receive.
History	Very good. Results at advanced level are above the national average and those at AS are well above. Teaching is very good and students have very positive attitudes to the subject. A major contributory factor to high standards is the very good quality of leadership and management.
Business Studies	Very good. Standards are well above the national average at advanced level as a result of consistently good teaching. Relationships between staff and students are positive. The very good leadership and management make a significant contribution to the very good results achieved by all students in relation to their prior attainment.
French	Good. Results at AS level have been above average overall and the course provides students with a good basis for further study. Results achieved at the end of advanced level courses have been consistent with national averages and represent satisfactory achievement. Students have excellent attitudes and respond well to good teaching. Work in the sixth form is well managed.
Psychology	Very good. Students following both A level and AS courses in this popular subject are very positive about this course. At the time of this inspection, examination results had been improving, but none stemmed from teaching by staff at this school. Teaching and learning are very good and predicted examination grades suggest results are likely to be above the national average.

Work was sampled in other subjects during the inspection. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was **very good**. The provision in **drama** is good. Good teaching and a well-organised programme have supported inexperienced students in making satisfactory progress, despite below average examination results. Good management has concentrated efforts in Years 10 and 11 to broaden the experience of a large number of potential recruits. The provision in **music** is very good. Examination results are commensurate with the musical skills and understanding of those involved. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The number of students studying music is increasing. The provision in **physics** is good. In 2002, the A-level examination results improved and were just above average. The progress students make from GCSE to A level is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good, as are leadership and management. The provision in **general studies** is very good. The advanced level course is completed in one year and examination results are above the national average. Teaching and learning are good overall. The subject is very well led and managed. The provision in **design** is good. Examination results for 2001 were above the national average. Those for 2002 are at a similar level. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are good and standards have improved since the last inspection. The provision in **art** is good. Examination results are in line with the national average and have improved since the last inspection. The consistently good quality of teaching, tailored to the needs of the individual, encourages and inspires students in their learning and helps them to reach their full potential. This has a positive effect on achievement and standards. Numbers taking art to Advanced level are increasing. The provision in **geography** is good. Examination results are above the national average. The progress made from GCSE to A level study is good. Teaching and learning and leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The provision in **sociology** is very good. The 2001 examination results were above the national average. Teaching and learning are very good and have a positive impact on standards. Leadership and management are very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are well supported. Ongoing monitoring of both their academic and personal development quickly identifies any areas of difficulty, which may affect their learning. The school intends to teach key skills to current Year 12 students during the summer term of 2003. Course planning has already started. This includes in-service training for the tutors, who will be responsible for teaching the course as part of the personal, social, education programme.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and have been a major contributor to the high standards achieved each year. About three years ago the governors and senior staff implemented a programme of change in the sixth form entitled 'Recipe for Success'. This resulted in more positive attitudes towards study by sixth form students and examination results improved. Pressures on accommodation and resources are increasing as the sixth form grows in popularity. There has been a focus on raising standards through the monitoring of students' progress. Equal emphasis has been placed on students' personal development. The newly appointed head of sixth form has a clear vision of the educational direction the sixth form should now take to raise standards further. The sixth form is cost effective.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support systems, which enable them to settle well and make progress with their study. • The very good accommodation. • Range of subjects to match career prospects. • Good teaching ensures they learn well. • Systems to help promote independent study. • Teachers are accessible to provide support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources, especially computers in the library. • Provision of lockers for all sixth form students. • More flexible private study arrangements for Year 13 students. • Preparation for life in a multi-cultural society. • The way in which the school gathers and responds to views of students in the sixth

	form.
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The inspection evidence supports the strengths identified by students. The very good relationships evidenced during the inspection week provide a caring and supportive ethos, which supports both the academic and personal development of the students. The purpose-built sixth form block is bright and airy and makes a positive contribution to the learning environment. The school is aware of the need to make a substantial investment in the library particularly with regard to ICT, including access to the Internet.

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

Main school

1. When pupils start school in Year 7, their overall level of attainment is above expectations and their skills in literacy and numeracy are very well developed. The level of attainment fluctuates slightly each year, but appears to have risen in recent years. There are several pupils in each year, who are capable of achieving the highest grades in the national tests and examinations.

Years 7 to 9

2. In the 2001 tests, taken at the age of 14, pupils' attainment overall was well above the national average. During the same year, attainment in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science was well above average. When compared with similar schools¹, English and science results were above average, and in mathematics they were below. In the 2001 tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher-level 6 in all of the core subjects was well above the national average. The 2001 results, when compared to similar schools, show the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 grades was well above average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. This indicates that many of the higher-attaining pupils were underachieving in this subject. From 1997 to 2001, the girls outperformed boys at a much greater extent than national trends. During this period, the school improved pupils' attainment at a faster rate than the national trend.
3. The most recent 2002 tests results, overall, are similar to those in 2001, except for an unexpected dip in English and an improvement in mathematics. However, the overall results have remained well above the national average and average when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher-level grades improved slightly and remained well above national and similar school averages. The quality of pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms the attainment indicated by these latest test results. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are achieving well and for many their progress is good. There are a number of factors that have contributed to these recent improvements:
- Improved planning and departmental schemes of work;
 - Making better use of assessment information to set pupils targets for achievement;
 - improvements in the quality of teaching and learning;
 - grouping and teaching pupils in ability sets;
 - successfully implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.
4. In virtually all lessons seen during the inspection, pupils made good progress. However, the very highest-attaining pupils were not always set work that was sufficiently challenging. This was because tasks were not always well matched to their different needs, with these pupils often completing the same work as other pupils before proceeding to more challenging activities. Pupils with special educational needs achieved well in their learning, especially, when they received specific support in lessons. There are a small number of boys in Years 8 and 9, who are not always well motivated and if the teacher and content of the lesson do not fully engage their attention they become distracted, misbehave and fail to learn.

¹ Similar schools are identified by using the number of pupils claiming free school meals.

5. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils are currently attaining at a similar level to the 2002 national tests in English, mathematics and science, reflecting that for a few years, the school has made these the priority for development. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has increased and is now well above average. Attainment is also well above expectations in history and German. In information and communication technology (ICT), French, and music, attainment is above expectations. In all the other subjects, pupils' attainment is close to national expectations. In religious education, standards are above the local requirements. There were significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls in English, art and design, design and technology, geography, German and music. The school is aware of this, but not enough action has been taken by teachers to find a solution to the issue. The school has set targets for 14-year-olds, based on their attainment at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Although demanding, they are within reach.

Years 10 and 11

6. In 2001, the school's total GCSE points score² was above the national average and an increase on the previous year. From 1997 to 2001, girls outperformed boys by a greater extent than the national trend. In 2002, the gap was reduced slightly, but is still significant. Over the last five years, the trend in the school's average point score per pupil has fluctuated, yet, overall, indicates an upward trend in line with the national trend of improvement. In the same year, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades was well above the national average and average when compared to similar schools. In 2001 and 2002, the proportion of pupils, who gained five or more A*-G grades, was above the national average, but well below average when compared to similar schools.
7. In the most recent 2002 GCSE examinations, results improved again and the average points score per pupil was the highest ever achieved by the school. This result is well above the national average, although below the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades also improved to the highest level and is well above the national average and average for similar schools. This is an indication that the above average- and average- attaining pupils are achieving well and gaining good examination results. However, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*-G grades declined slightly and is now close to the national, but well below similar school averages. The proportion of pupils, who do not gain the expected examination success, is relatively small, but an issue for the school to tackle. Some subjects have found it difficult to raise the attainment of boys or ensure that the very ablest pupils gain the highest examination grades. In addition, there are a small group of pupils, frequently boys, who do not attend school regularly or do not complete examination coursework. It is these pupils, who are underachieving and giving concern to staff in school.
8. The school has set itself challenging GCSE targets for the Years 2003 and 2004. Most targets were met in 2001 and 2002 and there is confidence in school about further improvements being achieved in 2003. The school has implemented several

² The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school. At Key Stage 3 the Level attained by each pupil, for example, in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 4 = 27 points, a Level 5 = 33 points and so on. ~~Therefore~~ The average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the Level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Therefore, a school whose average points score for mathematics in the end of Key Stage 3 tests is greater than 33 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. The calculation is similar for the GCSE points score. The only difference is the value of the points assigned to an individual grade, for example, an A* grade is worth 8 points, A is 7 points, B is 6 points and so on until grade G which is worth 1 point.

strategies to raise standards in Years 10 and 11. These include: supporting individual pupils with a mentor to help them achieve their academic targets, using assessment information to set pupils precise targets to achieve, identifying pupils at risk of underachieving and providing examination revision clubs. Undoubtedly, the staff have worked hard to improve pupils' performance in Years 10 and 11. The school's analysis of its 2002 results has identified that only a relatively small number of below average attaining pupils failed to achieve their predicted grade. The inspectors agree with this analysis.

9. In most subjects, the achievement of pupils in their GCSE examinations was close to, and in many cases above, predictions based on their prior attainment when measured at the end of Year 9. This is a clear indication that pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11. In many subjects, pupils' attainment in Years 10 and 11 is currently above national averages. Moreover, in English, science, history, German, music and religious education, standards are well above this level. In art, design and technology and ICT, pupils' attainment is in line with national averages.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when taught as individuals or in groups when withdrawn from class. They also make good progress with specific support. Where there is no support, they generally make similar progress to other pupils in class, which is good, often because subject teachers have an intuitive response to their special needs. However, their progress is restricted because the targets on their individual education plans are not sufficiently specific and subject teachers cannot always take full account of their special needs when planning lessons.

Sixth form

11. Most students entering the sixth form pursue AS and A2 level courses, or a mixture of AS/A2 and vocational courses. Entry to the sixth form is open to all students for whom there are appropriate courses and, who are committed to further study. A high proportion of students, who attended the main school, stay on to undertake post-16 courses. Nearly 80 per cent of students enter higher education at the completion of their sixth form studies.
12. About three years ago, the governors and senior staff implemented a programme of change in the sixth form entitled 'Recipe for Success'. This resulted in more positive attitudes towards study by sixth form students and examination results improved. The average points score for students taking two or more GCE A/AS courses is now well above the national average and the school has achieved this same high level of attainment for at least the last three years. There is no significant difference between the examination results of male and female students. Most students achieve well in their chosen subjects and gain results in line with those predicted from the grades of GCSE examinations. The level of improvement is frequently good. Students are making good progress with developing their key skills, although the opportunities to use computers at school are very limited.

Literacy and numeracy

13. Standards of literacy across the school are good. Although some lower-attaining pupils find it hard to understand written questions in mathematics, most pupils cope well with the texts that they read. They listen particularly well and so are able to make good use of discussion to deepen their understanding. This is particularly the case in science lessons. Writing skills are above average and pupils are helped in most

subject areas by helpful guidance on spelling and writing frames, which have been developed as part of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy.

14. Pupils enter school with standards of numeracy well above the national average. They apply their numerical skills well in most subjects. In some subjects, such as history, good use is made of these as this subject has carefully planned where pupils can use and develop their skills. For example, they analyse birth and death rates in Year 8 and war casualty figures are studied in Year 9. Such good practice provides pupils with the chance to apply their skills. They grow in confidence at using numerical data and, of course, develop their mathematical understanding through use of the Numeracy Strategy.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Main school

15. The attitudes of pupils towards school are good. Most demonstrate a good work ethic and determination to succeed. Pupils are highly motivated to take part in events organised by the school, such as the forthcoming production of *Bugsy Malone*, musical concerts and representing the school in sporting competitions. The few pupils from ethnic minorities, or those with special educational needs, are fully included within the school community.
16. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good. Teaching staff value pupils for their individuality and help them to achieve their potential in as many ways as possible. Pupils respond positively to this and develop during their time at school into confident young people. Most are happy to approach members of staff if they are experiencing difficulties with their academic work or have personal problems. There are many opportunities for collaborative or group work further to develop pupils' social skills and they willingly share and support each other in their learning. Pupils are encouraged, through debate, to express their feelings on a wide range of moral and social issues. They listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of their peer group that may differ from their own. This is as a direct result of the good provision for their social development.
17. The standard of behaviour within the school is good. The school is a socially harmonious community. Behaviour in lessons was rarely less than satisfactory and on many occasions very good. In 6 per cent of lessons, behaviour was considered unsatisfactory. This was usually related to teachers' low expectations of standards of acceptable behaviour and the non-application of the school's clear behaviour management procedures for dealing with potentially disruptive behaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions has risen significantly since the previous inspection from 19 to 61. Two pupils were permanently excluded. Monitoring systems to enable the early identification of pupils causing concern are not always effective. Currently, strategies to support this group of pupils to help them manage their behaviour more effectively are not consistently applied. Pupils state that bullying is not tolerated within the school and is not an issue. The ethos in school encourages pupils to accept responsibility for their actions and treat everyone with respect and the majority respond to this.
18. The development of pupils' initiative and personal responsibility is good. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, pupils are confident and articulate young people, who express their feelings and concerns in a logical manner. During lunch and break times, pupils organise themselves with minimal adult intervention. Prefects play an important role in supporting teaching staff in the day-to-day running of the school. The school

council provides an effective forum for pupils to air their views. A member of the governing body attends its meetings.

19. A range of visits, both in this country and overseas, extends pupils' understanding of the wider community. Residential opportunities form a significant part of pupils' social development and contribute significantly to the good relationships between pupils and with staff. The school has maintained the positive aspects of behaviour, relationships and personal development found at the time of the last inspection.
20. The overall attendance level is good. In 2000/2001, it was 92.2 per cent, which was above average and unauthorised absence was below the national average. A minority of pupils, particularly in Years 9, 10 and 11, have low attendance levels. This reduces the possibility of these pupils achieving their potential in GCSE examinations. Attendance levels have improved since the last inspection.

Sixth form

21. Students in the sixth form have very good attitudes towards their studies. They are enthusiastic and articulate, highly motivated to learn and work hard to achieve a high standards. Their personal development is good and their interaction with the rest of the school gives them the opportunity to act as positive role models for younger pupils. For example, they support in lessons in Years 7 to 9. Students organise the annual sixth form ball themselves. By the end of Year 13, they have developed into mature young people able to cope well with the requirements of higher education or the working environment. Relationships with teaching staff and between students are good and supportive. Attendance overall is satisfactory. The school requires students to be in school full time. The attendance levels in Year 13 are unsatisfactory at 86.05 per cent and monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous. This affects students' ultimate success in external examinations.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Main school

22. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and there are examples of very good teaching in most subjects. Of the 205 lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good in 49 per cent, very good in 24 per cent, excellent in 2 per cent and satisfactory in 20 per cent. In only five lessons, some taught by temporary staff, did teaching not ensure pupils made adequate progress. Teaching was less than satisfactory in only 4 per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is now a strength in the school and has contributed to the progress pupils make and the raising of standards in all years. In addition, the quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' personal, moral and social development, their attitudes towards work and their behaviour in class and around the school. There were examples of very good teaching in every subject. Through staff development and a focus on improving teaching, the school has made a good improvement since the last inspection.
23. The previous inspection report judged the quality of teaching to be satisfactory or better in 86 per cent of the lessons and very good in 13 per cent of them. The unsatisfactory teaching was closely linked to several factors that included: work was not always matched to the needs of the higher- and lower-attaining pupils; slow pace of work in lessons; the use of made of assessments and the quality of the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. This resulted in a key issue relating to improving the quality of teaching and learning by broadening the range of teaching

styles to match work to the needs of the lower- and higher-attaining pupils. In particular, art, music, French and religious education were highlighted as subjects that needed to improve. Findings in this inspection show that the school has successfully addressed most of these issues relating to teaching and learning, although there is still room for further improvement in ensuring the most able pupils, especially those, who are gifted and talented, achieve to their full potential. Also, the school has not adequately addressed the weakness identified over the individual education plans.

24. The quality of teaching is good in most subjects and is the main reason why pupils are making good progress and achieving well. During the inspection, teaching was especially effective in history, modern languages, physical education and music. In mathematics, teaching was satisfactory, but not as effective as in other subject areas. Generally, teaching is effective because teachers have a high level of subject expertise and manage the pupils well in class. In some subjects, teachers' expectations are very high, but the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
25. In the best lessons, teachers show good subject knowledge that is passed on to pupils with zest, interest and enthusiasm. The purpose of the lesson is effectively shared with pupils and this contributes well to their understanding of their own learning. Planning is very good, matching the scheme of work and ability of the pupils. Teachers use demonstration and explanation well to put across key teaching points. Relationships are good, with pupils being confident and secure with their teachers and support staff. In these lessons, pupils make very good progress and are keen to learn.
26. Within this context of a good provision for teaching, at times, the pace of work is too slow. This is due to too greater emphasis on teachers explaining the tasks or imparting factual knowledge, class activities that last too long, inappropriate tasks that do not closely match pupils' ability or needs and lessons that simply do not sustain pupils' interest and concentration. Generally, teachers provide pupils with a high level of support and guidance, but this is at the expense of ensuring pupils make some of their own decisions, take responsibility for their own learning and work independently of the teacher. At times, teaching becomes too directed and pupils are too passive, not developing sufficient self-motivation or their own 'culture for learning'. This is the case for a relatively small number of pupils, mostly boys, who find it hard to concentrate when not sufficiently active or positively engaged in lessons. They become distracted and this leads to inappropriate and poor behaviour. Many teachers deal with this situation well and keep the pupils working on task, but some teachers lack the behavioural management skills to cope with pupils' negative response. When this happens, the amount of learning decreases and pupils lose interest in the subject. Few subjects make good use of ICT to further pupils' learning and the school is aware this is area for development.
27. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and this guides pupils in their future learning. The quality of marking is satisfactory, but there are inconsistencies in the use of constructive comments on how to improve. Teachers often use the results of marking to plan future lessons as well as the assessments they make of pupils' learning. They use homework in a beneficial way to support the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, but there are inconsistencies between classes.
28. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Learning is good in withdrawal groups and when pupils are working individually with teachers or support assistants. Teaching is generally effective in regular lessons where pupils with special needs have additional support. Pupils with special educational needs often make good progress as a result of class teachers' intuitive response to their needs. However, for those pupils, who have individual education plans, the targets for improvement are not

sufficiently specific to enable all teachers to plan for these pupils' special needs and progress towards these targets is difficult to assess.

Teaching of Literacy and Numeracy across the curriculum

29. The quality of teaching literacy and numeracy skills in different areas of the curriculum is satisfactory throughout the school. Most teachers have secure knowledge of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. They usually plan thoroughly, identifying clearly how the basic skills of literacy and numeracy for pupils of different abilities are to be covered, although there is room for improvement in some subjects, for example geography. Teachers recognise the primary importance of literacy and often create effective links between English and its application to other subjects. This is particularly the case in science lessons. Writing skills are above average and pupils are helped in most subject areas by helpful guidance on spelling and writing frames, which have been developed as part of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy. Pupils are taught to apply their numerical skills well in many lessons. In some subjects, such as history, good use is made of these as teachers carefully plan where pupils can use and develop their skills.

Sixth form

30. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout both years of the sixth form. During the inspection, 51 lessons were observed and the quality of teaching was good in 59 per cent of lessons, very good in 27 per cent, excellent in 4 per cent and satisfactory in the remaining 10 per cent. Consequently, there were no unsatisfactory lessons and this represents a very good profile of teaching. The high quality of teaching is a significant strength in the sixth form and has contributed to the success in examination courses at a higher level than the national average. In addition, the very good teaching has a positive impact on the support and guidance given to students and prepares them well for the next stage of their educational career or employment. The school plans to extend students' key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT in the sixth form through the personal, health and social education course, which is to start in the summer term 2003. Teaching was reported as 'at least satisfactory' in the last inspection and the quality has improved considerably since that time.
31. In the sixth form, teaching is consistently very good in history and psychology. In all other subjects, it is good. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in history. The particular strengths of teaching are the high level of the staff's subject expertise, the very good relationships between the teachers and students and the effective preparation for examination courses. Teachers have high expectations of the students and provide good support and guidance for them. In return, the students respect this commitment by their teachers and respond by working hard in lessons and on their coursework assignments. The quality of learning is restricted at times by a lack of focus on developing students' independent study and by the inadequate provision for using computers. The school is aware of this and making an effort to remedy the current shortfalls.

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

Main school

32. Since the last inspection, the school has addressed most of the issues identified and made a good improvement in the range of courses offered to pupils. There is now an

agreed curriculum statement in place. The school is increasing its provision for pupils' personal development. It now meets statutory requirements in religious education, dance, music and geography. In addition, there has been a marginal increase in the time for art. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 now receive their entitlement for information and communication technology (ICT). However, the provision for cross-curricular ICT remains a weakness. The school has made an effective start in implementing the Key Stage 3 National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies³.

33. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good and the allocation of time and distribution of lessons across the week are well planned in most subjects. The school offers pupils a good range of subjects that cover all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Design and technology covers resistant and compliant material options, although pupils can only access two of the four disciplines on offer in Year 9. ICT is successfully taught as a discrete subject, however, the provision for cross-curricular ICT is restricted by the poor level of computer resources. This results in pupils having to share equipment and, thus, reduces time for individuals' practical experience. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good in art, science, history, religious education, physical education, English, and ICT. In music, the provision is very good. It is satisfactory in geography, design and technology, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
34. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good in most areas and 18 GCSE courses are offered. Other short courses are offered in ICT and religious education. For a small number of pupils, the curriculum includes the Youth Award Scheme and a single science. Most pupils take nine subjects at GCSE at the age of 16 years and two short courses. Certificate of Achievement accreditation is available for pupils not suited to GCSE. No vocational courses are currently available for the vast majority of pupils in the school. A small number of pupils are disapplied from some of the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11, taking the Youth Award Scheme. The programme is designed to meet the individual needs of the pupils concerned.
35. Personal, social and health education provision for Years 7 to 9 is well planned and taught effectively by form tutors. Aspects of citizenship are also covered in this time. A comprehensive guidance programme covers all the relevant aspects of this area of pupils' personal development, such as sex and drug education and study skills. Pupils in Year 11 benefit from an additional lesson a week that prepares them well for the next stage of education or the world of work. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils. A co-ordinator for more able pupils has recently been appointed. However, the most able pupils are not identified on the grounds of exceptional ability in subjects. Programmes are still to be designed and implemented to extend the educational experiences of these pupils.
36. Pupils with special educational needs, who are withdrawn from regular lessons, have a satisfactory curriculum. This curriculum is inclusive as work usually follows what other pupils are doing in class. However, where pupils are taught in mainstream classes without specific support, the targets on individual education plans are too general to be of use for subject teachers to plan for their specific needs, which inhibits the progress that these pupils make. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection and has shown insufficient improvement. Some 15- and 16-year-old pupils do not follow a full range of GCSE courses. For part of their time, they follow an accredited course that is suited to their special needs. There is satisfactory involvement of outside agencies to support the provision for pupils with special educational needs. However, there is a lack of clarity about procedures to be followed in some cases that might require referral to the local education authority or other external agencies.

³ A national approach to raising standards for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

37. The school has established good links with feeder schools. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 attend the school prior to joining in Year 7. They gain experience in a number of areas, for example information and communication technology. There are regular meetings between local schools to discuss how each can benefit from closer links. The Moulton Sports Complex, owned by the school, greatly enriches the sporting provision for pupils. Visiting coaches provide coaching in a range of sports that promote a high level of skill development and success at a high level of performance.
38. Good links with the careers service supports the school in this area of its work. It is taught as part of the personal, social and health education programme. The school makes good provision for the work-related curriculum through visits and occasional visitors to subject areas. The school has a well-established and highly-regarded careers education and guidance programme. Year 9 pupils receive talks from the careers service prior to making option choices for GCSE courses. Year 10 pupils have two weeks work experience and Year 11 receive good advice on post-16 options.
39. There is a very good programme of activities available to pupils throughout the lunch break and after school, covering sports, music, drama, ICT and other subjects. In addition, there are numerous opportunities for pupils to visit places of educational and general interest, both in this country and abroad. All years from 7 to 13 benefit from the very extensive extra-curricular activities. Allied to this, the school has strong links with the local community. These offer good opportunities to develop pupils' skills and understanding.

ICT across the curriculum

40. Pupils have some opportunity to use their ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum, but access is very difficult given the low level of resources. Use is satisfactory in, for example history, science, mathematics and design and technology. Computer-based activities should improve, particularly in mathematics and science, when equipment related to the newly-gained science college status becomes available. The use of ICT to support learning is unsatisfactory in art, religious education and modern foreign languages. Although pupils are gaining their entitlement in a number of subjects, this is achieved through infrequent access in school and high levels of home access. The poor levels of resourcing, together with the age of some equipment in school, impacts on the overall achievement of pupils. Departments are able to book the specialist rooms, but availability is affected by discrete subject use. The school has no facility to allow a ratio of 1:1 for teaching purposes. Pupils in the discrete ICT lessons work in pairs or sometimes in threes. Current arrangements for ICT ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to the programmes of study. The school has in place a programme that will ensure that it can teach the Key Stage 3 ICT strand. However, the suggested time allocation per pupil is unlikely to be achieved because of the shortage of computers. Overall, the provision for cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory.

Citizenship

41. The school has the benefit of a recently-appointed co-ordinator for citizenship, who has carried out an audit of all subjects. The audit has aided the establishment of common areas within subjects where citizenship topics can be taught. The planned programmes resulting from the initial work of the co-ordinator address all of the required aspects of National Curriculum citizenship. There are aspects with links to the personal and social education schemes of work, but the school is ensuring that these are taught independently by the form tutors. Much of the citizenship curriculum is

covered in a range of subjects, thereby ensuring appropriate contexts to aid pupils' understanding. All developments in the area of citizenship are in their infancy and the school has yet to finalise the approach to assessment. Monitoring of the teaching is another challenge facing the co-ordinator because no time is allocated to him for this purpose. Despite the embryonic stage of the subject, the planning and mapping has been carried out effectively. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and well informed, having taken advantage of external training opportunities. Teachers in the subjects involved and form tutors have yet to receive the relevant training to ensure that pupils gain equal opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of citizenship.

Sixth form

42. The variety of courses offered to sixth form students is good. The majority of courses offered are AS and Advanced Level courses and students achieve good results in relation to national averages. The school offers GNVQ courses only in business. The school does respond to the needs of the students with regard to the subjects offered. The introduction of psychology, English language and sociology courses are examples.
43. The school is part of a tertiary cluster arrangement. Through this arrangement, Moulton students have access to a very wide range of AS, Advanced Level and GNVQ courses. The curriculum is good in all subjects offered. At the time of the last inspection, there was no provision of religious education in the sixth form, as is required by statute. This situation still remains.

THE PROVISION FOR PERSONAL, HEALTH AND SOCIAL EDUCATION IS GOOD. THE PROGRAMME IS RELEVANT AND DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS PREPARING FOR INDEPENDENT ADULT LIFE. IT COVERS ASPECTS OF CAREERS AND HIGHER EDUCATION, STUDY SKILLS AND ADVICE ON SELF-ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC TARGETS. THE TEACHING OF THE KEY SKILLS OF COMMUNICATION, NUMERACY AND ICT IN THE SIXTH FORM WILL BE THROUGH THE PERSONAL, HEALTH AND SOCIAL EDUCATION COURSE, WHICH IS DUE TO START IN SUMMER 2003.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

44. The overall provision for the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. There has been no significant improvement in the school's provision for enhancing the spiritual and cultural development of pupils since the last inspection. In response to the last inspection, the school has produced a policy that identifies opportunities throughout the curriculum to meet this aspect of pupils' education. This document does not contain any reference on how to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of life in a multicultural society. Teachers have not put the policy into practice consistently throughout the school. Its implementation has not been adequately monitored by senior staff.
45. Spiritual provision is satisfactory. It is promoted mainly through school assemblies and in the learning of subjects such as religious education, English and music. House assemblies often have an element of reflection, but this is not consistent and opportunities are missed. Often, the theme of assemblies is thought-provoking, but there is little active involvement of pupils to share their thoughts and feelings with others. Assembly themes are not explored and developed further in tutor groups. The school does not meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

46. There is good provision for pupils' moral development. The school's behaviour code is good and clearly understood by all pupils. Religious studies lessons ensure that moral issues, such as euthanasia, death and abortion, are addressed. Pupils in Year 10, for example, during a personal, social and health education lesson, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of dropping the developing countries debt.
47. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of living in a community. The school council is an elected body. It brings issues to the attention of the headteacher and governing body. Prefects act as good role-models around the school. Through school productions, music concerts and competitive sport, pupils are encouraged to develop a team spirit and work collaboratively for the greater good. The school promotes pupils' awareness of those less fortunate than themselves through its charity work where pupils raise considerable sums of money.
48. Cultural provision is satisfactory. A range of visits, both in this country and overseas, extends pupils' knowledge of the wider community as well as contributing towards their personal development. Through subjects such as history and geography, pupils have the opportunity to study cultures different from their own. However, they have no opportunities to gain the knowledge and understanding that will prepare them for life in a multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Main school - *pastoral support*

49. Moulton is a caring school. The good relationships between staff and pupils make a significant contribution towards the quality of support that pupils receive. The educational and personal support and guidance that pupils receive are good. Care is given to the transition of pupils from primary school to secondary school. Pupils are placed in houses and these small communities provide a secure base for pupils and help them to integrate into the larger school community with ease. The good relationship that tutors establish with their group contributes to their ability to monitor both the personal development and academic progress of pupils through the mentoring scheme and their daily contact. Careers education raises pupils' awareness of the need to consider the importance of making appropriate choices when deciding on which subjects to study at GCSE, further education or the world of work. The bridging course in Year 11 ensures that pupils are well prepared for the move into the sixth form.
50. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. The computerised attendance recording system provides accurate data and helps the school effectively to monitor attendance. Rewards are given for high levels of attendance as well as improved attendance. There are a small number of pupils whose attendance is less than satisfactory and the school deploys a range of strategies to re-integrate these pupils into mainstream education.
51. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good overall. Pupils know and understand the standard of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. A range of strategies, such as daily reports and pastoral support plans, are in place to support pupils. The rewards system is used to reinforce positive behaviour and attitudes, but there is a lack of consistency across the school in the rewarding of pupils. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are monitored by tutors. However, the current system of recording these incidents makes it difficult for heads of house and senior management to have an overview of the frequency of these. A minority of

pupils' behaviour is a cause for concern. Strategies for the early identification of these pupils, and the support systems to ensure they are able to remain in mainstream education, are not always applied consistently between the houses.

52. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The ethos of the school promotes mutual respect for all. This is borne out by pupils, who felt that if incidents occurred the procedures ensured they were effectively dealt with. Incidents are recorded and overseen by senior management.
53. The procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The arrangements for child protection are generally satisfactory in that the nominated person has received training and all the appropriate procedures are in place. However, staff have not received any training that raises their awareness of child protection issues. A system has recently been set up to identify children in public care. Health and safety procedures are of a high standard and ensure the safety and protection of pupils.

Sixth form - Advice, support and guidance

54. Sixth form students receive good educational and personal support and guidance. Tutors know students well. Students say they feel well supported and are comfortable discussing both personal and academic matters with most tutors or academic staff. However, they said that there is a variation in the level of support given amongst the staff. Termly progress reports form the basis for 1:1 mentoring sessions with tutorial staff to ensure that students are achieving at the appropriate level and making progress towards their target grades. The enrichment programme is very good and makes a significant contribution towards students' preparation for life after school. Links with higher education successfully raise students' aspirations and also prepare them for life as undergraduates.
55. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. They are unsatisfactory in Year 13 where the overall level of attendance is 86.05 per cent. Students are required to register daily with their form tutor. Monitoring of attendance, however, is not sufficiently rigorous. Good links with other schools providing courses enable staff to know if students are not attending. Students interviewed in Year 13 felt that their time for private study could be better used if they were at home where all of their books and notes are. Currently, students have three periods of supervised private study per week in the library.

Educational inclusion and racial equality

56. There is a lack of cohesion in the co-ordination of educational inclusion and, overall, this aspect of the school's work is unsatisfactory. The school does not have a racial equality policy in place. In some subjects, boys considerably underachieve when compared to girls. Pupils with special educational needs do not have precise individual targets. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest examination grades is below average. These weaknesses all have an adverse impact on pupils' achievement.
57. Although the school has appointed an inclusion co-ordinator, his work is mostly focused on supporting a group of pupils with special educational needs, who are undertaking the ASDAN awards course. His brief does not sufficiently extend to a wider range of pupils, who may not be fully included in school life or achieving the same level of

success as other pupils. At present, arrangements to meet the needs of these groups of pupils tends to be 'ad hoc' and not adequately co-ordinated. The school has a number of programmes in place to assess pupils' attainment, but carries out only limited diagnosis for specific learning needs of its pupils. This term, the school has identified 24 pupils in Year 8 for a mentoring programme because their underachievement is causing concern. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this provision. Pupils with English as an additional language have not been specifically identified and no member of staff has the responsibility for monitoring their progress and ensuring that the appropriate support is in place.

58. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is generally good. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and an enrichment programme developed in conjunction with other Northamptonshire schools. Activities, such as a Book Writing Day for Year 8 pupils, extend pupils' skills. A Paying for Health Day organised for Year 9 pupils gave them the opportunity to consider the moral choices that have to be made when they consider the funding of health care. In some Advanced Level and GCSE subjects, the most able pupils do not achieve the very highest examination grades or standard of work. The response of the school to this has been to organise a range of events for other year groups, such as attendance at Warwick University's open days for Year 11 pupils. Master classes on Shakespeare and Hardy led by tutors from Merton College, Oxford for Year 12 and 13 raise students' aspirations to enter higher education.

Assessment

Main School

59. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, academic progress and personal development are good. The quality of monitoring pupils' academic progress in departments is more variable, but satisfactory overall. The arrangement for assessment makes a positive contribution to the standards achieved by pupils by providing a detailed picture of the progress they make. The school combines information provided by National Curriculum tests and internal assessments into a picture of pupil performance in all subjects. The school analyses how well pupils are achieving and the progress they are making. This information is then shared with subject departments, pupils and parents in order to help pupils to make wise option choices of GCSE. The practice of setting targets is at an early stage of development, but the school is starting use it effectively. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are aware of the grades and percentages they obtain in tests and what they should achieve in future examinations. The levels of attainment and predicted grades are shared with pupils in subjects. However, in many subjects, pupils are not fully aware of what they have to complete in order to achieve their predicted grade, or how to achieve an even higher grade. The practice across departments is uneven. Predicted grades are revised at the beginning of Year 11 and again after the mock exams. This provides further guidance about where pupils need to concentrate their efforts to achieve higher standards.
60. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning and lesson preparation is satisfactory. In some departments, such as science and history, teachers make particularly good use of performance records. Specific improvement targets for pupils are set and analysis of their progress results in better teaching and learning. Not all departments make full use of the assessment information available to motivate pupils and help them understand how to improve their own performance or develop self-assessment skills and awareness of the target-setting arrangements. There is scope for sharing the best of these approaches more widely across all departments. The school uses information to track individual progress and to maintain details about other

factors that effect standards, such as absence rates, gender differences and those, who may have special educational needs. However, the analysis of assessment information still requires further development.

61. The school has its own systems for identifying pupils with special educational needs. However, these systems are not clear and there is some confusion about procedures where pupils might have specific learning difficulties or require referral to the local education authority or other agencies. There are satisfactory systems in place for recording the progress of pupils with special educational needs. However, where pupils have individual education plans, targets for improvement are not sufficiently specific and it is difficult for teachers to measure progress towards them.

Sixth form

62. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. The use of this information for subject planning and for guiding and supporting students is also good. GCSE examination results predict how much progress students following sixth form courses are likely to make. In Year 13, the predicted A2 grades help the head of sixth form to prepare references, especially for the many students, who apply to universities and colleges. The use of assessment procedures in the sixth form is good in many departments. However, there is an inconsistency in the use of performance data, by departments, to predict final examination results for individual students.
63. Teachers know their students very well, develop good relationships with them and offer good support through the marking and monitoring of their work. Some good examples of self-assessment have been developed, which encourage individual reflection and responsibility. This good practice is not yet shared across all departments.

The views of sixth form students

64. As part of the inspection process⁴, students were asked to complete a questionnaire to express their views about the sixth form and many also spoke to inspectors during lessons and in both formal and informal discussions. Although there are some areas of school life that cause them dissatisfaction, their overall views of the school are very positive. Well over 90 per cent of those, who returned the questionnaire, said they enjoyed the sixth form and would recommend it to other students.
65. Parents indicate that they too are very pleased with many aspects of the sixth form and this shared confidence is reflected in the fact that about 60 per cent of the pupils in Year 11 choose to stay on for Years 12 and 13. Students are pleased with the standard of teaching that helps them to study independently and particularly appreciate the fact that teachers are available to provide help when they need it. Students, however, would like to have more personal support. Students are pleased with the range of courses available and their satisfaction is reflected in the very low drop-out rate during Years 12 and 13.
66. Over half of the students, who completed the questionnaire, feel that they are not well informed about the progress they are making. Inspectors do not entirely agree with this as students receive information about how they are getting on, as well as details of their predicted target grades in all their courses. During their two years in the sixth form, students also have individual interviews with their tutors and the head of sixth form helps out if there are any major problems. This support helps to provide students

⁴ As this inspection took place early in the autumn term, the Year 12 students have limited experience and knowledge of arrangements in place.

with academic advice and this is reflected in their examination success at AS and A-level.

67. Around two-thirds of the students, who completed the questionnaire, feel that they are not provided with enough information about the various options available once they have left school. They would like help and advice to be more readily available and say that it is very difficult for them to find the time they need to conduct their own research. In addition, around one quarter of students feel that they are not treated as responsible young adults and feel that the school does not respond readily to their views.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are positive. Twenty-nine parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection and 21 per cent of parents completed the questionnaire on parent's views.
69. The parents, who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting, felt their child liked coming to school, was expected to work hard, was making good progress and that teaching is good. They would feel comfortable about approaching the school if they had any concerns. The concerns they expressed were about the amount of homework that children received, the information they received about their child's progress and the ability of the school to work closely with its parents.
70. Inspectors agreed with parents' positive comments. The team felt that the setting of homework was satisfactory and generally extended pupils' learning and the development of independent learning skills. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about the progress of their child, is very good. Parents receive a termly progress review and an annual report. Annual reports ensure that parents can see what their child has studied, what they have learned and what they need to do to improve their work further, though there is a variation between subjects. Targets set for pupils are generally subject specific and identify clearly how pupils can improve their standard of work. A range of letters are sent home to parents when concerns arise about such things as attendance or behaviour, as well as letters of congratulation when pupils have achieved well. The fortnightly newsletter keeps parents informed about the daily life of the school and its achievements. Communication with parents of pupils identified as having special educational needs is good.
71. The contribution of parents to children's learning is good. The Parent Teacher Association organises both social and fund-raising events. Information evenings are held for parents at the beginning of Years 10 and 11 on study skills and revision techniques. This helps parents to effectively support their child with the completion of coursework and examination preparation. These evenings are usually well attended. The improving results attained by pupils in external examinations are due in part to the high-quality support of parents. However, there are a minority of parents, who do not ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. This reduces the effectiveness of the school in ensuring that these pupils are able to achieve their potential.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Main school

72. The school has made a good improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity to ensure that this level of improvement will be maintained. Moulton is an effective and improving school that provides the pupils with a good quality of education.

There is a clear focus and determination by governors, the headteacher and senior staff to raise standards and improve the school. Most of the recommendations identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed, with the exception of support for pupils with special educational needs and providing daily collective worship. The school has also made improvements in many other important areas, including: improving the quality of teaching and learning; raising academic standards; increasing attendance rates and developing systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and assessing pupils' and students' progress. The school has also been successful in gaining a number of prestigious awards that include: Science College Status; The Schools Curriculum Award 2000; The Sportsmark Award and Investors in People Award. Consequently, there has been an improvement in the overall quality of education and the academic standards pupils and sixth form students now achieve throughout the school.

73. The school is a pleasant and well-ordered community that creates a positive environment where virtually all pupils work well and achieve some academic success. The mission statement and aims of the school are reflected in the life of the school and the vast majority of pupils are happy to come to school, as reflected in the high attendance rates. The school is committed to equal opportunities for all, but it has not yet adopted a policy on racial equality to promote the importance of racial harmony. Although most pupils are challenged to achieve the standards of which they are capable, the provision for the higher-attaining pupils, those with special educational needs, the few, who speak English as an additional language and the small minority with behavioural difficulties has room to improve further.
74. The headteacher provides positive and thoughtful leadership that has helped to raise standards and ensured the school is popular in the local community. The headteacher is supported well by hard-working senior colleagues. However, some senior staff and subject managers teach a high proportion of lessons and this reduces their capacity to fulfil all their management tasks effectively. Monitoring by the headteacher and senior staff has improved considerably since the last inspection, but further developments are still needed. The senior staff, with support from other agencies, undertake monitoring of work across the school and this keeps them informed about the quality of work in subject areas. Together, the team of senior staff ensure the school operates smoothly on a daily basis. The school provides a positive environment for staff and pupils to work.
75. Several of the subject managers and heads of house are very effective and lead their departments well. However, there is not a scheduled programme in place for senior staff and subject and pastoral leaders to conduct regular and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the departments and then share any effective classroom practice. Consequently, the role of the head of department is not being fully developed and does not always ensure that decisions made for future action are followed through to their completion across all subjects. There is a full review of all departments during the autumn term. However, little systematic monitoring is possible in subjects on an on-going basis with heads of departments and houses being required to report formally on the progress made. There is wide variation of practice and effectiveness between both subject departments and also between the way the pastoral houses are managed. The governors, headteacher and senior managers have not delegated sufficient responsibility to heads of department and pastoral houses to monitor the work in their areas and accept accountability for the standards achieved. Consequently, there is room to develop the school further as a self-evaluating institution. The leadership and management of the literacy and numeracy strategies are sound.

76. The school's development plan identifies suitable priorities for raising attainment and improving the quality of education. There have been substantial improvements made in development planning since the last inspection. Currently, the school's financial planning and the development planning process are not completely integrated. The school has recognised this and is planning to ensure the timing of the two planning cycles occurs at the same time. The development plan is written by the deputy headteacher and senior staff, but governors and other staff are suitably involved in the process. However, the current plan is not sufficiently linked to departmental action plans and issues raised through the performance management appraisal scheme. The development plan provides a clear focus for the governors to enable them to help the school to move forward. It is always an issue for discussion at curriculum committee meetings, but not frequently used in other meetings.
77. The governors meet at least termly and provide good support to the school. They successfully fulfil virtually all of their statutory requirements. Exceptions are they do not provide daily worship, have not adopted a policy on racial equality and do not ensure religious education is taught in the sixth form. The school does not comply fully with the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. Governors have developed a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have ensured good improvements have been achieved. During the last few years, the governing body has developed its role as a 'critical friend' by becoming better informed about what happens in school. However, the governors do not have a plan for their own development. The governors' role in strategic planning and reviewing the school's strengths and areas for development would be strengthened further by setting measurable objectives for more areas of school performance. For example, the school has yet to develop systems for checking the effectiveness of provision for pupils with special educational needs.
78. There are significant weaknesses in the leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and the overall co-ordination is unsatisfactory. Although there is a co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs, there is confusion about responsibilities and the management structure is not clear. For example, there is a wide range of staff involved in the establishment of targets for the individual education plans, with lack of effective oversight of this important area. There is no school system for evaluating the effectiveness of the special needs teaching. The school has not fully implemented elements of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. It does not have a policy based on the new Code of Practice. There are satisfactory administrative procedures in place, for example, for the annual reviews for pupils with statements of special educational needs. The governing body are not sufficiently involved to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Funding for special educational needs is prudently and well used. Relevant training has been provided for the support assistants, who work with pupils, who have special educational needs.
79. The school's bursar is the senior administrative officer and is actively involved in the administration of the finances. She has a detailed knowledge of current budget figures and projected costs. The management and control of financial matters is good. The school makes some use of the local education authority to provide budget monitoring and maintaining the accounts. Principles of 'best value' are applied to major purchases, but there is room to develop this aspect of financial management by measuring if value-for-money is achieved. The school uses its specific grants for the purpose they were intended. For example, the grant for special educational needs is used correctly and provision for these pupils is satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology in aspects of its work. For example, it has started to use computer software to record and analyse assessment information and record

pupils' attendance. During each of the last four years, the school has suffered a financial deficit. This is because the intake number of pupils has increased, causing additional staffing and resource costs. The higher level of funding for the increased numbers is not delegated to the school until the following financial year and, consequently, the school has to meet the additional costs without the benefit of any increased income. This partly accounts for the low number of computers in school.

Sixth form

80. Past and present leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and have been major contributors to the high standards achieved each year. The leadership of the sixth form is successful in providing a good range of academic courses for students. The number of pupils has significantly increased over the last few years, but, commendably, examination results have remained above average. The provision for vocational courses is limited and so does not fully meet the needs of all pupils at the end of Year 11. However, students have the opportunity to take courses not provided at the school in other local institutions. There has been a strong emphasis on raising standards through very good teaching and the monitoring of students' progress. However, equal emphasis has been placed on students' personal development. The newly appointed sixth form co-coordinator has a clear vision of the educational direction the sixth form should now take to raise standards further. The daily administration, the recruitment of students, promotion of standards and reviewing of overall progress is good. Careers advice is available and the school uses the services of the local authority and members of the community to support students in their future choices.
81. About 60 per cent of Year 11 pupils continue their studies into the sixth form and a few of the present group are from other schools. As a result of its size, the sixth form has a positive impact on the overall ethos of the school. There are some opportunities for students to exercise responsibility around the school. Pressures on accommodation and resources are increasing as the sixth form grows in popularity. The governors have not devised a long-term strategic plan for post-16 provision to demonstrate how the school will adapt to the potential increasing number of students. Although some subjects recruit low numbers on to the courses that are not financially viable, overall, the sixth form is cost effective. The governing body mostly fulfils its responsibilities towards the sixth form, but have not ensured that religious education is taught.

Staffing

82. The school is well staffed with a good range of experience amongst teachers, all of whom are qualified in their teaching subject or one closely allied to it. However, there are currently some staffing difficulties in religious education.
83. Teachers work hard, both in timetabled time and in the time they give to extra-curricular activities. A well-structured induction programme very well supports newly qualified teachers and newly appointed teachers. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are effectively managed and systematically monitored. The quality of training received is rigorously evaluated and is appropriate. In February 2001, the school gained endorsement from the Investors in People⁵ organisation.
84. There is a good range of staff to support pupils with special educational needs. There has been a significant increase in learning support assistants since the previous

⁵ This is a national organisation that endorses institutions that are seeking to ensure its employees are receiving high-quality career development.

inspection. These support assistants have had general training for supporting pupils with special educational needs, but not in the implementation of the new Code of Practice. The learning support assistants are effective in enabling pupils with special needs to make good progress. However, where there is no in-class support, this sometimes has an adverse effect on the progress made by all pupils in class. There are link teachers in each subject area, who have had training in the implementation of the new Code of Practice. Other subject staff have not had sufficient training in adapting the targets from pupils' individual education plans to make them relevant to their own areas. The inclusion co-ordinator has close involvement with pupils with special needs, although his place in the management structure is unclear.

85. The non-teaching staff serve the school very well. They make an important contribution to the ethos of the school and its smooth running. The administrative staff are most efficient and helpful and make a very welcoming first impression on visitors and parents. Teaching is monitored in accordance with performance management requirements. Objectives are set and are reviewed annually.

Resources

86. Resources for learning overall are unsatisfactory due to the poor provision of computers throughout the school. The facilities for drama are excellent and those for physical education and music are very good. There are insufficient textbooks for mathematics and biology. Facilities for using information and communication technology (ICT) are poor and, at the time of the inspection, not sufficiently available in a significant number of subjects. The school is fully aware of the problems of both the lack of equipment and inadequate access to computers and has plans to improve its ICT facilities. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are good.
87. The two libraries are efficiently managed by a full time librarian with the support of an assistant and a team of pupil helpers. Both are attractive areas in which to work and are well used by pupils. At the time of the inspection, the sixth form library has no computers to support students' learning. Both libraries are limited, in particular, in their stocks of up-to-date non-fiction books to support independent study in a significant number of subject areas. Most areas of the school are attractively enhanced with displays of pupils' work and information that celebrates the success of the school.

Accommodation

88. The overall quality of the environment, buildings and specialist accommodation is good, with the exception of science where there are too few laboratories. This high standard has been maintained since the previous inspection. Accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is generally good, but some areas of the school have inadequate access for pupils with physical disabilities.
89. Major improvements have been made in teaching accommodation for English and drama. Accommodation is generally in a good state of repair and maintenance. There is a comprehensive programme of decoration and major repairs based on an annual state of buildings report produced by the site supervisor and his team. The school provides a very pleasant, safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

Value for money

90. Taking into account:
- the progress made by pupils and the high standards achieved throughout the school and sixth form;

- the quality of leadership, which ensures good improvement since the previous inspection;
- the overall good quality of teaching and learning;
- the positive behaviour and attitudes of the pupils;
- the high levels of attendance;

the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to further improve the standards of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

Main school

1 Raise the attainment of boys, as indicated in the subject reports, and a small proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11** by:

- using a variety of strategies to support boys' learning;
- increasing the range of teaching strategies so pupils take more responsibility for their own learning;
- making better use of the assessment information available to motivate pupils and help them understand how to improve their own performance;
- ensuring that the good practices in the use of assessment and independent learning, that exists in some departments, is shared and adopted in all subjects;
- developing pupils' self-assessment skills and awareness of target-setting arrangements;
- involving all pastoral staffing in the monitoring of pupils' performance;
- providing pupils with a range of vocational and work-related courses in Years 10 and 11.

(paragraphs: 2, 6, 26, 34, 60-62, 93-94, 104, 108, 120, 128, 135, 157)

2 Improve the behaviour and attitudes of a small number of pupils, who lose motivation as they move through school** by:

- early identification of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties;
- providing further support and training for staff to strengthen their skills in management of pupils;
- providing a greater variety of strategies to support and develop pupils' attitudes and behaviour;
- ensuring consistent application of rewards for positive behaviour and attitudes across the school.

(paragraphs: 17, 26, 52)

3 Enhance the effectiveness of management procedures throughout the school by:

- strengthening the rigour and regularity of review and monitoring by governors, senior staff, subject leaders and heads of house;
- devising a programme of systematic departmental reviews;
- providing training for staff with responsibility for review and monitoring;
- providing time for senior staff and subject managers to regularly monitor and support teaching, learning and curriculum development;
- insisting that all the agreed school policies are implemented consistently.

(paragraph 76)

4 Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs by:

- improving the overall co-ordination and management of special educational needs;
- fully implementing the 2002 Code of Practice for special educational need;
- improving the quality of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs;
- devising a comprehensive range of assessments to identify all aspects of special educational need;
- setting targets and deadlines for the special educational needs department to measure their success and then regularly monitor the effectiveness of the overall provision;

- providing training for all members of the special educational needs department in the implementation of the 2002 Code of Practice;
 - closer involvement of the governing body to evaluate the overall quality of provision.
- (paragraphs: 10, 28, 36, 62, 79)

5 Improve the quality of library educational resources overall and increase the number of computers throughout the school**.

(paragraphs: 32, 40, 87-88)

Sixth form

- 6 Ensure greater consistency in the use of performance data, by departments, to predict more accurately final examination results for individual students**.
- 7 Develop key skills within subject areas, particularly in relation to literacy, numeracy, communications, working with others and information and communication technology**.
- 8 Forward plan in relation to accommodation, resources and examination courses to ensure that the demand for places from pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 can be fully met.
- 9 Teach religious education to ensure the school meets statutory requirements.
- (paragraphs: 43, 55-56, 63-64, 81-82)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Governors may consider including the following less important issues in their action plan:

Improve the co-ordination and support for pupils and students for whom English is an additional language.

(paragraph 58)

** These issues are already identified in the school's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	154
	Sixth form	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	2	36	70	37	6	3	0
Percentage	1	23	46	24	4	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	14	30	5	0	0	0
Percentage	4	27	59	10	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1082	190
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	94	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	117	7	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	11	106
	Girls	89	84	92
	Total	175	95	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (89)	85 (82)	86 (88)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (59)	65 (51)	54 (58)
	National	32 (32)	45 (43)	3 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	111	117
	Girls	97	86	94
	Total	203	197	211
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (92)	86 (69)	92 (85)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (51)	51 (40)	61 (47)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	95	90	185
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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	63	83	92
	Girls	63	85	87
	Total	126	168	179
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	68.1 (62)	90.8 (93)	96.8 (97)
	National	51.2 (49.8)	88.9 (86.6)	96.0 (95.7)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.2 (41.6) 39.0 capped
	National	(39.1) 34.6 capped

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	36	36	72

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	36	36	72
	Average point score per candidate	22.8	26.5	24.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school 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
1066	51	2
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	0
0	0	0
16	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age. It 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)	75.16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	179

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	19.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
	£
Total income	3,366,467
Total expenditure	3,245,526
Expenditure per pupil	2,772
Balance brought forward from previous year	40,505
Balance carried forward to next year	161,446

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.8
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

21%

Number of questionnaires sent out	1270
Number of questionnaires returned	267

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	29	63	4	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	64	8	3	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	60	21	6	2
The teaching is good.	17	69	7	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	13	49	25	4	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	48	9	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	56	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	17	49	19	6	9
The school is well led and managed.	23	54	7	4	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	61	9	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	47	13	3	14

Other issues raised by parents

- There was general concern about the unreliability of the buses and the school's lack of response.

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 provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards overall are above average.
- Careful preparation and methodical teaching to support pupils to succeed in national tests.
- Very good relationships that enable almost all pupils to work hard and to make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of boys and the most able pupils.
- Review procedures to monitor work in the department and share the good practice.
- Strategies to motivate and manage the behaviour of a small minority of poorly-behaved boys.
- Promoting more independent learning, particularly for the highest-attaining pupils.
- Developing the use of information and communication technology.

92. At the end of Year 9, most pupils attained well above national averages in the 2001 and the 2002 tests. Standards have risen faster than the national rate of improvement over recent years. Apart from an unexpected dip in 2002, standards have been high by comparison with other similar schools and close to those in mathematics and science. Pupils make good progress from the time they enter the school to the end of Year 9. However, girls continue to outperform boys at a greater extent than the national trend. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
93. There has been a similar trend of improvement in the standards at GCSE English Language examinations taken at the end of Year 11. This trend was interrupted in 2001 when boys particularly underperformed, although the overall standards were still above the national average. Results in 2002 improved and were well above average, maintaining good achievement for the great majority of pupils. Results in English Literature have remained steadily above the national average. Throughout the school, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is similar to other students, especially when they receive additional support in lessons. The most able pupils do not achieve their full potential and the number gaining the very highest grades is below expectations.
94. With the exception of a very small number of poorly-behaved pupils, pupils across the age range speak and listen very well. They show particular respect for each other and collaborate very effectively in discussion. From early in Year 7, the majority of pupils are prepared to offer extended answers when teachers ask questions. In Year 11, the lowest-attaining pupils show determination to improve when they explore social issues through role-play.
95. Reading is a particular strength, which develops steadily as a result of well-planned teaching. In a Year 8 class, pupils recognised how a writer builds a persuasive argument about vivisection. In Year 9, pupils compared two autobiographies and began to make judgements about quality and about the social context in which they were written. Pupils at different levels of attainment in Year 10 understood and commented on the social messages in *An Inspector Calls*. However, in another Year

10 group, a minority of poorly-behaved pupils had little appreciation of the social comment in *Of Mice and Men*.

96. Writing is well organised. Pupils in Year 7 learn quickly to build well-constructed paragraphs into a convincing argument and as they progress through the school, they develop a range of creative, analytical and practical writing styles. Standards of basic technical accuracy are good, mainly because teachers mark early drafts of writing very carefully and so help pupils to eliminate mistakes. Teachers are very careful to support pupils with learning difficulties so that they make good progress. However, the teaching is often so rigidly organised that there is sometimes not enough opportunity for pupils with particular talents to work independently.
97. Teaching is good overall. The team of teachers has a good range of skills and develops very good relationships with the vast majority of pupils, who are keen to behave well and who enjoy their learning. However, in a small number of lessons, where a minority of pupils are intent on misbehaving, teachers do not have the skills or strategies to reduce the disruption and ensure satisfactory learning. The range of teaching styles has increased since the last inspection. In some lessons, the questioning is excellent. Planning is thorough and the pace of work is generally brisk. However, there is still scope to introduce more ways of ensuring that all pupils are busy and productive throughout every lesson.
98. The curriculum is broad and offers a wide range of activities. The range of writing tasks has been increased to make them appeal to a wider range of pupils, but there is not enough access to computer-based writing to improve this process even further. There is insufficient monitoring to ensure that some of the very good lessons, promoting social or moral development, for instance, are offered to all classes regardless of who teaches them. Leadership and management are good and the team has improved the scheme of work. However, there is scope for further improvement in using classroom display to support learning and adapting the work to suit the different skills and aptitudes of individual pupils. Although there are still areas of teaching English that need further developments, the department has achieved good improvement since the last inspection.

Drama

99. The overall provision for drama is good. Results in GCSE examinations have improved over the last two years and are now above the national average. Teachers have a strong knowledge of the subject and in Years 7 to 9, they structure the lessons very well and manage behaviour effectively. Consequently, pupils rapidly develop serious attitudes to the subject and are willing to learn. They understand the need for self-discipline, collaborate well and respect the independence that they are given. They develop new skills and techniques and a deepening understanding of the way that drama can be used to explore and explain human behaviour as well as social and moral issues.
100. Based on the thorough grounding in Years 7 to 9, pupils, who study the subject in Years 10 and 11, are able to adapt to the additional written work for the GCSE examination course where they record and evaluate the practical sessions. They respond well to these new demands, though initially most pupils find the formal conventions of the requirements of writing quite difficult. The subject is well managed, the working spaces are excellent and resources are very good.

Literacy across the curriculum

101. The school has made an effective start in implementing the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy. A small team of teachers has guided the developments. However, this team did not originally include anyone, who had recently qualified in English and specifically in relation to the central issues of developing literacy across the curriculum. This has now been rectified and an audit of the school's needs led to a programme of support for spelling that began at the start of this term. The team also promoted the use of frameworks to support pupils to write for different purposes, which has been particularly effective in history lessons. However, the project does not benefit from a single co-ordinator effectively drawing together the activities in different subject areas. The school has not ensured the best use of displays to help pupils' learning and with producing resources for developing literacy. The school libraries do not contain enough resources to support effective independent research by pupils, although a research course taught to Year 7 is developing skills very effectively.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- A high proportion of pupils achieve standards that are above the national average.
- Teachers know the pupils and plan work to match their needs.
- The mathematics rooms are of a high quality.

Areas for improvement

- The most able pupils achieving the highest examination grades as not all pupils are challenged sufficiently to achieve their best.
- The attitudes of pupils, especially a few boys, who disrupt their own learning when they should be completing mathematics tasks in lessons.
- The regularity and rigour of the review and monitoring arrangements.
- Many classes have two teachers each week and this restricts the learning of some pupils.
- There are not enough textbooks or computers.

102. In national tests in 2001, Year 9 pupils gained results well above the national average. These results were below the average for similar schools. In recent years, these results have risen in line with the national trend. Results in 2002 were higher than in 2001. Boys' and girls' results have been similar over recent years. Pupils' results for English and science are better than they are for mathematics. Year 9 pupils' work seen during the inspection is also well above the national average. Pupils enter school with standards that are above the national average and their achievement is good in the first three years at the school.

103. GCSE results in mathematics in 2001 were above the national average, but below average for similar schools. Pupils gained better results in English, science and in nearly all their other subjects. Girls' results were much higher than boys'. GCSE results in 2002 were considerably better than in 2001. This continues the rise in GCSE results since the previous inspection. In 2002, boys' and girls' results were very similar. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades is below national expectations and pupils still did not do as well as they did in their other subjects. Their GCSE results show satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11.

104. Year 9 pupils' work seen during the inspection is well above the national average. The highest-attaining pupils in Year 9 are confident with algebra. They can write numbers in standard form. However, they are not as good at explaining their work or at applying

mathematics as they are in other aspects of mathematics. Many cannot explore ideas and this stops them reaching the highest levels found in pupils of this age. Pupils of average attainment can estimate sensibly. They know about angles, but they cannot yet use simultaneous equations. Lower-attaining pupils can measure angles, but not calculate angles, in a triangle. Their numerical skills are higher than is often seen for pupils of this age.

105. Work from pupils in Year 11 seen during the inspection is above the national average. The highest-attaining pupils use statistics to test an idea. They use irrational numbers. When doing investigations they do not give detailed descriptions of what they have done. Very few of these pupils make suggestions why they found what they did. Average attaining pupils can calculate the volume of a compound shape. They can also perform simple statistical tests, but they cannot yet factorise quadratic equations. Lower-attaining pupils use graphs to solve simple equations and have adequate arithmetical skills. Standards of algebra have risen since the previous inspection.
106. Unlike the previous inspection, pupils with special educational needs make progress equal to others. This is because they are taught in smaller groups. Their teacher can spend more time with them. Teachers know the pupils well and they are usually given work to match their needs.
107. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. The best teaching challenges pupils to achieve the highest standards. For example, Year 8 pupils responded very well when asked to divide a square into two. They used two lines starting from the same point and pupils came up with very creative answers. Good teaching moves pupils forward quickly as when Year 7 pupils learnt how to divide fractions. Then, in the same lesson, they extended this to algebraic expressions. Work is marked regularly and this is an improvement on the previous inspection. In many lessons, pupils are not given the opportunity to reach the highest levels and this is why standards are not even higher. In many lessons, pupils talk about things not to do with mathematics or the lesson. Boys do this more than girls. Teachers do not always stop this disruption and, consequently, pupils learn less than they should. Some pupils with behaviour problems do not have sufficient support from teaching assistants and some teachers lack the skills to deal effectively with them. Consequently, when the teacher deals with their unacceptable behaviour, too much time is taken away from other pupils.
108. Some classes have different teachers during the week for mathematics and this slows pupils' learning. Frequently, teachers spend a long time reminding pupils of what they learnt in the last lesson as it was a week ago. Pupils have done different work in their other mathematics lessons and have forgotten because they had not been able to practise the skill. Many pupils have to share textbooks and this slows progress when pupils need to refer to different pages. Although homework is well used, many pupils cannot take books home. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, however, pupils do not use ICT enough in mathematics. Laptop computers have been ordered and teachers already know how and when pupils will use them.
109. The subject is well managed. The head of department has been at the school for just over a year. He has brought teaching plans up-to-date and has planned for new computers. An informative system of recording what pupils can do helps teachers monitor pupils' progress. The head of department monitors the work of his team, but not in a systematic or rigorous way. Most mathematics lessons are taught in modern rooms with plenty of space and these contribute to a good sense of purpose. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Numeracy across the curriculum

110. The school has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy⁶. It has developed a policy to meet this approach and most teachers of mathematics classes in Years 7 and 8 use this consistently in their lessons. Some, who only teach a few mathematics lessons, do not adequately implement the numeracy strategy. Most teachers use it well, however, in some lessons, the introductory session lasts too long. When used well, the 'starter' gets pupils well prepared for the rest of the lesson. A good example is when Year 7 pupils guess an unknown number. Teachers have not yet fully developed the skill of summing up learning in the plenary part of the lesson. The numeracy policy is beginning to raise standards further throughout the school. However, some subjects do not make good use of planning numeracy skills where the principles of the numeracy strategy are not fully understood.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards in science are very high and achievement is good.
- Leadership and management is very good.
- Good systems of assessment mean the pupils have a good understanding of what they know through regular marking, end-of-module tests and self-assessment.
- Teaching is good and a significant factor in improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- A few pupils do not take pride in their work.

111. The attainment of pupils in science when they enter the school is above average. Standards at age 14 are well above average and standards are improving at a faster rate than standards in other schools. In 2001 and 2002, the proportion of pupils, who reached the expected level, was well above the national average and for schools with a similar intake of pupils. Pupils perform better in science than in English and mathematics. The science faculty exceeded its target in 2001 and 2002. Girls and boys achieve equally well in science.

112. The science results that pupils' achieve at age 16 are well above average. Results in GCSE examinations are significantly above the national average. Pupils perform better in science than in almost all other subjects within the school. In 2001, in double-award science, the proportion of pupils awarded higher grades A*-C and the average grade was significantly above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-G was also above the national average. The school enters the same number of pupils for double-award science as other schools nationally. A small number of pupils are entered for the single award science where the proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C was average and the proportion obtaining A*-G was significantly above average. In 2002, the results were slightly lower, but continue to be above average.

113. Pupils' standard of work seen during the inspection confirms the picture given by test results at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examinations. Pupils achieve well in almost all classes and in all aspects of science. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in science. Teachers and classroom assistants provide good support in class. Year 7 pupils are achieving standards above the expected level. Pupils can

⁶ A national approach to raising standards for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

carry out an experiment and deduce from their results that a force meter contains a spring and not an elastic band. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. Year 9 pupils can explain how to measure speed of cars moving down a ramp. The higher- and middle-attaining pupils can work out the quantitative relationship between speed, distance and time.

114. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good. Year 11 pupils are achieving standards that are above the national expectation in all areas of science. The higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of the products of photosynthesis and confidently use symbol equations. They achieve well in challenging work on hydrocarbons and fractional distillation. They can balance symbol equations. The middle-attaining pupils in Year 11 understand atomic structure. They can define isotopes and work out the isotope of chlorine and oxygen. The achievement in scientific enquiry is similar to that in other areas of science. All pupils can complete investigations in a range of contexts. Higher-attaining pupils can evaluate their results whilst other pupils find the skill of evaluation more difficult. Pupils increased their literacy in science by recording their investigations and using key words.
115. Pupils' attitudes to science are good. Pupils enjoy science lessons and behave well. In almost all the lessons, pupils work hard. There are well-established routines and good classroom control. In almost all lessons, there is a co-operative atmosphere and pupils listen to teachers, ask and answer questions and enjoy learning. Pupils of all attainment carry out practical work in a safe manner. A minority of pupils do not behave as well as they should, but this is usually linked to the teachers' lack of pupil management skills.
116. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, which is a significant factor in improving standards. Teaching is good and this results in good learning. Teaching was satisfactory or better in almost all of the lessons and good in more than six out of 10 lessons. The science faculty intends to use the change of school status to a specialist science college further to enhance teaching. The strengths of teaching include the teachers' knowledge and understanding and the commitment to their subject. Teachers plan their lessons effectively and expect pupils to work hard and to behave well. They set and mark homework, which enhances learning started in the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers use their knowledge to explain clearly and they give well-focused concrete examples to ensure that pupils are interested and understand the topic. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher referred to a concrete example to remind pupils of the abstract concept of electricity. In a Year 7 lesson, the teacher made the pupils think, moved at a fast pace, 'pushed' slow starters and supported and praised individuals. As a result, pupils learnt effectively about adaptations. In a Year 8 class, pupils used computers to help their research on elements. The lesson was effectively planned and well organised so that learning was enhanced and not restricted by the limited number of computers. A few lower-attaining pupils lack pride in their work and some of it is untidy and poorly presented. In many lessons, teachers pay good attention to keywords and to the teaching of numeracy.
117. The science curriculum is broad and relevant to pupils' needs. The Year 7 to 9 scheme of work is very detailed and supports teachers in their planning for pupils of different abilities. There are some split classes, which mean that teachers do not always know the pupils as well. Systems for assessment in science are very good. The pupils have a good understanding of what they know through regular marking, end-of-module tests and self-assessment. Teachers correct pupils' work and explain how they can improve, but pupils do not always respond. Each teacher has good records of pupils' progress from the age of 11 and uses this information to plan appropriate work. The science

faculty uses a very good system of target setting. All pupils are aware of their targets and their National Curriculum level or predicted GCSE grade.

118. Leadership and management in science are very good. The previous head of faculty found out what is going on by monitoring teaching, test and examination results. Where necessary he took action and supported colleagues. He has devised a good system of tracking individual progress from pupils aged 11 through to 16 for each teaching group. Further refinements of this system should enable the school to monitor the results of pupils of different abilities in science. The quantity and quality of resources are satisfactory. At present, the provision of computers is limited, but there are firm plans in place to purchase 60 laptops for science. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The laboratories are spacious and well equipped, but there are too few. The laboratories have a high occupancy rate and a number of science classes are taught in classrooms. This adversely affects the continuity in science teaching. The technicians work efficiently and effectively and provide very good support to teachers. Overall, there have been good improvements since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently good and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, attitudes, relationships and achievement.
- There has been much improved achievement and progress throughout the school in recent years.
- Planning caters for a wide range of abilities and cultural backgrounds.

Areas for improvement

- The proportion of pupils, who achieve the higher grades at GCSE.
- The use made of ongoing assessment so it becomes an integral part of lesson and curriculum planning.
- The review and monitoring procedures to measure progress and ensure strategic planning for art.
- The use of information and communication technology within the curriculum.

119. Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils are now achieving in line with national expectations. A minority of pupils are achieving above the standard. GCSE results in 2001 were slightly above the national average. In 2002, although results were slightly below the national average, all pupils, who entered, achieved at least a pass grade. Girls achieve a much higher standard than boys. During the last few years, the number of pupils achieving the higher grades has been below average. There is an overall upward trend since the last inspection and numbers taking GCSE art have increased dramatically over the last two years. Forecasts indicate that this improvement can be sustained and increased.

120. The revised schemes of work with a greater emphasis on teaching skills in Year 7 is now compensating well for the low skills and knowledge of many pupils on entry to the school. As the course develops in Years 8 and 9, the emphasis on drawing continues with activities that build on the pupils' prior learning and the needs of the individual.

121. During Years 7 to 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding of art and design increase, as does their use of a wide range of media and materials, including graded pencils, pastels and paint. Pupils work with increasing skill and imagination. For example, in a

Year 7 project, producing prints from built-up surfaces using pattern texture and line. Pupils now have knowledge of a wide range of artists and designers from different cultures, including European, African and Japanese. Pupils use the quality of line, colour and texture from other artists' works in many of their projects as a stimulus or starting point. One such example is the Year 9 project on portraits, using the works of Modigliani, and how shape and colour are used to show form and expression. During Year 9, pupils bring together ideas and skills learnt, work with increasing confidence and produce outcomes of quality.

122. In Years 10 and 11, the majority of pupils are able to build upon the varied experiences gained in Years 7 to 9, making good progress and achieving well. A minority of pupils still have to develop their basic skills in the first year of the GCSE course that should have been firmly established by the end of Year 9. The majority of pupils adapt well to working in a different way producing GCSE coursework. They can, in the main, sustain themes, develop ideas and give reason for visual decisions made. Pupils discuss and compare different artists work, for example, working in groups in Year 10 producing an analysis of different artists' use of line and colour to produce style. Most pupils take pride in their work and its presentation.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. This is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, attitudes and achievement and has improved since the previous inspection. It is conducted with confidence and is sensitive to the needs of individuals, including those with learning difficulties and from different cultural backgrounds. Teachers have a depth of specialist knowledge and expertise and this enables them to challenge pupils well. There is a strong emphasis on improving the quality of pupils' work. Lessons are carefully thought through, with learning supported by discussion and directed questioning at the beginning and during lessons. Pupils' learning is well supported and enhanced by the good balance between whole-group and individual help at all levels. Pupils respond well, working with pace and creative effort in the friendly supportive atmosphere where they feel valued.
124. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good throughout all year groups. Pupils enjoy their art and design, relationships are good, pupils share materials and older pupils discuss their work with interest and confidence. Pupils are prepared to experiment, they use media with confidence and they show initiative and an ability to organise themselves. Art makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
125. The course in Years 7 to 9 now meets National Curriculum statutory requirements and the school offers the opportunity for all to follow a GCSE course in art and design. Assessment and recording systems are in place and teachers are beginning to use National Curriculum levels to grade the quality of pupils' work. The use of ongoing assessment and the sharing of criteria as an integral part of teaching and learning is not yet secure. As a result, too many pupils in all years are not sure what they need to do to improve or what is being assessed. The use of information and communication technology is poor and needs immediate attention throughout the school, as there is little evidence of its use at present.
126. There is good management of art and design within the faculty of design and technology. Art and design staff are well qualified with a range of expertise covering all aspects of art and design. The head of art and design has a clear view of the subject's direction and its contribution to the whole curriculum. Staff meet regularly as a faculty, but insufficient time is given for art and design. There is insufficient regular review and monitoring to ensure specific development and strategic planning for art. Staff value their subject and have the capacity and enthusiasm to take the subject forward and improve standards further. Accommodation is now good in term of size, but is in need

of some decoration. The environment supports visual investigation. Displays in the department and around the school celebrate achievements at all levels. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Improvement in examination results since the last inspection.
- The quality and use made of assessment information in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for development

- The narrow range of curriculum opportunities in Years 7 to 9.
- The limited teaching and learning methods to promote pupils' progress and independence to learn.
- Opportunities for all pupils to attain at higher levels in the tests and examinations.
- The success of boys' test and examination results.

127. In 2002, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 is likely to be in line with national expectations, with standards being similar to those in 2001. However, there is no evidence of pupils working at higher levels as teaching styles often restrict pupils from working at the highest standard. Teacher assessments for 2002 show a significant difference between the standards of boys' and girls' work with girls achieving a much higher standard. However, there was little evidence of this during the inspection.

128. Standards of work by the end of Year 11 are in line with expectations. In textiles technology and graphic products, standards are above average. The 2001 GCSE results are above the national average and represent a significant improvement since the previous inspection, but they are below the school's average for all subjects. The 2002 results show a further slight improvement, but are still below the school average. Girls attained significantly higher results than boys in 2001. The department has been effective in reducing this difference in 2002, but it is still significant. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to other pupils due to satisfactory support in lessons.

129. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but there is some unsatisfactory teaching of pupils in Years 8 and 9. Teaching is successful where teachers use questions well to probe and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Where lessons are well planned, pupils are enthusiastic about their work. This leads, for example, in a Year 11 textiles technology lesson, to pupils having sufficient resources and freedom to make their own design decisions and in turn, developing good levels of practical skills and understanding. Positive relationships lead to pupils making good progress when teachers work with them as individuals.

130. Where teachers have insufficient understanding of the basic elements of product design, teaching methods do not lead to satisfactory learning. Consequently, pupils are limited in the standards of work produced and the results they can achieve. Pupils' ability to work independently is not well developed and this constrains the quantity and quality of work as invariably they all work at the same pace. In these circumstances, pupils, although compliant, are less enthusiastic about their work.

131. There is a satisfactory curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9. This has recently been improved by extending the length of time that pupils spend in each specialist area in Years 7 and 8. However, there are still weaknesses. Too many topics focus solely on the development of practical skills, with the necessary design skills not being developed concurrently. Therefore, pupils' work and progress is limited, at best, to a narrow range of practical experiences and tasks. Restricting pupils' choice to just two specialist areas in Year 9 does not allow for development of the required range of skills, knowledge and understanding expected at this age. Curriculum planning does not provide for work at the higher levels, which affects the progress of higher-attaining pupils. There are no resources to enable pupils to develop skills using pneumatic systems. In addition, there are few planned opportunities to develop pupils' basic skills of literacy and ensure their personal development to become more independent. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, but does not include vocational courses.
132. The assessment system for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. However, it is not sufficiently developed so that the information gathered is used to help with planning and that pupils know how to build on their prior attainment and achieve higher levels of work. Assessment systems and their use are good for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
133. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good sense of team spirit amongst the staff and the department is well placed for further development. The good levels of experienced technical help impact positively on pupils' attainment. Accommodation is good. Teaching resources are satisfactory, but there are too few books in the department and the library to support pupils' individual learning. The information and communication technology resources are inadequate to give full support to this subject. Although there are still several areas of the subject that require further development, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The progress made by pupils by the end of Year 9 is good, as is the progress made by the small numbers, who choose to follow the GCSE course.
- Well-prepared teachers plan carefully and structure their lessons to meet clearly stated learning objectives.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of boys, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Review and monitoring arrangements do not result in sharing the good teaching practice and identifying the areas that are in need of improvement.
- The lessons in Years 7 to 9 are not stimulating or interesting and this results in a low number of pupils opting for geography in Years 10 and 11.
- Opportunities for pupils to use ICT within their courses continue to be inadequate.

134. Teacher assessments indicate that pupils enter Year 7 with attainment that is close to expectations. The progress made by the end of Year 9 is good overall, but boys are achieving at the national average while girls are well above this level. The gap between the performance of boys and girls is wider than that found nationally. Part of the reason for this is that lessons in Years 7 to 9 are not stimulating or interesting. The progress made by lower-attaining pupils, including those with statements of special educational need, is similar to other groups of pupils.

135. By the end of Year 9, many pupils find other subjects much more interesting and the numbers choosing geography for GCSE have declined sharply over recent years. However, those that do opt for geography make good progress and, by the end of Year 11, the standards achieved at GCSE in 2001 were above average. Results for 2002 reported by the department were even better.
136. Many pupils, particularly girls, in Year 7 make good progress and this continues into Years 8 and 9. Lessons encourage an enquiry method and use key questions to study the connections between man's activities and the world environment. Some use is made of different activities within lessons, but, overall, the content and methods used need further development. There is fieldwork in Year 7, but there is no more until Year 11 and this is a weakness in the overall provision.
137. By the end of Year 9, pupils produce neat maps and diagrams and understand how geographical processes shape the landscape and influence how people live. Well-drilled pupils at all levels of attainment use quite advanced geographical terminology accurately to describe the causes and effects of factors influencing the world we live in. By Year 11, pupils produce well-structured work in which evaluations and summaries are a particular strength. This helps them to achieve the high proportion of A*/A grade results that are a feature of GCSE results. Pupils identified as lower attaining also make good progress, especially with their studies of the local community, and they achieve pass grades.
138. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Teachers usually manage lessons well, so that everything pupils need is immediately available. This improves the work rate in lessons and increases the progress pupils make. Most lessons end with an activity that checks what pupils have learned and understood and links with the homework that is set. All lessons seen involved an element of practical work that helped pupils to understand issues. At times, pupils arrive late from other lessons and when lessons have a delayed start, there is a tendency for the teaching to move on before all pupils have time to absorb details of the task. The department is still developing different styles of teaching. Pupils listen dutifully in lessons, ask questions confidently and accept the advice they are given. Work is marked regularly and consistently. Teachers' comments recognise and encourage the effort pupils make, but do not clearly identify how pupils can improve their geographical skills. Because of this, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not at all clear about what they need to do to get better at geography, although they do understand the mark system that grades both the level of success and the amount of effort. The marking in Years 10 and 11 links to exam criteria and clear advice and gradings help pupils to understand how to increase their level of success.
139. The department has responded to the previous inspection report with satisfactory improvements in most areas, except for the use of ICT. There is little use of computers in the actual teaching of geography, partly because the department does not have computers in classrooms. The co-ordination of teaching is not fully effective and the availability of ICT rooms is too limited. Teachers are unable to use modern interactive technology in their teaching and pupils cannot move to and from computers within lessons. This reduces the amount of advanced computer-aided work undertaken, especially in Years 7 to 9.
140. The main subject rooms are bright, well equipped and display pupils' work. The department has begun to develop pupils' literacy skills and clearly labelled diagrams and pictures use specialist vocabulary. There are also articles from newspapers and magazines that draw attention to important issues. In this way, pupils are encouraged to understand and use special vocabulary to describe and explain events worldwide.

Two other rooms used for teaching geography do not have any subject display and this does not provide a stimulating environment for learning geography.

141. Overall, there has been a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, but the head of department is not taking sufficient steps to make the learning of geography an exciting experience. There are notable exceptions, as with pupils, who made a lively documentary style video about the effect of storms in Calderdale, and pupils speak enthusiastically about such experiences. Leadership and management of geography are satisfactory. In spite of regular departmental meetings, there is insufficient review and monitoring to share the good practice and focus. It is difficult for teachers to work with each other on different teaching methods. Resources, with the exception of the availability of computers, are generally satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good, ensuring pupils make good progress.
- Relationships are very positive, helping to raise pupils' achievement.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- Work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils.
- Increased numbers opting for the subject, reflecting the high quality of teaching and management.

Areas for improvement

- Greater use of school assessment information to track pupils' progress.
- A need for the school to increase the resources for Years 7 and 8.

142. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. The GCSE results in 2002 were outstanding. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, although a minority of boys experience some problems with writing. The most able pupils achieve very well and their learning needs are matched to work of an appropriate standard. Pupils with special educational needs and the few with English as an additional language make good progress. Overall, achievement is very good and standards have risen considerably since the last inspection.
143. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject matter is very good and their listening skills are well developed. They are beginning to acquire real strengths in the handling and interpretation of sources. They have a good understanding of how past societies functioned and pupils across the full ability range are willing to express their views on a wide variety of historical issues. In a Year 9 lesson on domestic service during World War One, pupils could analyse video evidence about an Edwardian household to produce well-balanced accounts on the life style of young female domestic servants. The choice of female employment and the very good quality of the video enabled the teacher to explore the differences in working opportunities between Edwardian and modern times and to make a significant contribution to literacy skills through analysis of the process of drafting and proof reading.
144. By the end of Year 11, pupils can organise and communicate their research findings in a variety of ways and have developed real strengths in the critical analysis and

evaluation of historical sources. In a Year 10 lesson on the merits of American membership of the League of Nations, for example, pupils compared written and visual evidence, then drew relevant conclusions about the difficulties of interpreting it. This enabled them to reach well above average standards for their age and also to understand the effects of a clash of cultural outlooks between Europe and America over the global responsibilities of great powers. The regular use of writing frames and an emphasis on the learning of key words is helping to raise standards for all pupils. They are well versed in the examination skills required for the writing of extended essays. This generates increased self-confidence and is reflected in the large increase in the numbers of pupils opting for the subject.

145. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teaching and learning was good or better in all the lessons observed and very good in over two thirds of them. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, plan meticulously, use lesson time well and set clear learning objectives. This enables pupils to increase the range and depth of their knowledge and understanding. Teachers choose a wide variety of stimulating resources that are carefully linked to regular changes in teaching strategies. In a Year 8 lesson on the merits of Henry V1111's break with Rome, for example, groups of pupils were able to analyse the views of all the parties involved in the divorce dispute because the teacher presented them with informative contemporary sources of evidence. More able pupils could understand how the family connections of Catherine of Aragon with the Emperor Charles V restricted the pope's ability to compromise. Pupils are stimulated to learn by lively teaching approaches that present them with an element of challenge. They are keen to engage in discussion and writing activities that help to extend the range and depth of their key historical skills. Good use is made of video clips and artefacts, thus, enriching students' appreciation of the period, places and personalities they are studying. A key factor contributing to pupils' progress is the care with which teachers match work to the needs of the individual and this ensures that all pupils are fully included in the learning process. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards their work and this improves the quality of their learning. Very positive relationships with teachers contribute to overall pupil achievement and this is a strength of the subject.
146. The contribution of history to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Subject literacy and numeracy strategies are in place and writing frames are used effectively. Study of cultural factors in different societies and consideration of right and wrong make a strong contribution to personal development and citizenship. Good progress has been made in the use of ICT, for example, in the use of the Internet to access Commonwealth war graves data. However, restricted access to computer facilities limits the opportunities for Internet research.
147. Management and leadership are very good and a major strength in the success of the department. The subject leader has a clear view of the priorities for history and is committed to the further improvement of standards. Resources are carefully managed, but further progress in Years 7 and 8 is dependent on the allocation of more resources to the department. A close working relationship with the librarian has enabled the department to extend pupils' learning, but the history section of the library is underresourced. Teachers know their pupils well and progress is closely monitored and evaluated. Insufficient use is made of central school assessment information to track individual pupils effectively. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities enriches the history curriculum. The department has resolved all the issues that arose from the last inspection and has made good improvement since that date.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and manage pupils well.
- Leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The numbers of computers in school to improve opportunities for their use.
- The use made of marking and assessment information.
- Review and monitoring arrangements to share good practice.

148. Standards of work are above those expected of pupils by the end of Year 9. Pupils come into the school with an average range of information and communication technology skills. By the time they reach the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding has improved and, overall, has exceeded national expectation. Standards at the time of the last inspection were average and, therefore, good improvements have been made. There is little difference in the overall performance of boys and girls; both exceed national averages for pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum Level 5 and above.

149. Pupils at the age of 16 years have a skills and knowledge base that matches national expectation. Current Year 11 pupils do not take a nationally recognised qualification, but follow a programme aligned to the national standards for Level 2 Key Skills in information and communication technology. There are no school results for Year 11 with which to make national comparisons. Judgements on the performance of pupils are made on the quality of pupils' work seen and discussion with individual pupils. Year 10 pupils are all working towards a GCSE short course award in information and communication technology and are performing at the expected level.

150. The standard of work seen in Year 7 and 8 lessons is good. Year 7 pupils are at an early stage in their development, but standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils have a sound understanding of the software, some having used it in their previous school. However, many are unfamiliar with accessing files and saving work via networks. They, therefore, require greater teacher support in the initial stages of their work. Most can now log on to the system with minimum fuss. However, the unreliable nature of some of the older equipment does interrupt progress at times. Pupils' knowledge of the software is basic, although a small number have a greater understanding of the features of Word, being quick to follow the instructions given by the teacher. Pupils in Year 8 have made good progress moving towards being confident and competent users. Their knowledge of a computer-aided design package is sufficient to enable them to produce simple two-dimensional and three-dimensional images using specialist software. Pupils in all years are able to access the Internet easily. By Year 9, pupils have made use of desktop publishing, spreadsheets, databases, word processing and the Internet. Work retained in hard copy, whilst varied in quality, shows examples of most applications. The good learning that takes place in ICT lessons is rarely built on in other subjects mainly due to a lack of access to computers. Pupils do not expect to use ICT in most subjects.

151. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress. Those in Year 11 are generally less well motivated as they are aware that national certification is not linked to the

course. The department recognises this and has instituted changes in the current Year 10 curriculum. All pupils have sound knowledge and understanding of ICT and are capable of using the range of generic software. Pupils are beginning to become discerning users of ICT. All pupils sign up to the 'acceptable use policy' and recognise the seriousness of misuse.

152. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is almost all satisfactory and often good or very good. Teachers plan well and explain lesson expectations to pupils with a clarity that enables pupils to learn effectively. They have very good subject knowledge and manage pupils well. Where teaching is less satisfactory, the level of challenge is inappropriate, insufficient emphasis is given to the range of ability in the groups and pace is slow. Teachers are aware of pupils with special educational needs and support them through additional guidance. Pupils with statements receive no additional learning support in the subject. This affects not only the progress made by the pupil with special needs, but the other pupils in the group, who have less access to the teacher. The effect of low levels of learning support is lessened as a result of good pupil attitudes and their positive approach to teachers and peers.
153. The departmental leadership and management are good. Well-qualified staff ably support the enthusiastic and committed head of department. The specialists in the department teach the majority of classes. A small number of non-specialists take some classes in Years 7 to 9. The quality of technician support is good, but only just sufficient to meet current demands. Equipment levels are very poor with a current ratio of computers to pupils of 16:1, nearly three times above the national average of 6:1. This has a detrimental effect on overall achievement as pupils have to share equipment. This greatly reduces the amount of first-hand practical experience. The assessment systems in place are good, but teachers' marking and consistency of use of systems are less so. Work presented by pupils rarely contains any diagnostic comment to indicate to pupils how they can improve.
154. At the time of the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 were average, and now they are above average, indicating an improvement in pupils' attainment. By the end of Year 11 standards were satisfactory and they remain so. Monitoring of pupils' performance has improved, but requires further development of individual target setting. Overall, progress continues to be affected by very poor equipment levels, both in the discrete subject and across the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve high grades at GCSE in both French and German.
- There is consistently good teaching from a caring team.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute significantly to their progress.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

- Teachers share a strong commitment to raise standards for all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- In Years 7 to 9, assessment lacks clarity and is not used well to promote progress.
- The use of ICT is not well integrated into learning in Years 7 to 9 and lacks impact.

155. By the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments in 2001 show attainment in French to be above national expectations. There is a rising trend in the number of pupils reaching higher levels. Girls do better than boys, but by less than the national difference. Levels have improved since the previous inspection.

156. In Year 11, results at A*-C at GCSE in French for 2001 were high, compared to the national average, for both boys and girls. There was an improvement in 2002. Though there is no discernible trend in results, they have remained at high levels over three years. Girls do better than boys by more than the national difference in 2001. In 2002, boys' results improved significantly, so that there is now no significant difference. In German, small groups of high attainers achieve very high standards. In both 2001 and 2002, every pupil entered gained a grade at A*-C. Boys and girls do equally well. In both subjects, numbers gaining the higher grades, A* and A, were consistent with the national average in 2001 and increased a little in 2002, indicating at least satisfactory achievement by gifted pupils. More girls than boys achieve these grades. Every pupil entered earned a grade across the full range, A* to G, in both years, indicating at least satisfactory, and sometimes good, achievement by lower attainers, including those with special needs. A small number of these gained a certificate of achievement in French. Pupils do better in modern languages than in most other subjects. This represents considerable improvement from the previous inspection when standards in French in Years 10 and 11 were included in a key issue.

157. In lessons and work seen, attainment by Year 9 is above the national expectation, overall. Higher attainers acquire and apply knowledge in all skill areas. They understand what they read and hear in increasingly challenging passages of French. They write accurately and by Year 9 produce extended written accounts of past holidays, some of which would gain high marks at GCSE. They exchange and present information orally, with good pronunciation and without hesitation. They make a positive start in Year 9 in their second language, German. Overall, pupils in top sets achieve well. Average and lower attainers achieve as well as expected. Average attainers recall knowledge quite well, so that their comprehension skills are sound. They sometimes need help or repetition. Their writing is mostly descriptive, but they are beginning to practise and apply different tenses, both orally and in writing. Lower attainers, including those with special needs, respond to good teaching to achieve satisfactory standards. Where they receive support, or work is adapted for them, they make good progress. They need consistent support in speaking and writing, but understand important points in listening and reading work. No significant difference was seen in standards achieved by boys and girls.

158. By Year 11, inspection evidence shows standards to be well above average, representing very good achievement over Years 10 and 11 for all pupils. Higher-attaining pupils enrich their spoken and written work in both languages with sophisticated structures. They give accounts of holidays, work experience and road accidents, review films and describe their home routine using a range of tenses. Average attainers cover similar topics in French. They make errors more frequently, sometimes basic, but convey messages without ambiguity. Higher and average attainers all have sufficiently extensive vocabulary to achieve high levels in comprehension work. Lower attainers, mostly working towards foundation tier at

GCSE, convey information at appropriate levels and understand key details in short messages. They use dictionaries poorly, leading to difficulties in understanding some of their written work.

159. Pupils express and display positive attitudes to learning languages. Their behaviour is always good, so that they listen well and benefit from the tasks set for them. Their willingness to collaborate in pairs or groups and to make individual oral presentations contributes significantly to their personal and social development. In general, they take pride in the appearance of their work and there is little unfinished work.
160. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, with very good features in most lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This represents considerable improvement from the previous inspection. All teachers speak with good accent and use French or German well to drive up standards in listening and pronunciation. In a minority of lessons, English is sometimes used unnecessarily, reducing the impact of subject expertise. Very good knowledge of examination requirements enables teachers to improve grades through the quality of their advice. The contribution to basic skills is satisfactory overall, though good in improving literacy skills, especially in the awareness of how language works. Teachers make good use of key words and phrases displayed in all classrooms. ICT skills are practised rather than taught. Planning for lessons is effective and based on high expectations of behaviour, effort and achievement. Activities challenge pupils to think and sometimes to use newly-acquired knowledge to speak or write creatively. In Year 10, pupils produced and performed their own role-plays in German, pretending to be customer and waiter at a fast food stall. Teachers use games well to ensure that pupils learn as they have fun. Pupils in Year 7 worked energetically, out of their seats, to accompany choral repetitions in French with exaggerated mimes. Such tasks engage pupils well. They improve their oral confidence and they learn well. However, in a few lessons, some or all pupils do not use the foreign language at all and this limits their progress.
161. Teaching methods are effective and suitably varied. Teachers provide different types of oral and written tasks and try to give some responsibility to pupils to produce independent work through their use of different groupings within lessons. They manage pupils easily through the pace and content of work. Very good relationships support learning well. In their efforts to encourage all pupils to match work to needs and to include all through their targeting of questions, teachers show a caring and inclusive approach. Learning support assistants make a good contribution. Teachers use time and available resources well to improve learning. Readers, video and computers are used to vary the content of lessons. Access to computers is difficult, causing problems in ensuring pupils receive their ICT entitlement. This is partially compensated by the provision of an interactive whiteboard, though its use is not yet fully exploited. Most marked work includes comments, which are helpful for improving future work, though the addition of National Curriculum levels, whilst commendable, is not applied sufficiently accurately to provide pupils with correct information. Homework is set regularly and is effective in complementing classwork and sometimes in offering opportunities for higher attainers within groups to extend themselves.
162. Leadership and management are very good and foster very good teamwork from a stable team of committed and hard-working teachers. Issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. There is a constant, thoughtful focus on raising attainment further for pupils of all abilities. As at the previous inspection, the provision of supporting documentation is weak, but this is secondary to good practice, based on shared understanding of policies. Systems for monitoring teaching and learning are satisfactory and schemes of work and planning are sound. Assessment procedures are good in Years 10 and 11, but ineffective in Years 7 to 9 because of

confusion about new level descriptors. Good accommodation, enhanced by very good display of helpful language and pupils' work, supports learning well. Apart from computers, resources are good, with foreign-language assistants in both subjects helping to improve pronunciation. Significant improvements in attainment and the quality of teaching indicate very good improvement since the previous inspection.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching ensures improved standards by the end of Year 9.
- Well above average GCSE results.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and enthusiasm for music.
- An extensive range of extra instrumental lessons and extra musical activities.

Areas for improvement

- Full time staff to meet fully the needs of the department.
- Greater access to music technology.

163. Music is a thriving and popular subject in the school. Since the previous inspection, considerable improvements have been made in the overall provision for music. These have resulted in improved standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 and the continuance of high standards at GCSE. This is substantially due to very good teaching, very positive attitudes by pupils and enthusiasm for the extensive range of extra musical activities available. A strong tradition of music making is being maintained. It enriches the life of the community.

164. Standards by the end of Year 9 are above the national expectations. Pupils achieve well throughout their first three years at the school. Girls do better than boys at this stage, similar to the national pattern. The interest shown by boys, however, is as enthusiastic as that shown by girls. From the start of Year 7, pupils begin to understand how to communicate effectively through the language of music. They gain a good technical knowledge of its elements and notation and put these to good use in their own playing and improvising. They play a variety of instruments individually and in ensembles and use their voices confidently to support their instrumental activities. They share very good relationships with each other and work collaboratively. Groups in Year 9 were observed practising a piece in Blues style from music specially prepared for them by their teacher. The various tasks enabled all to work to their own level of musical skill and achieve satisfying musical results.

165. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average with a greater proportion of pupils gaining high GCSE grades than is found nationally. As many boys as girls are involved and there is no significant difference in the standards achieved. In 2002, 19 of the 20 pupils entered achieved A*-C grades. A significant number show a good individual sense of style and imagination in their composing. Some compositions are confidently improvised whilst others have well-written scores that show a sound knowledge of notation. A few make good use of computers to add a further degree of sophistication to their work. Pupils perform commensurately with their individual instrumental or vocal skills and take a pride in performing well. Their skills range from a fairly elementary level to the higher grades of external examinations. Listening skills are well developed by this stage. In one Year 10 lesson, pupils were heard enjoying a good level of technical discourse with their teacher while listening to and studying the score of an aria from Handel's *Messiah*.

166. Standards achieved by the significant numbers of pupils, who perform in bands, choirs, instrumental groups, concerts and musicals each year, are good. Particularly high standards were heard in the string orchestra where Paul McCartney's *Liverpool Suite* was being rehearsed. Over 100 pupils have extra instrumental lessons each week, which are provided by a team of seven visiting specialist teachers.
167. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers are both enthusiastic and musically experienced and ensure that pupils learn to communicate musically with confidence. Lessons are practical and meticulously well organised. Pupils understand what is expected of them. They are helped, in particular, by good methods of informal assessment and are frequently shown how to evaluate their work. Discipline is very good and self-discipline is encouraged. Students are shown how and what to practice. They are rigorously rehearsed collectively before embarking on their own practice. Musical tasks are suitably graded and adapted to match individual needs. There are good routines for the use of instruments that are respected by pupils. Most pupils enjoy the creative effort they make in learning to compose and perform music. Full use is made of the very good facilities available. At the time of the inspection, some good use was being made of computers to enhance teaching and learning and the department is now keen to extend this so that greater numbers of pupils can use them at the same time.
168. The management problems highlighted in the previous inspection have been fully resolved and the subject is now efficiently managed. The department is aware of the need to maximise the use of time and staff to cover the needs of this busy and thriving department even more effectively. The usefulness, or otherwise, of part-time staff is an area to be considered. Accommodation for music is very good with two large well-equipped teaching rooms that provide plenty of performing space and five practice rooms. Resources are very good and will be better still when more computer facilities are made accessible.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching ensures that pupils have a solid grasp of skills and strategies.
- A well-led and managed department.
- Very good quality of accommodation has a positive effect on the pupils' enjoyment of the subject and the standards they achieve.
- Good provision for extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the time allocated to the GCSE course.
- Ensure that all pupils are engaged in the planning and evaluation of their work.

169. On entry to the school, pupils bring with them a range of physical education skills, many of which are below that expected. They quickly settle into their new school, make good progress and, by the time they are 14 years old, the majority of pupils are attaining levels that are in line with national expectations, with a minority doing even better. This judgement is similar to the teacher assessments. Pupils perform well in a wide range of physical education activities. They demonstrate good ball skills in soccer, netball and basketball and are aware of simple attack and defence strategies. In gymnastics, body management skills are developing and most pupils perform a range of balances and movements using small apparatus with an increasingly competent ability to link them together into good-quality sequences. Pupils understand the necessity of warm-up exercises and have a good understanding of the safety aspects associated with activities and apply them appropriately. Some pupils are able to evaluate their own and others' performance and to make perceptive comments on how improvements can be made, but others are given too little opportunity to develop this aspect.
170. In September 2001, the department introduced the opportunity for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to take the GCSE examination in the subject. In spite of the limited time allocated for the course, inspection evidence shows that good progress is being made and attainment is in line with the national average. Written work is mostly well presented with some pupils using their ICT skills to word process their work. In the statutory lessons, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining at a level above that expected nationally. Good standards of work are demonstrated in a variety of sports. Pupils are able to show increasingly refined techniques and to undertake coaching and officiating skills. They use the fitness room sensibly and some pupils are able to create their own fitness programmes.
171. Individual pupils and teams achieve high standards in county and national competitions. During the Year 2001-2, 30 pupils represented Northamptonshire in 13 different sports and a few have gone on to gain international honours. Pupils with special needs are well integrated, are given much support by both teachers and fellow pupils and reach levels of attainment that are commendable for them. Teaching is sensitive and there is no evidence of pupils with special educational needs being disadvantaged by the curriculum that is on offer. Talented pupils are encouraged to extend their skills both in school and with outside clubs.
172. The curriculum, which is meeting statutory requirements, allows pupils to take part in a wide variety of activities. While the time allocation for the subject is generally good, it is of much concern that the time allocated for pupils studying for the GCSE is barely adequate for them to meet the demands of the examination syllabus. The procedure for planning and recording pupils' attainment has been improved. Comprehensive records of pupils' attainment are now kept and are related to the National Curriculum levels of attainment. All pupils know what level they are at and what they need to do to improve.
173. Many staff, including non-specialists, give freely of their time to provide a very wide range of extra-curricular games and lunchtime and after-school clubs. There is a particularly high participation rate in these activities. Pupils are able to further their interest through trips such as skiing to Spain, water sports in France and outdoor pursuits at the authority's Longtown outdoor pursuits centre in South Wales.
174. The good teaching standard reported at the last inspection has been maintained. All lessons observed were judged to be good or very good. Teachers have a depth of

knowledge that ensures that pupils have a solid grasp of skills and strategies. The management of pupils, through the use of established routines and the high expectations of the teachers, is strength of the department. Pupils respond very positively to the enthusiasm and energy of their teachers. Pupils work hard, are co-operative and are well behaved. Their enjoyment of the subject is very evident.

175. This is a well-led and well-managed department. Good-quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and helps the delivery of the subject. The excellent accommodation is well used and has a positive effect on the pupils' enjoyment of the subject and their attainment levels. The staff, who teach physical education, work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to their pupils. In July 1999, the school gained the Sportsmark award. This is a nationally recognised award for high-quality provision in physical education. Since the last inspection, the department has continued to provide a high-quality physical education programme. An excellent astro-turf playing surface has been laid, which has done much to improve the quality of the outdoor accommodation. Pupils now have the opportunity to take a GCSE in the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching has a significant impact on pupils' achievement.
- Very good contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- High standards are achieved in Years 10 and 11.
- Good departmental leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The use of attainment levels and setting detailed targets so that progress can be identified and shared with pupils to help them improve.
- The systematic use of data on assessment to guide curriculum planning.
- The monitoring of pupils' work, teaching and learning are areas for development.

176. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above expectations for 14 year olds in relation to the Northampton locally agreed syllabus. At the end of Year 11, standards are well above expectations in the GCSE short course. In 2002, results were well above expectations.

177. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the expected levels of the local syllabus. There are some good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. In Year 7, through a well-directed reflective lesson, pupils explored their ideas about God as creator. The use of poetry, music and verse enabled pupils to express their views and feelings about the Christian view of God in today's world. In Year 8, pupils were provided with an insight into the Muslim cleansing ceremony of Wudu. Through a well-directed discussion, pupils made clear connections between Christian and Islamic views of water as a symbol of life. In Year 9, pupils develop a good understanding of the early life of the Buddha and its relationship with parental expectations and attitudes. The teacher's variety of approaches enabled pupils to form their own views, whilst respecting the different attitudes of others. Pupils with special

educational needs make good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work were useful aids to improve speaking and listening skills. Overall, pupils' progress is good.

178. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above expectations. In Year 10, pupil achievement is good and their attainment is above national expectations. They show a clear understanding of moral issues within a religious context. As a result of a good question and answer session by the teacher, pupils were able to understand that lives can be changed by encounters with charismatic characters. They are good at linking Christian principles with life experiences. In Year 11, attainment is well above national expectations in the GCSE short course. As a result of a good illustration by the teacher, pupils were able to express their views and feelings about prejudice and discrimination, as related to racism in society. Their ability to analyse material in order to form judgments is well developed. Overall, learning is good and pupils achieve very high standards.
179. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different gender or ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and those, who are gifted or talented, make satisfactory progress.
180. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They behave well, are motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is good and teachers support individuals, both academically and personally. Pupils' good behaviour makes a significant contribution to their achievement and progress.
181. Teaching is good in all year groups with some very good features. It has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Planning is good and lesson aims are shared with pupils in all cases. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles, such as video, discussion, question and answer and worksheets, which match the needs of individual pupils. This enables pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion and assists them to maintain their interest and develop an understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, contributing to a good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, and these are effective in contributing to pupil achievement.
182. Assessment of pupils' work is in need of further development. The current procedures do provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Marking of pupils' work is generally consistent, but the grading system requires further development. The department does not use levels of attainment, nor does it set targets for pupils. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised by the department as an area for development.
183. Departmental management is good. The head of department approaches the task with great enthusiasm and deep commitment to the pupils. There is excellent support from other staff. The departmental development plan addresses current issues and forms a good basis for future action. The monitoring of pupils' work and of teaching are areas for development. Pupils are provided with a good diet of religious education. The quality of classroom display is high and celebrates pupils' achievements.

184. Since the time of the previous inspection, standards, the quality of teaching and the management of pupils have all improved. There has been good improvement in the contribution religious education now makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Overall, the improvements since the last inspection have had a good impact on standards, pupils' achievement and progress.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001⁷.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English Literature	3	100		0		27	
Mathematics	3	66		33		23	
Biology	4	100		0		28	
Physics	3	100		0		33	
Chemistry	2	100		0		30	
Business studies	8	100		28		40	
Art	5	100		20		30	
Media studies	2	100		0		36	
Photography	1	100		0		30	
History	1	100		0		30	
French	3	100		66		47	
Drama	5	40		0		10	
Geography	2	100		50		40	
Psychology	7	86		0		19	
Sociology	3	100		0		27	
General studies	10	80		10		25	
Computing	8	100		13		35	

GCE A level and AVCE courses

⁷ At the time of publishing this report the national comparative figures were not available

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	9	100		11		62	
Mathematics	5	60		60		84	
Biology	9	89		44		82	
Physics	5	100		40		84	
Chemistry	5	100		40		78	
Business studies	22	100		41		83	
Art	8	100		0		58	
Music	2	100		50		80	
Media studies	4	100		0		70	
Film studies	1	100		0		80	
History	24	100		29		79	
Drama	3	100		33		73	
French	1	100		0		80	
Geography	6	100		50		90	
Design	7	100		43		80	
Psychology	16	100		19		73	
Sociology	12	100		25		80	
Business AVCE (Double Award)	5			40		136	
General studies	39	82		13		50	
Computing	31	100		7		59	

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Education		5		60	n/a		n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection focus was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. The work in physics was also sampled.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching ensures students achieve well.
- The course is well structured to meet the needs of individual students.
- Students have a good range of resources to support their learning.

Areas for improvement

- More information should be given to students when their work is marked so they understand how to improve their own standards.
- The number of students taking the course, especially girls.

185. In 2001, A level results were above the national average. Students gained similar results in mathematics to those gained in their other subjects. Only two female students took the examination and because of this, it is not valid to compare the results of male and female students. Results have improved in recent years. In 2002, only five students took A level mathematics and their results were as expected based on their prior attainment at GCSE. Most students complete the A level course and gain a pass grade.

186. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above the national average. The work of all students indicates they will gain an A level pass grade in the forthcoming examinations. Their achievement is satisfactory because they start the course with standards above the national average and maintain this standard throughout the course. Students are developing a good range of mathematical skills and understanding of more advanced concepts. For example, they are able to select the correct statistical tests to use and enjoy the practical work in mechanics. There is no difference in the standards reached by male and female students.

187. Teaching and learning are good because teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. They know how to impart that knowledge and fully understand which parts of the course students will find more difficult. Teachers know the students well and how best to support each individual. The quality of teaching ensures students learn effectively and make good progress. The students speak highly of the course and say they would recommend it to others. Enthusiasm is shown when students make presentations to the class about statistical methods. This type of work helps them prepare for higher education and how to learn more independently. As a result, they gain more confidence in their mathematical ability.

188. All work is regularly marked and students value the comments teachers make. However, they say they would like greater consistency between the way teachers mark work. For example, some teachers regularly inform students the grade they are working at and how to improve, but this is not always the case.

189. The subject is well led and managed. Students have good-quality textbooks and an extensive range of books in the sixth form library supplements these. More male students than females take the subject, but some effort is being made to make the subject more attractive to girls. Although there are still areas for development, good improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on biology and chemistry. **Physics** was also sampled and the overall provision is **good**. In 2002, the A-level examination results improved and were just above average. The progress students make from GCSE to A level is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are good, as are leadership and management.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is good.

Strengths

- The examination results are above average and show a rising trend.
- Teaching and learning are good because of the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Good leadership and management provide effective support and guidance to help students reach their predicted targets.

Areas for improvements

- The quantity and use of resources, especially computers.
- Students' understanding of technical language and terminology to gain access to biological information and record their learning.
- Analysing assessment information to measure trends of students' achievement.

190. The GCE A-Level results rose from average in 1998 to well above average in 2000. In 2001, the standards declined and were average, but the 2002 results show a significant improvement again. These latest results are likely to be above average when the national results become available for comparison. The standards seen during the inspection were as expected for the students' age, this is partly due to students' lack of understanding of technical language and terminology and because they do not have sufficient access to ICT for research and other work. These factors are limiting their level of achievement and progress. The standards attained by male and female students are similar.

191. Year 13 students have a good understanding of methods of pest control and the advantages and disadvantages of these methods. They know the main groups of living things and how each group is classified at different levels. They know biological and non-biological factors and how these affect populations of living things. However, they are less secure in their knowledge of the standard growth curve of populations and their lack of understanding of technical language hinders their comprehension of biological information, especially with evidence gained from experiments. Year 12 students know about biological molecules and understand their function. They also know about various cell organelles and how their structure is related to their function.

192. Teaching is good overall and in some lessons it is very good. One of the strongest features is teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject. This is used effectively for a variety of teaching methods to stimulate intellectual effort and help

students to make substantial gains in knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, how a molecule of water is structured and how this affects its properties as a solvent and as a transporter of biological molecules such as globular proteins. The lessons are invariably well structured and organised for efficient learning. Very effective management ensures pace and productivity of learning. Questioning and discussions are used effectively to assess how well students are learning. Quality of learning is also enhanced by effective use of model questions and support and guidance on what students need to do to score good marks. Analysis of students' work shows that greater focus is needed to improve their technical language skills, interpretation of experimental evidence and the use of ICT for learning.

193. Students have good attitudes to learning biology. They find the subject stimulating and enjoyable. They co-operate well in sharing information and apparatus. However, they do not recap often enough what they have learnt in lessons. This creates gaps in their knowledge and understanding of concepts, principles and processes.
194. The head of department has only been in post for one year and demonstrates good leadership of the subject. This leadership has enlisted a high level of commitment from the biology specialists in the science department. One measure of success is the increasing number of students, who want to study biology in the sixth form. In addition, human biology is being introduced next year. Results of students' work are analysed and target grades are set. Interim grades are awarded to track performance and gauge progress. The assessment information is used effectively for target setting and tracking progress. However, the department does not carry out sufficient analysis to measure students' progress and identify trends of achievement from different groups of students. The curriculum is effective, as are the assessment procedures. However, there are not enough resources for the increasing number of students. For example, there are not enough books and this compromises students' independent study. More resources are needed for scientific enquiry, including investigations. Not enough computers are available for independent research and presentations of work.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Standards in A-level chemistry are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good and teachers show very good knowledge and understanding of chemistry.
- Good systems for assessment of students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- The use of the syllabus as a scheme of work leads to a narrow range of teaching and learning styles.
- Some students lack pride in their written work and it is untidy and poorly presented.

195. Standards in A-level chemistry are above average. The GCSE A-level examination results for the last three years have been above average, although the numbers, who took the examination, were small. In 2001 and 2002, all students, who entered for chemistry A-level, achieved a pass grade. In 2001, the four students, who entered for chemistry, performed better in chemistry than students nationally and the proportion gaining the higher grades A and B was above average. In 2002, the five students, who entered for chemistry A-level, achieved a pass grade and two achieved the highest A grades. In relation to their GCSE grades, most students performed as expected and

their achievement is satisfactory. With so few students opting for the subject it is not valid to draw conclusions about the relative success of male and female students.

196. The standard of work of the current students is also above average. Students tackle calculations and have opportunities to develop their communication skills. In the lessons seen, students are achieving well because of the rigorous teaching, which demands much of them. In one lesson, students showed good understanding of transition metal chemistry. A higher-attaining student could explain fluently the practical work she had completed and relate the colour changes to the excitation states of vanadium. They made good progress. Most students recall information well and apply their knowledge when answering questions.
197. Students in Year 12 are achieving well in the foundation module. They show good understanding of basic concepts such as atomic structure and bonding. In one lesson, a higher-attaining student had a good understanding of ionising energies and could interpret successive ionisation energies in terms of its position within the periodic table. In another lesson, students had researched a wide range of information about magnesium and calcium. Most students are successfully moving from GCSE work into the A-level course and are systematically organising their work.
198. Students' attitudes to chemistry are good. They show interest and have good relationships with each other and with their teachers. During presentations, they show respect for each other and listen well. They answer questions when asked, but some do not volunteer.
199. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers show very good knowledge and understanding of chemistry in their questioning and explanations. Some teachers convey enthusiasm for chemistry to the students. Overall, teaching is thorough and learning is good. Some teachers use a variety of teaching approaches, but others use a narrow range of teaching methods. The higher-attaining students enjoy the rigorous approach, but this theoretical approach is less suited to some students. Teachers provide individual support, but, in lessons, some students need more concrete examples in making the transition to the increasingly sophisticated models demanded by the A-level course. The lesson on amines used a variety of methods where pupils were actively involved in practical work and their own learning. The students had to think about their presentation rather than passively take notes. They responded confidently to the activity. Practical work forms an integral part of the course and students are learning appropriate practical skills. Some students take pride in their written work, but others lack care and some of it is untidy and poorly presented.
200. Chemistry is well led. There are coherent policies in place, which are consistently implemented. Students attend chemistry lectures off-site, which provide enrichment to their normal curriculum. There are common approaches to marking and assessment. Marking is thorough and regular. Work is carefully annotated with corrections. Students are aware of how to improve their work. Teachers have appropriate records of students' assessed work. Students' performance is assessed on a regular basis by tests. The head of chemistry monitors the results of these tests carefully. Target setting based on analysis of students' performance in tests is well established. The chemistry department provides effective tutorial support. Individual students review their performance in chemistry with their teacher. Teachers provide opportunities for the development of the key skills of communication and numeracy. The sixth form science laboratory is new, but small. With current numbers in Year 12, it is too small for practical work.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects were inspected in depth in this curriculum area, but the work in design was sampled. The provision in **design** is **good**. Examination results for 2001 were above the national average. Those for 2002 are at a similar level. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are good and standards have improved since the last inspection.

BUSINESS

The main focus of the inspection was on business studies.

Business studies

Overall, the quality of provision for business studies is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management, which ensures that the numbers of students choosing to follow a course in business in Years 12 and 13 is rising year on year.
- The good quality of teaching, which results in students, who are well motivated and display very positive attitudes to learning.
- The high expectations of staff, which lead to above average standards achieved by students.
- Students' very good attitudes and maturity of approach to their study.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment information to monitor more accurately the performance of individual students.
- Schemes of work that offer more opportunities to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all students.
- Review procedures so staff within the department can observe each other teaching as a way of sharing the good practice.

201. The school offers a variety of business courses for students in the sixth form. These include Advanced Level and AS level business studies, an Intermediate GNVQ in business for Year 12 students and AVCE, a double award A level course in business.

202. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the expected pass levels for business studies courses. In Year 13, over three quarters of the students following the advanced level course are attaining at grade C or above. These standards are achieved because the teaching is consistently very good. Students' achievements in relation to standards are good. Students show very good attitudes and commitment to the course and this contributes significantly to the quality of their learning being very good. Students make good progress as they work through, and build on, modules in Years 12 and 13.

203. The standards achieved by students, who completed an advanced level course in business in 2001, was well above the national average. All students gained a grade within the A to E range and almost half gained the top grade of A. All achieved high standards in this subject in relation to their prior attainment. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Results for the summer of 2002 reflect a similar picture. Whilst fewer students gained the higher grades, the 100 per cent pass rate was maintained and all achieved high standards in relation to their prior attainment. The first set of results for the AVCE, a double award A level course in

business, were achieved in 2002. All five students achieved a grade within the B to E range. Inspection evidence, and the examination of students' work folders, indicates that all students following advanced courses this year will again achieve high standards in relation to their prior attainment.

204. The average point score achieved by students, who completed the new style Intermediate GNVQ in business in 2001, was above average. Of the five students, who followed the course, two were awarded a merit, two a pass and one achieved a pass in four of the six units. The results for 2002 indicate an improving picture. Of the five students, who followed the course, three gained a merit and two a pass. All five students are now taking an Advanced business course.
205. Students have a very good understanding of the main business functions of organisations. During the courses they follow, they develop sound research skills, which enables them to gather a broad range of information to support the detailed written assignments required. Within the research notes produced by Year 13 students, there is evidence of analytical thinking as opposed to simply recording facts. All units of work have a clear learning focus that is shared with students. They are regularly required to recall and apply knowledge gained from previous lessons and apply it to a new context.
206. Teaching on Year 12 and 13 courses is good overall, with some very good lessons in both Years 12 and 13. Teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussions and provides students with the opportunity to explore topics in depth. Teachers plan and sequence lessons well, with many having a practical focus that sustains interest and motivation in the topics studied. Very good teaching is lively and interactive. As a direct result, students are well motivated and display very positive attitudes to learning. To enable successful teaching strategies to be more consistently applied across the department, teachers would benefit from more regular classroom observations.
207. In discussion with students, they are aware of their progress in relation to each unit or module of work completed. They know the criteria used to assess their work and they know what they need to do to improve. They are aware of the final grade predicted for them, although many of them see this as an absolute minimum in terms of what they are working towards. A great deal is demanded of the students, who follow a business course. A high level of commitment, particularly in the area of undertaking personal research, is expected. Facilities to enable students to undertake research work within the sixth form centre are limited. The library does not have the range of books or journals to support this course and there are no computer facilities available. Only one classroom used for business studies has computers and, therefore, learning opportunities are limited. The department seeks to redress these limitations by taking students on visits to both local and national companies. These visits, in addition to providing students with good research material, also contribute positively to their social development. The department should now give consideration to identifying within each unit of work opportunities that would contribute positively to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of all students.
208. The head of department is a very good leader and manager. He has positively promoted the subject in Years 10 and 11 with the result that the numbers of students choosing to follow a course in business in Years 12 and 13 is rising year on year. His commitment to expanding the range of courses available to students and improving standards is shared by all teachers teaching business courses. The department has started to set minimum target grades for students in Years 12 and 13. All students are aware of these grades. Progress against these targets is formally recorded on three occasions throughout the year. This is in line with the newly-introduced sixth form

assessment and reporting system. The department has not yet developed regular focused assessment opportunities to enable specific learning targets to be set for each student. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The main focus of the inspection was on information and communication technology.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes and development of learning skills.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations.
- Quality and use of assessment.

Areas for improvement

- Responsibility given to students for their own learning.
- Levels of equipment for use in lessons.
- Access to large screen display facilities.

209. The majority of students arrive with average levels of attainment. They achieve at a good level during the course, attaining results that are above the national average. The majority of students perform at a level that exceeds predicted achievement based on GCSE performance. Results over the last three years have been consistently good and show an upward trend. At the time of the last inspection, results were in line with the national average. There has been an improvement in both attainment and progress. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or by those from different ethnic backgrounds.

210. Work seen in lessons, as well as in students' folders for Years 12 and 13 students confirms that they achieve above average standards. In conversation with students, it is evident that they have a good grounding in the subject, being able to comment on the different legislation that affects the use of electronic communication and storage.

211. Year 13 students, working on their major project, demonstrated a good working knowledge of databases, being able to identify the most appropriate way in which they would apply the software to meet the needs of the various problems selected. Most are working towards suitable designs as a result of good working relationships with the end users. They are confident in their ability to find solutions that will meet users' needs and in producing final solutions that combine the correct degree of complexity with ease of use to match the knowledge of the final user. All are well supported by family or friends in the coursework activity. Some of the weaker aspects of the work seen centred on students not following the process through in sufficient detail in order to meet the coursework criteria. For example, some students placed insufficient emphasis on clarity of objectives and establishing clear data structures. Most are aware of the importance of testing and analysis. Higher-attaining students are able to consider a range of possible solutions before disregarding, with sound reasons, those thought to be least suitable.

212. There is an evident enthusiasm for the subject amongst students in both years. Students approach the subject in a purposeful way. They appreciate that, although the quality and quantity of equipment needs improvement, the very good staff support

provides some compensation. Whether working individually or in groups, students are always co-operative. There is a readiness to help one another, discuss work and make contributions that benefit the whole class. The vast majority of students have computer equipment at home, which enables them to access notes and other information from the school web site in order to complete assignments. Any students without equipment at home are provided with opportunities to use computers at any time, provided they are not required for lesson purposes.

213. Overall, teaching in the subject is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen and the majority was good or very good. All staff attached to the department have very good subject knowledge, but, unfortunately, do not have the benefit of interactive whiteboards or projection equipment in their presentations to students. Arrangements for ensuring that staff remain up-to-date with the latest developments in ICT are linked to the school system of performance management. The enthusiasm observed in the students is clearly linked to the enthusiasm teachers have for the subject. They prepare well, making effective use of oral and written assessment to ensure that students know the progress they are making in the lessons. They have high expectations and manage students well, giving them every opportunity to meet these expectations. Occasionally, the enthusiasm for the subject leads to a disproportionate amount of teacher input, placing insufficient responsibility on the students for their learning. Sometimes, the lesson structure does not provide for a suitable summary and checking of knowledge that has been achieved in the lesson, therefore, affecting the soundness of the content of the subsequent lesson. However, teachers use time well, ensuring that students' needs are met through individual discussions as appropriate.
214. Although ICT use should be a natural part of study in the sixth form, with a computer to student ratio of 16:1, few find access easy. The subject is well managed. It is supported by experienced, well-qualified and committed staff, who assist one another and the students effectively. An efficient and effective qualified technician maintains the network.

Use of ICT across the post-16 curriculum

215. Opportunities for the use of information and communication technology across subjects are limited in the sixth form. However, the size of most teaching groups and the more independent nature of study in the post-16 sector enables students to access individual computers on an ad hoc basis. Currently, there is no computer facility in the sixth form library. Flexibility on the part of the information and communication technology teaching staff and the maturity displayed by students ensures that access is possible for most when required. Despite this, as with lower years in the school, it is the high rate of personal ownership that enables students to continue to develop their computer skills.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects were inspected this curriculum area.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

No subjects were inspected in this curriculum area, but work in art and music was sampled.

The provision in **art** is **good**. Examination results are in line with the national average and have improved since the last inspection. The consistently good quality teaching, tailored to the needs of the individual, encourages and inspires students in their learning and helps them to reach their full potential. This has a positive effect on achievement and standards. Numbers taking art to Advanced level are increasing. The provision in **music** is **very good**. Examination results are commensurate with the musical skills and understanding of those involved. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The number of students studying music is increasing.

HUMANITIES

The main focus of the inspection was on history and psychology. Work in geography and sociology was sampled. The provision in **geography** is good. Examination results are above the national average. The progress made from GCSE to A level study is good. Teaching and learning and leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The provision in **sociology** is very good. The 2001 examination results were above the national average. Teaching and learning is very good and has a positive impact on standards. Leadership and management are very good.

History

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good and leads to a positive response from students.
- Very strong leadership and management ensure a clear direction for the department.
- Excellent relationships exist between students and teacher.
- Students know how to pursue their own independent research.
- The high number of students opting for the subject in the sixth form.

Areas for Improvement

- Male students achieving the higher examination grades in A level examinations.
- The large size of class groups in Year 12.
- Increased learning resources to meet the demands of higher student numbers.

216. Standards are well above average at AS level and above average at A level. The AS examination results in 2002 indicate a further rise in standards, especially with regard to the higher A/ B grades. There is no significant difference between the performance of male and female students. The rising trend in A level higher grades over the past four years has not been maintained in the 2002 results. The proportion of male students achieving the higher examination grades was significantly below that of female students and the department is taking appropriate measures to rectify this situation. History results compare very favourably with those of other subjects. Students have made good progress since the last inspection.

217. Students in Year 12 are achieving well. Students benefit from the department's change to additional course planning and study technique that enables them to meet the challenges presented by the different work patterns required in the sixth form. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of historical concepts, are able to interpret and evaluate a range of sources and are developing their capacity for critical thinking. In a lesson on the rise of Mussolini, for example, students were able to undertake a critical examination of complex source material in preparation for their individual extended essay assignments.

218. Students in Year 13 are achieving well. Their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter is very good, they make mature value judgements on source provenance and respond enthusiastically when allowed to discuss issues or undertake their own research. In a lesson on ideology in Tsarist Russia, for example, students drew on their knowledge of contemporary political ideology to draw parallels with Marxist/Leninist beliefs. Students write well-structured essays and have a full understanding of the complex terminology arising in the study units. This was a weakness in the last inspection.
219. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good in-depth knowledge of their subject, their planning is meticulous and they introduce an element of challenge for the whole ability range. The lack of challenge was a weakness in the last inspection. This good teaching leads to a positive response from students. They are willing to engage in discussion and take risks when expressing new ideas. In a lesson on dictatorship in Russia, for example, students made intelligent comparisons between the crisis facing Tsar Alexander 11 in 1856 and the post-Stalinist challenge facing Nikita Krushchev in 1956. Intellectual challenge in the teaching stimulates able students into making very perceptive responses. History is a popular subject because all the teachers encourage students to undertake their own research into a wide variety of historical issues. Teachers select written sources gleaned from a variety of texts and introduce students to the most recent articles written by scholars. This prepares them for further study after they leave school. Achievement in an over large Year 12 class was hampered by the restrictions student numbers placed on the use of these successful teaching strategies. Relationships with teachers are excellent and there is a collaborative ethos.
220. The department is very well led and managed by the subject leader and this is a major factor in promoting high standards. The schemes of work reflect a team approach to planning. The students have access to a comprehensive range of resources, although there is a need to upgrade library facilities. The monitoring and evaluation of students' progress is a strength of the subject and students are fully aware of how to achieve their learning targets. A coherent marking policy is in place. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Extremely good specialist subject knowledge of the highly-qualified staff.
- Carefully planned and well-resourced teaching provides an excellent introduction for Year 12 students.
- Extremely good relationships between staff and students result in a high level of motivation and progress.
- Highly-effective tutorial support, leads to very good learning by students across the whole ability range.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the range and number of specialist texts available to students in this popular subject.
- Increase the availability of ICT resources both for teaching and learning.
- Monitor closely the results achieved by students and use this information to inform curriculum planning and tutorial support.

221. Psychology at post 16 was previously taught off-site by staff from Northampton College. For the first time the subject is now being taught at Moulton School by its own staff. Over the last few years, examination results have been improving.

222. At the time of this inspection it was too early in the academic year to make accurate judgements about the standards being achieved, especially in Year 12, where the subject is completely new to students. Nevertheless, from students' written work and their well-informed contributions in lessons, it is clear that they have already made good progress. For example, Year 12 students have developed a detailed understanding of the issues relating to day care and their connection with the 'nature – nurture' debate. In another session, Year 13 students built on a detailed review of the causes and forms of aggression to produce a comprehensive and perceptive analysis of a series of video clips from films, TV soaps and cartoons.

223. Students are very enthusiastic about the subject, which they find both challenging and stimulating. They work very well in small groups and independently. In class discussions, they listen carefully to the teacher and each other and contribute with confidence and precision. Relationships between the teachers and students are excellent. They are informal yet intellectually rigorous and this results in a high level of commitment and intellectual challenge. Students complete homework tasks well and come to lessons very well prepared. This means that the teachers are able to build on the students' good prior knowledge, explore wider implications and increase the depth of understanding.

224. Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers have an excellent command of their subject matter and use a variety of teaching strategies very effectively. Lessons have clear and appropriate objectives and include a range of activities that address these objectives effectively. These include teachers' exposition, class discussion, brainstorming and individual, paired and other small group work. The changes of pace and focus sustain a very high level of interest and commitment, even in the longer sessions. The teaching is notable for clarity of explanation and the impressive use of probing questions in class discussions. Small groups work to draw out ideas, test and consolidate understanding and challenge students' thinking. Teachers make very effective use of case studies in helping students to explore the processes and impact of human behaviour. Teaching use proven techniques such as 'mind maps' and 'spidergrams' to aid memory and understanding. Students appreciate the regular links drawn between theory and important everyday issues. Strategies such as 'writing

frames' are used well to improve students' analytical writing skills and there is a consistent expectation that students will think about the implications of the areas studied. There are limited ICT resources so that the teaching does not yet benefit from opportunities to access on-line in lessons or use interactive displays.

225. Planning is a strong feature of the teaching, both for individual lessons and across sequences of lessons. Independent study and homework are used thoughtfully and effectively to support work done in lessons. Medium-term planning is very clear and well structured, reflecting considerable thought and a secure grasp of consistent progress in learning. This includes good awareness of opportunities for personal, social, moral and cultural development and of the need to develop literacy and numeracy skills. This is achieved, for instance, through presentations that describe and defend different theoretical approaches to explaining human behaviour. Through the challenging teaching strategies used and the tasks set, students are required to develop their individual and collaborative study skills.
226. Strategies for assessment are thoughtful and appropriate. A good understanding of the needs of individual students results in effective and personalised support and guidance. Students recognise and very much appreciate this element of learning support. Assessment tasks test developing understanding and skills thoroughly and comprehensively. Written work is marked rigorously and constructively using the relevant examination criteria and includes helpful guidance and progress advice for students.
227. Leadership and management of the subject are both at an early stage of development, but an impressive start has already been made. The newly appointed principal specialist teacher has a clear vision for the subject's development and she is ably supported by her line manager and colleagues. Continuing links with Northampton College are providing a valuable element of continuity for Year 13 students. Planning is very thorough and well developed. Money for initial resourcing has been spent wisely and with considerable thought. The rapid expansion of student numbers requires further investment in both the range and quantity of study materials. A very strong commitment to the subject and to students' learning and achievement are key features of the teaching.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English and French. However, drama and general studies were also sampled. The provision in **drama** is good. Good teaching and a well-organised programme have supported inexperienced students in making satisfactory progress, despite below average examination results. Good management has concentrated efforts in Years 10 and 11 to broaden the experience of a large number of potential recruits to post-16 courses. The provision in **general studies** is very good. The advanced level course is completed in one year and examination results are above the national average. Teaching and learning are good overall. The subject is very well led and managed.

English

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

Strengths

- The very good subject knowledge that teachers bring to the lessons.
- Detailed planning and teaching techniques that are well adapted to students' individual needs.

Areas for improvement

- Giving higher-attaining students more insight into the range of skills needed to attain the higher grades.
- Developing students' independent study skills.
- Developing a wider range of resources to support students studying English Language.

228. The provision in English caters for over 50 students. GCE AS and Advanced Level courses are offered in English Literature. An AS course in English Language has been started this year and the take-up has been very positive. GCSE English is offered to a small number of students, who wish to improve their grade.

229. Standards achieved in the GCE AS and Advanced Level examinations are average. Although they were below average in 2002, they have been in line with the national average for the last four years, as they were at the last inspection. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades is below the national average. Most students make satisfactory progress in relation to the standards they achieved in their GCSE examinations. The proportion of students continuing with the study of English into Year 13 is good, but, frequently, the attendance of some students to lessons is unsatisfactory.

230. The observation of lessons during the inspection confirms the standards of work indicated by the examination results. Attainment is in line with the national average because teachers provide detailed support that compensates for students' restricted reading experience and underdeveloped independent study skills. At the beginning of the AS course, most students find it difficult to adopt appropriate language of literary criticism. They struggle to adapt to the need to consider language in greater detail and to cope with a wider range of styles and genres than they have come across previously. As a result, many students write quite simply, without regard for a more extended vocabulary.

231. By Year 13, students have developed the skills of close analysis and can show how a writer uses language and form to develop meaning. This was seen when students compared two letters from *The Colour Purple* to note how they reflected gradual changes in a relationship between two characters. Some students still need prompting

in discussion to move from everyday speech to language that reflects the broader issues that the writers are dealing with. The higher-attaining students can explain the effect of details within a text, for example, showing how Lady Bracknell's choice of a phrase can reveal her attitude and the writer's attitude to contemporary social issues. At this early stage in the course, few of the higher attainers can step back from the detail of the text to appreciate the broader picture. When they write about texts, their writing is structured and clear, but they respond to the demands of the examination question, rather than using it as a framework for their own perspective on the work.

232. The achievement of AS and A-level students is satisfactory. Most students respond well and work steadily in lessons. Students beginning their study of accent and dialect in a new course in English Language took great care to use the correct technical vocabulary and to apply their newly acquired skills as they identified the nuances in regional pronunciation. However, a significant minority do not make the best use of their own study time and inconsistent attendance hampers their progress.
233. The teaching of English in the sixth form is good overall. Teachers know their subject very well and cater for the range of learning styles of individual students. They plan carefully, but do not always support students, who do not have a well-developed background in literature, which limits the pace at which they can work. Because students do not have sufficient skills to work independently, it is not possible for teachers to stimulate them with the wide-ranging references, which might support more sophisticated comparisons between texts. Teachers develop very good relationships within class and the level of interest is high throughout the lessons so that most students stay on task and consolidate their learning effectively. Homework can then be used to reflect and to revisit the concepts, leading to the sound understanding that is reflected in the final results.
234. Students work effectively in small discussion groups where their listening skills are well developed. This enables them to test and revise ideas to deepen their understanding. When students work in groups, teachers intervene too frequently to ensure that concepts are clearly understood. Consequently, there is too little scope for higher attainers to develop an independent view and reach the very highest standards. Teachers evaluate both spoken and written contributions effectively and comments on written work are very constructive and helpful. There is insufficient acknowledgement of successful elements within students' formal writing, but clear information on the overall quality of every piece. Teachers respond carefully to emerging needs that are identified in students' work and adapt teaching plans to meet these needs.
235. Teachers are careful to develop students' appreciation of the social, moral and cultural contexts of the works they are studying. The texts themselves repeatedly challenge students' assumptions about the nature of human existence. There has also been a partially successful drive to broaden individual students' reading experiences. Teachers are well qualified and bring a range of skills to support students' learning. Teaching is predominantly accommodated in a dedicated suite of rooms and this also supports students' progress. Learning resources are sufficient, although teachers have not yet harnessed the full potential of modern technology, including computers.
236. The provision for English in the sixth form is effectively managed. Since the last inspection the teaching team has changed and the department has adopted a wider range of teaching strategies. New syllabi have been introduced, with radical changes both to the content of the course and the style of the examination. The new course in English Language has been carefully developed, though resources to support independent study are inadequate. Five members of the team contribute to the teaching in the sixth form and their different methods and emphases are effectively co-

ordinated through daily discussion in a spacious department staff room. Overall, the department has made a sound improvement since the last inspection.

French

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

Strengths

- Students make good progress overall.
- Teaching is good and ensures steady progression from GCSE to A level.
- Students' excellent attitudes and commitment contribute significantly to their progress.
- Good planning provides a suitable framework for new courses.

Areas for improvement

- Provision in the sixth form library does not support effective use of students' study time.
- There are no opportunities provided for students to extend their linguistic and cultural knowledge abroad.
- Attracting more male students on to the post-16 courses.

237. Results for the small numbers of students taking French are consistently close to or slightly above, the national average. In 2001, four students gained two B grades and two D grades at advanced level. In 2002, one student gained grade C. Although there were no A grades, these results represented satisfactory achievement based on grades gained at GCSE. Grades achieved at AS level in 2002 were above average overall, though only one of the six students has chosen to continue studies into Year 13. All students are female.

238. The evidence from work seen in lessons, from students' files and from an interview with students shows that attainment is above average. Students currently in the sixth form are achieving well. They are building well on good results at GCSE and considerably extending their knowledge of lexis and structure. In Year 13, oral standards are very good. The sole female student benefits from individual tuition by a native French teacher and further coaching from a foreign language assistant. This enables her to speak fluently and with good accent and intonation on issues such as employment and unemployment. She makes good use of untutored lesson time to research such topics, so that she has the basis of factual and language knowledge to participate in meaningful exchanges and to explain difficult phrases in French when requested. Written work in the student's file shows rapid improvement in Year 13 in applying complex language structures, verb tenses and moods. She writes accurately and at length about the effects of immigration on French life and the life and role of the politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen. The content of these essays shows very good research skills and the ability to construct an argument. In the lesson observed, comprehension skills were very well developed. The student followed demanding reading and listening material and could explain targeted words and phrases in French as well as answering factual questions.

239. In lessons seen in Year 12, where nine female students are at an early stage of the AS course, attainment is more variable, but above average overall. Some students show the benefit of time spent on holiday in France to speak fluently about this experience. They make good contributions as topics become more demanding. A minority of students are reticent and need encouragement to speak aloud. They are comfortable with topics covered at GCSE, but, as yet, lack the confidence to express themselves coherently on unfamiliar topics. Initial written work tends to lack ambition. Essays are rather short and show little evidence of reference to the work being done in grammar

lessons. However, they are beginning to consolidate and build on their high GCSE grades as they participate well in lessons with a grammatical focus. In one lesson, higher attainers grasped rules about preceding direct objects and completed a series of written exercises speedily and faultlessly. Others needed more help from the teacher, but grasped the concept well by the end of the lesson. Increasing confidence is enabling all students to follow written and spoken passages of increasing complexity. They understand key points and can engage in relevant discussion.

240. Sixth form teaching is shared between a team of teachers and is good overall. In Year 13, it is very good. Teachers have a clear idea of their individual responsibilities and combine to deliver a cohesive programme of study, having significant impact on learning. Teachers use French consistently to provide a model and instil the expectation that students will follow suit. English is tolerated only in translation work. As a result, students' standards in listening and speaking improve rapidly. Teachers rely on the chosen coursebook, written specifically for new courses, but supplement this with authentic materials from French newspapers or magazines relevant to the topic being studied. They also download factual information from the Internet and use video resources. This gives students a wide range of material, which varies lesson content and enriches their knowledge of contemporary French society. Planning is good. Some lessons have a single objective, such as the teaching and learning of a grammatical point. In such lessons, teachers ensure not only written practice of that point, but some oral output by students, so that oral progress is continuous. In other lessons, based on consideration of a prescribed topic, teachers provide a range of different tasks. They change the activity frequently, making good use of time and involving all students in producing and understanding language. Relationships are very positive and support learning very well. Marking is helpful, especially in Year 13, where more extended written work is diagnosed with reference to published criteria. Consequently, students know how they are doing and how to do better. Homework is used effectively. Students are given a lot of learning and productive tasks, sometimes involving independent research.
241. Students show maturity both in their work and in talking about it. They have excellent attitudes, which help them to cope with challenging and time-consuming work and to make good progress. They are generally keen to participate in oral classwork and are capable of personal research to extend their topic knowledge. In Year 13, this underpins the quality of engagement with the teacher.
242. Work in the sixth form is well managed. Teachers are clear about their individual roles and collaborate effectively as a team. Schemes of work depend heavily on published syllabi, but have been drawn up quickly and are being refined in the light of experience of the new examinations. Assessment procedures are good, with individual attention ensuring that students have a clear idea of their progress towards assessment objectives. The sixth form library provides a good range of dictionaries, but books relevant to prescribed topics are out-of-date. Students have to use home computers to assist their learning. There is no provision, for example, through links with the borough's twin town in France, for students to spend time abroad. Such provision would have a significant impact on students' oral confidence and standards and improve their factual knowledge of French culture, which is sketchy. It is regrettable that no male students choose to study French in the sixth form, since they would add a missing dimension to discussion. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, with similar standards being achieved.