

# INSPECTION REPORT

**BLESSED HUGH FARINGDON CATHOLIC  
SCHOOL**

Reading

LEA area: Reading

Unique reference number: 110107

Headteacher: Mr Paul Barras

Reporting inspector: Mr David H Roberts  
7582

Dates of inspection: 7 – 11 October 2002

Inspection number: 251145

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Fawley Road  
Reading  
Berkshire

Postcode: RG30 3EP

Telephone number: 0118 957 4730

Fax number: 0118 956 8150

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Bernard Jennings

Date of previous inspection: 2 December 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7582	David H Roberts	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievement How well is the school led and managed?
9588	Anthony West	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15415	Jane Portman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12857	Robert Bailey	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
4922	Michael Driver	Team inspector	Science	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
10133	Veronica Matthews	Team inspector	Design and technology	
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
7399	Paul Roberts	Team inspector	History	
2172	David Saunders	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music	
17987	Brian Coates	Team inspector	Physical education	
31129	Jeffrey Pickering	Team inspector	Art	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
28002	Sue Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
2561	Anthony Byrne	Team inspector		How well are pupils or students taught?
4908	Ian Farquhar	Team inspector	Mathematics (6 <sup>th</sup> form)	
20609	Carol Worthington	Team inspector	Physics (6 <sup>th</sup> form)	
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Sociology (6 <sup>th</sup> form)	
30317	Elizabeth Barthaud	Team inspector	Business education (6 <sup>th</sup> form)	

The inspection contractor was:

*PkR* Educational Consultants Ltd  
6 Sherman Road  
Bromley  
Kent  
BR1 3JH

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Blessed Hugh Faringdon School provides education for mainly Catholic children. The vast majority of the rest come from other Christian denominations. The school is situated in the western part of Reading and draws pupils mainly from parishes across the town (including from areas of considerable deprivation), but also a significant number from further afield. There are currently 820 pupils aged 11 to 18 at the school. This figure includes 706 pupils aged 11 to 16, representing a significant increase since the last inspection (1996). Most year groups are oversubscribed. In 1997, a sixth form was established. There is a broadly even mix of boys and girls in each age group. A special unit for pupils with Asperger's Syndrome is established on the site.

The attainment of pupils aged 11 on entry to the school remains somewhat below the national average, although closer to it than when the school was last inspected. The range of attainment of students who enter the sixth form is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Ten pupils are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Fifteen per cent of pupils are identified by the school as having special educational needs (SEN). This is broadly in line with the national average. Of these, 31 pupils have statements of SEN including 13 who are in the Asperger Resource Centre. The overall proportion of statemented pupils is above the national average.

The school currently has difficulties in recruiting teaching staff when vacancies occur. There were six vacant posts at the time of the inspection, two of which were for science teachers and one for English. These, together with other teaching posts, are covered by teachers on short-term contracts, many of whom are overseas trained and experienced.

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

This is a popular school which provides a broadly satisfactory education and where, in most years, pupils achieve satisfactory standards. Pupils have a positive attitude and behave well in lessons. There is good teaching in a number of subjects but it is unsatisfactory overall in science. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for. The school benefits from the highly committed leadership of the senior team and school staff work hard to generate a positive climate. The relatively new sixth form, although somewhat small, provides an adequate curriculum and is popular with its students. The school provides satisfactory value for money, except in that the sixth form provision continues to be subsidised by the main school.

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

- It gives a high priority to pupils' personal development so that relationships are very good and pupils respect each other's feelings and beliefs; they bring a positive attitude to school and behave well.
- The school works very hard to ensure that there is appropriate provision for the particular needs of all children, giving them good support and guidance.
- Teaching is good overall in English, drama, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, and overall in the sixth form.
- It makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- It gains parents' loyalty through effective communications with them.
- It identifies the appropriate priorities for development and Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and carry out their role effectively.

### What could be improved

- The quality of teaching, particularly in science and in other subjects where weaknesses are identified.
- The use of pupil performance data to raise standards.
- The sharpness of action plans to ensure that the identified priorities are properly addressed.
- The supervision of some new staff, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the curriculum and expectations in the English system.
- The monitoring and development of teaching quality in some subjects.
- The use by subject teachers of the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.
- The curriculum breadth and cost effectiveness of the sixth form.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Under the widely respected leadership of the headteacher, overall improvement has been satisfactory. The school's popularity has increased each year and a sixth form has been successfully established. The standards achieved by pupils have generally improved in line with national improvements although there are current weaknesses in mathematics and particularly science. Teaching has improved, particularly in years 7 to 9 where there is now far less unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils' attitudes to school have improved, as has behaviour in lessons. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is now good. The school now benefits from examples of good or very good leadership at all levels, which is focused increasingly on priorities to raise standards further, but inconsistencies remain. Governors perform their role well. The school continues successfully to promote good relationships and positive attitudes. It has responded well to the needs of the different mix of pupils who now attend the school.

### 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 in 2001, the latest year for which comparable data are available.

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

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

The trend of overall improvement at GCSE level indicated in the above table was reversed in 2002, due largely to the unsatisfactory results in mathematics and science. Overall, GCSE results in other subjects in 2002 were satisfactory, taking into account the starting point of these pupils when aged eleven. There were relative strengths in English, drama, design and technology, French and music. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, there was significant improvement in 2002 in English, with performance now likely to be above the national average for similar schools. In mathematics and science, 2002 results were not as good as in 2001 when they were close to the national average. The school's results fell well short of the targets set by the governors, but these were unrealistic, having not taken any account of the prior attainment of pupils in the relevant year groups.



From the work seen in lessons, standards in Year 9 are in line with national expectations except in science, where they are below, and in physical education, where they are above. In Year 11, standards are in line with expectations except in mathematics and science, where they are below, and in geography and physical education, where they are above.

The progress that pupils in Years 7 to 9 are making is good in art, history, French and physical education; it is satisfactory in English, mathematics, design and technology and geography; but unsatisfactory in science. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress in art, geography, history and physical education, unsatisfactory progress in mathematics and science and satisfactory progress in all other subjects.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: positive attitudes both to learning and to the school's inclusive ethos. Very good attitudes among sixth-formers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: in lessons, assemblies and around the school. The few instances of bullying have been well handled.
Personal development and relationships	Very good, with very good relationships among pupils and with staff. Pupils respond well to opportunities for their personal development. Sixth-formers act effectively as mentors for younger pupils.
Attendance	Satisfactory, although somewhat below the national average largely due to extended holidays taken by some families. Transport difficulties lead to repeated lateness of some pupils.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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.*

Teaching of English is good in Years 7 to 11 and is very good in the sixth form. In mathematics, it is satisfactory overall (but with too much variability) in Years 7 to 11 and also in the sixth form. Science teaching overall is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11 and poor in physics (the focus subject for this inspection in the sixth form). Other areas of strength in teaching in Years 7 to 9 are history, modern foreign languages, drama, music and physical education (PE). In Years 10 to 11, the strengths lie particularly in design and technology, geography, history and PE. In the sixth form, from the subjects focused upon in this inspection, the strengths lie in business studies, PE, geography, history, sociology and information and communications technology (ICT). Teaching of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory with the school's new literacy strategy beginning to make an impact. It is well developed in history, geography, music and ICT. Numeracy teaching across the school has begun to benefit from the new strategy. The use of computers to support teaching and learning in subjects other than ICT is too patchy. Due to the ineffective supervision of some of the staff on short term contracts who are from overseas, the quality of some teaching, and therefore pupils' learning, is unsatisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, although requirements for ICT are not fully met in a number of subjects and elements of design and technology are not currently covered due to recruitment difficulties.

Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good at all ages, for pupils in normal lessons and very good for those in either of the school's special units.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good provision particularly for pupils at an early stage of learning the English language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision for spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, although some opportunities for this are missed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good in most respects; some unsatisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' current levels of work and therefore for supporting the progress they make.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory: the headteacher and senior staff are very well respected and highly committed to the success of the school and they fully secure its inclusive ethos; the quality of other key staff ranges from very good to unsatisfactory; the focus on raising standards is not always sharp enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: they know how to operate as 'critical friends' to the school's management ; they fulfil all their statutory duties.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall: senior managers are strongly committed to this process; areas for improvement remain, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching in some subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall, with the need to keep under review the costs and benefits to the whole school of the provision of sixth form education.

Although the school has worked hard to overcome recruitment difficulties, the match of teachers to the curriculum is unsatisfactory in some subjects where induction of overseas staff on short-term contracts has been inadequate. This is having a temporary negative effect on the quality of teaching in some areas. The school's accommodation is well organised and is intensively and efficiently used, but is barely adequate for the number of pupils now attending. The provision of learning resources is generally satisfactory, although some sixth form subjects remain under-resourced. There is good provision of computers.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like coming to school.</li><li>• The school has high expectations of what their children can achieve.</li><li>• They feel comfortable to raise questions or problems with the school.</li><li>• The school helps their children to become mature and responsible.</li><li>• The school is well managed and led.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The range of activities the school provides outside lessons.</li><li>• The information the school provides about children's progress.</li></ul>

The inspection team agreed with most of these views but is concerned that not all teachers' expectations are high enough in some subjects. It believes that the school does provide an adequate range of extra-curricular activities and that the information provided to parents about their children's progress is broadly satisfactory.

## ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

## BLESSED HUGH FARINGDON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school's sixth form was established in September 1997. Numbers have grown steadily to the current level of 114. The proportion of the school's pupils who stay on into the sixth form has also risen steadily. In addition a number of students are recruited from outside. This inspection focused on A/AS-level courses in nine subjects, with some sampling of students' experience of a number of others. There are three pupils with statements of special educational need in the sixth form and a further eleven pupils with special educational needs.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

In most of the subjects inspected students are achieving at expected levels, taking into account the level they had reached by age 16. Most students complete the courses on which they initially enrol. Their attendance is good. Teaching overall is good although temporary arrangements in physics are leading to poor provision. It is very good in English, business studies, ICT and geography. As relatively new courses are settling down, there are indications of improvement. Leadership and management of the sixth form is good and, in general, students are happy that it meets their needs well.

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching in most subjects.
- Students' positive attitudes to their work and the effort they make.
- Working relationships among students and with staff.
- Access to the sixth form by students with a range of needs.
- The guidance given to students to support their progress.

#### What could be improved

- The curriculum breadth and cost effectiveness of the sixth form through productive links with other post-16 providers locally.

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

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory:</b> students' achievements indicate they are making appropriate progress given their starting point; teaching is sound; students are too reluctant to contribute their own ideas to discussion.
Physics	<b>Poor:</b> students are enthusiastic, keen to do well but are achieving at levels which are a little lower than expected given their starting point; the current temporary arrangements for the teaching of the subject are inadequate and management of the situation is unsatisfactory.
Business Studies	<b>Very good:</b> students make good progress and most achieve standards above those expected given their starting point. Teaching is consistently very good.

ICT	<b>Good:</b> the standards that students achieve are improving in the A-level course now that the quality of teaching is very good at this level.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Physical Education	<b>Good:</b> this is a new course at advanced level and students' work is in line with national expectations, in response to the good teaching.
Geography	<b>Very good:</b> students are making progress in line with expectations, given their starting points, supported by very good and excellent teaching.
History	<b>Good:</b> standards being achieved by students are in line with national expectations; teaching is good overall, with elements that are very good.
Sociology	<b>Good:</b> students are achieving high standards, which are often better than their outcomes in other subjects. Teaching is good overall and the subject is well managed.
English	<b>Good:</b> standards achieved in A-level examinations have been in line with the national average and 2002 results show an improvement. Teaching is very good, as is the management of the subject.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Satisfactory:</b> students generally feel well supported in their studies.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Day-to-day leadership and management of the sixth form are effective. The development plan contains a range of priorities, including the need for more links with other providers, but does not include targets for students' performance.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of courses available.</li> <li>• The accessibility of teachers.</li> <li>• The way students are inducted into the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of careers advice.</li> <li>• The information they get about the progress they are making.</li> <li>• Support with personal problems.</li> </ul>

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. In 2001, the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected level in National Curriculum tests at age 14 was in line with the national average in English and mathematics, but below in science. The proportion reaching or exceeding the higher level 6 was above the national average in English and in line with it in mathematics and science. Results were comparable with those of similar schools, with the proportion of pupils achieving level 6 or above in English being much better.
2. The 2002 results saw an improvement in the proportion achieving or exceeding the expected level in English but a significant downward trend in mathematics and science, such that they are likely to be below the average for similar schools nationally.
3. The school's improvement trend in English has been consistently in line with the national trend. In mathematics and science, results have been inconsistent from one year to the next, but have mirrored the differences in attainment on entry at age 11 between different year groups. In general, pupils are therefore making broadly appropriate progress through Years 7 to 9, although where there are weaknesses in the teaching, progress is less secure.
4. In terms of the proportion achieving five or more higher grades, both boys and girls achieved standards in GCSE (and equivalent) examinations in 2001 which were close to the national average for similar schools, although below the overall national average. Subjects with greater proportions of pupils achieving the higher grades in 2001 were English, French, drama, music and art. Significantly lower than national average proportions of higher grades were achieved in science and mathematics, although the overall pass rates in these two subjects was close to the national average. In 2002, the proportion achieving higher grades declined significantly and is likely to be well below the average for similar schools. These poorer results do mirror the significantly lower levels of attainment on entry to the school of this year group of pupils. In general pupils are, therefore, making broadly appropriate progress. Provisional results indicate that there were relative strengths this year in English, drama, design and technology, French and music. In other subjects, results are likely to have been in line with, or below, national averages.
5. The trend of improvement in the school's GCSE point score per pupil has been uneven, with a strong improvement in 2001, when results on this measure were above the average for similar schools. This improvement was not sustained in 2002.
6. Results at age 14 and age 16 in 2002 were significantly below the targets set by governors but these targets were not realistic having taken no account of the prior attainment levels of these year groups.
7. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress overall and make good progress over time in relation to their individual targets. Those pupils who are

withdrawn for specific work on literacy or other basic skills are making good progress towards the targets set for them.



## **Sixth form**

8. In 2001, the average points score of A/AS-level candidates, both boys and girls, was close to the national average. Results for 2002 appear to indicate a continuing upward trend at A-level, with particularly good results in geography and English. On the other hand, AS-level results were not as good as in 2001, partly due to some students following courses which were inappropriate for them.

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

9. The pupils' attitudes towards their school are good. This is a significant improvement on the comments made by the previous inspection. The pupils are proud of their school, they are tolerant of one another and willingly uphold the inclusive ethos and rules of the school. The majority of pupils seen in lessons engage in their work, concentrate and have positive attitudes towards their learning.
10. The clear majority of pupils behave well in lessons, listening attentively, following instructions and settling quickly to the tasks given. They are eager to be involved, to contribute and to learn. They concentrate and work hard, independently and in differing group situations. For example, in a very well taught tutor period for Year 7, the pupils worked hard considering friendships. They were successful in a variety of group structures, behaving and listening very well and valuing each other's work. Where behaviour in lessons was unsatisfactory, this related to weaknesses in the quality and teaching.
11. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes towards work in class and when taught individually. In the Bartimaeus Area, where support is provided for pupils who have difficulties coping with the routines of school life, there is clearly trust and respect between staff and pupils, co-operation and very positive attitudes shown by pupils. Pupils in the Asperger Resource Centre showed very good attitudes, concentrating well, for instance, in a mathematics lesson.
12. The great majority of pupils are well behaved in assemblies and when they move around the school. In the playground areas at break-time and at lunch-time behaviour is good. When using public transport and mixing with the general public, their behaviour is good. There have been no permanent exclusions during the past year. This is a significant improvement on the last inspection.
13. The great majority of pupils are aware of right and wrong and comply with school and class rules. If any disruption or any bullying does arise, members of staff handle the affair very well and limit any effects. The majority of pupils follow the excellent role models provided by all members of staff, by being polite and courteous. They form orderly queues and wait their turn. The limited sizes of the communal areas, corridors and stairs place a premium on patience and tolerance. No examples of any oppressive behaviour, sexism or racism were seen during the inspection and the great majority of pupils understand the impact of their behaviour on others.
14. The pupils handled resources such as musical instruments, subject materials, computer equipment and books appropriately.
15. Personal development and relationships within the school are very good. Pupils and staff enjoy very good relationships and the majority of pupils confirm that they are happy to talk to members of staff if they have a problem. Pupils accept readily fellow pupils who may come from different backgrounds or who may have a range of abilities or

difficulties. Senior pupils act as school prefects and assist in the administration of the school. Pupils from all year groups are members of the school council, are involved in collections for a range of charities and take up roles and responsibilities assigned to them. The opportunities for them to take initiative and personal responsibility are sometimes limited by the styles of teaching.

16. Attendance in the school is satisfactory. For the school year 2000/01 attendance for the school was recorded as 90.4 per cent and was below the national average for secondary schools. For the same period, unauthorised absence was lower than the national average. The absence levels were highest amongst pupils in Years 8 and 10. The school confirmed that illness and additional holidays were the most significant reasons for pupils' absences. There is some lateness for morning registration, the most commonly reported reason for which is public transport delays. The registration of pupils at the start of morning sessions is handled efficiently and the majority of registration periods are used productively. Arrangements for recording attendance and categorising absences fully comply with legal requirements.

### **Sixth form**

17. Students have very good attitudes towards the school; they have pride in the school and its achievements, they enjoy coming to school and positively contribute to their learning and to the running of the school. Students are mature and delightful members of the school community, enjoying very positive relationships with each other, younger pupils and members of the staff. They comply with the school rules, they support staff, fellow students and pupils by accepting the responsibilities given to them and by using their initiative. Their attendance is satisfactory and they are satisfactory timekeepers. There have been no students permanently excluded over the past year.
18. Their personal skills are developed in school through the tutorial arrangements and students confirm that they benefit from and enjoy the very good relationships with their tutors. They also confirmed, during the inspection, that they benefit from the strong and effective management team in the sixth form, who are very supportive and always approachable.
19. Students are involved in the running of the school through participation in the school council, acting as head and assistant boy and girl and by being involved in a range of support arrangements for younger pupils in the school. Sixth formers act as mentors for younger pupils and they have recently formed a pastoral support arrangement for pupils. The 'Listening Ear' was initiated by a student in 2001 and this now provides a confidential 'drop-in' facility at lunchtime, for any pupil with a problem that it is felt would be difficult to discuss with a member of staff.
20. The school provides good enrichment for students through team building exercises and work on developing life skills, although the key skills learning for students is not always of a sufficiently high quality.
21. Students' views of the school as expressed in their questionnaires are that the school provision gives them opportunities to follow their chosen career and that information about subjects and courses was clear. They were not so positive about the information given to them on their progress, or the careers advice they have received. The students spoken to during the inspection did not agree entirely with the negative comments made in the survey, but they did confirm the positives. They also confirmed that the school listens to students, that they enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise others to join.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

22. Teaching and learning are on the whole satisfactory. In more than nine in every ten lessons, teaching is at least satisfactory. In just over half of lessons, the quality ranges from good to excellent. However, in almost one in ten lessons teaching and learning are unsatisfactory and very occasionally poor. Generally the school is an orderly learning community and pupils say that they experience a variety of ways of learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and often lead to well managed group work and effective one-to-one support whilst others are reading and writing. Learning support assistants are effective, particularly when they counsel pupils exhibiting problem behaviour. Pupils respond well to opportunities for independent study, such as Internet based research. Homework is set and recorded clearly and extends good opportunities for learning. Pupils who experience difficulties can get help at the homework club.
23. Pupils learn well when each individual in class is challenged to think and be actively involved. This occurs when teachers have prepared the lesson with clear objectives in mind. These objectives are stated clearly for pupils, re-focused on throughout and reviewed at the end. Very good and excellent examples of clear structure, with pace and variety leading to engagement of learners, were seen. In a Year 10 geography class, the teacher made clear the need to internalise knowledge when she told a pupil to answer without looking at the textbook because the answer needed to be, *“what you know, what’s in your head.”* In a drama lesson, with excellent pace and variety, for Year 7, the teacher continuously focused on the understanding of drama and the subject skills underlying the activities, making pupils write key terms and concepts into notebooks to record the knowledge they were acquiring.
24. When teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, a common flaw is a tendency to allow off-task chatter to build up, until pupils’ concentration lapses. Sometimes the objectives and direction of the lesson are not clear to pupils, as was the case in several science lessons. To some extent, unsatisfactory teaching is associated with some, but not all, recently recruited teachers on short-term contracts, some of whom are unfamiliar with the curriculum and other expectations. The school offers an induction programme, and close supervision is expected from the head of subject. However, action to prevent problems caused by inexperience or unfamiliarity among new recruits and under-performance of established teachers has not been sufficiently rapid or consistent.
25. Marking is regular, but generally teachers do not make enough reference to data about previous performance as a basis for setting targets or measuring progress.
26. Teaching in a number of areas has benefited from the national Key Stage 3 strategy. In English and mathematics, schemes of work, planning and teaching in many lessons have improved as a result. The structure of lessons in art and history has also benefited and in ICT the development of the three-part structure of lessons is beginning, although the plenary section is not yet successful. The impact of the literacy strategy is visible across a wide range of subjects but this is not yet true of numeracy. The use of computers to support teaching and learning is unsatisfactory in a number of subjects (mathematics, science, art, geography, history and physical education.).
27. Teaching is good in English, satisfactory in mathematics and unsatisfactory in science. Good quality teaching occurs frequently in drama, design and technology, business studies, geography, history, sociology, music and physical education. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages, ICT and art. Religious education in this denominational school was inspected separately by representatives of the Diocese.

28. Since the previous inspection, the difference in the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9, as opposed to Years 10 and 11 has reduced, although it remains less good overall in the former, mainly due to the way that unsatisfactory short-term contract teachers are deployed. Teachers' expectations are higher and pupils' independent learning skills have improved through homework and the variety of working in class. The range of subjects in which teaching is good has extended.
29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and so they make good progress in their lessons. Entry assessment data is effectively used to identify pupils with special educational needs, set targets for them and provide strategies and support. Additionally there are systems in place to identify these pupils after they have entered the school. The ethos of inclusion ensures that teachers are aware of their needs in general and they provide some adapted teaching and learning resources. Where it is provided, support for pupils with special educational needs within lessons is good. The learning support assistants are very knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils they are supporting and provide sufficient challenge to enable them to become increasingly independent in their learning. However, in too many lessons teachers are not aware of the pupils' specific needs as detailed on their individual education plans and the targets in them are not used for planning. Teachers do not adequately share their lesson plans with the learning support assistants and this reduces the effectiveness of support. The teaching of pupils in small groups or individual sessions, when they are withdrawn from lessons, is good, because of the knowledge and skills of the learning support staff. This facilitates the delivery of small-step, individual programmes and the close monitoring of progress. There are high expectations for learning and behaviour for those pupils who spend some of their time in the Bartimaeus Area. This is a very orderly environment, in which the focus is learning and completion of work. Attitudes are very positive and there is a high level of trust and co-operation between pupils and staff.
30. There was not consistent evidence that teachers have such clear information about gifted and talented pupils, nor that they have a clear idea of the levels of attainment that they should be working towards. As a result of good teaching suited to their needs, these pupils progress well through Years 10 and 11 in mathematics and art, for instance, but not in science. Pupils who have English as an additional language are supported well and make progress at the same rate as their classmates.

### **Sixth form**

31. Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge through which they develop students' learning. Groups are managed well to ensure participation by all and there is effective interaction on a one-to-one basis, as teachers challenge and support individuals. Good learning is reinforced by regular and thorough marking. There was no evidence that learning is impaired when groups are particularly small. Lessons were seen, such as geography with a small group in Year 13, in which a very good range of resources and techniques was deployed. Often, as in a Year 12 English lesson on *Anthony and Cleopatra*, the teacher collaborated closely with the students, so that teaching and learning become seamlessly blended and students make very good progress.

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

32. Overall the breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, in addition to the National Curriculum subjects, pupils receive weekly lessons in personal, social and health education. Discrete lessons in information and communications technology (ICT) have just been introduced and this has greatly improved the coverage of the National Curriculum requirements in this subject. Current staffing problems are affecting the teaching of some aspects of design and technology, including textiles, systems and control, and resistant materials.
33. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to make choices about the addition of two subjects to the list of core subjects or taking ICT leading to a double certification. Keen linguists have the opportunity to study two languages at GCSE. There is a very strong inclusive ethos which provides options that cater for pupils of all abilities, including combinations of activities such as work experience, school and college attendance for those who find taking the full range of subjects inappropriate. Work towards the Certificate of Achievement is available for those who are not able to take GCSE. Individual programmes of study are worked out for pupils who have special educational needs, which include support sessions instead of some French lessons. Pupils can follow either a single or a double science course. All pupils follow a personal, social and health education course and religious education.
34. The statutory curriculum is not fully taught in that requirements for ICT are not fully met in Years 9 to 11 because it is not an integral part of all subjects. In science, for example, there are too few opportunities for pupils for use data logging, although in design and technology computers are used to good effect. There are also shortcomings in this respect in mathematics, history, art and geography. There is a need to monitor the use of information and communications technology across all subjects of the curriculum to ensure that requirements are met.
35. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory for those in Years 10 and 11. Study skills, citizenship, careers education and health education are covered across Years 7 to 11 through a combination of the work covered in PSHE lessons, science and religious education. The programme for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is becoming established and includes a few external speakers, in particular the police liaison officer. The use of more outside specialists would be beneficial. The programme includes education about drugs, alcohol and smoking. Sex and relationships education is covered across the curriculum in science, religious education and PSHE and includes a one-day retreat. There is a range of additional support activities for those pupils who need them, which include the use of Circle Time, groups to raise self-esteem and anger management.
36. The PSHE programme in Years 10 and 11 is less well established. Close monitoring will be necessary to ensure that the required components continue to be covered now that citizenship is being added to the programme. Although sex and relationships education is covered in PSHE, science and religious education, the input from different subjects areas is not monitored to ensure that the programme taught is cohesive and that the information provided is related to everyday situations. Half-day sessions are planned on sex education and drugs education and a parenting programme is also planned.

37. The school works hard at tailoring the curriculum to benefit those pupils who may be at particular risk, or have special educational needs. The quality and range of this provision is very good.
38. Curricular arrangements promote the inclusion of all pupils with special educational needs and they have access to the National Curriculum. Pupils spend most of their time working in mixed ability or ability groups. Some withdrawal teaching is offered for literacy and numeracy development or to work towards specific targets. Withdrawal sessions are carefully planned and care is taken to schedule them so that access to the full curriculum is not denied. Well-staffed homework clubs provide good opportunities for pupils to seek help.
39. Pupils who are attached to the Bartimaeus Area for support with their behaviour attend their lessons and have full access to the curriculum. They are only withdrawn into the Area for teaching or help with their behaviour when necessary and return to their lessons when the issue is resolved. The school aims to broaden pupils' experiences and engage them in school and makes efforts to boost their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. To ensure that pupils continue to attend and succeed, the school works very effectively with outside agencies and the local authority. The school makes full use of pupils' pastoral support plans, individual educational plans and pupils' statements, in arranging their provision. As well as special educational needs provision, the Bartimaeus Area and the Asperger Resource Centre the school has established a "self-esteem group" for twelve pupils, a peer mentoring group and an "accessing potential" scheme. This provides pupils with a broad curriculum that includes access to college and work experience.
40. The very short lunch break and the number of after-school buses to a wide range of destinations make the provision of extra-curricular activities difficult. Nevertheless, much is on offer. Drama and the performing arts are well represented and a Christmas musical and other school productions play a prominent role. Out-of-school music is very evident and theatre and concert visits enlarge pupils' horizons. Dance and games clubs cater for many pupils and public speaking and debating are encouraged. A new school newspaper is in the pipeline; girls are encouraged to use computers after school; an Art club is run and there are many visits to galleries and museums locally and in the capital. A lively skateboard club was observed. Much of this activity is also available for the Sixth Form. The school has recently been awarded an "Artsmark" and is currently bidding to become a Performing Arts College.
41. The school teaches pupils to appreciate their own and others' cultures. However the school agrees that more could be done to fully prepare pupils for life in multicultural Britain. Art produced by pupils is on display in the school, but there are few examples of art from around the world or materials from other cultures. Pupils' own cultures are celebrated well in school. 'Black History Month' was introduced into the history curriculum, for example, during the time of the inspection.
42. Careers education for pupils is included in the PSHE curriculum and provision is satisfactory. In year ten, pupils undertake a week of work experience that the majority of students find successful. The school invites many visitors to support careers education, including a theatre group and members of the local Rotary Club, who visit the school to improve students' interview skills. There have been difficulties in initiating the new careers advice programme planned by an external contractor. These factors have caused the school difficulty with careers provision. A range of careers resources is available to the pupils including materials, books and information and communications technology.

43. The school makes use of the Education Business Partnership and enjoys the support of many businesses in enabling all pupils in Year 11 to benefit from work experience and to allow some pupils to attend extended work experience placements. Although the local water company supports the school and has been involved with Business Enterprise, giving pupils interview skills training, other companies that previously had links with the school sadly are no longer able to support the school.
44. Links with partner institutions are satisfactory. The school is developing relationships with neighbouring secondary schools and sixth form colleges. Relationships with providers of college places for pupils on enhanced curricular activities are good. The school also enjoys good relationships with the many feeder primary schools. The catchment area for the school is wide and this is a considerable achievement for the staff of the lower school. Pupils and parents agree that the pupils' transitions to the school are handled very well. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and those children involved in the Asperger Resource Centre are very positive about their transfers between schools.
45. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has been improved since the last inspection. A school chaplain has been appointed who takes a mass once a week, provides daily prayers for use in registration and works with teachers. A structured PSHE programme has been put in place, which addresses issues such as self-awareness, friendships, rights and responsibilities, bullying, emotional health, people with disabilities, environmental health, citizenship and careers education. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also addressed throughout the curriculum and is good in art, geography, history music and physical education. As a result of this coherent approach, including religious education, pupils gain insights into different values and beliefs. They show respect for themselves and for others and explore meaning and purpose. They are able to show expressive and creative qualities in subjects such as art, physical education and music. Moral development is good. There is racial harmony in the school and behaviour is good. A moral code of behaviour is effectively reinforced in curriculum subjects. In geography, for example pupils consider views on birth control, and the conflict of human and environmental concerns in issues such as whaling and fishing. Pupils' social development is good. They relate well to one another and work successfully in groups. Teaching methods in the PSHE course encourage pupils to formulate and express their own views. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They study other cultures in geography, look at the contributions of different scientists in science, explore painting, sculpture and architecture of different cultures in art and have opportunities to take part in school productions, choirs and bands. In physical education they explore cultural diversity in dance and participate in artistic and cultural activities. There is however insufficient reference to Britain as a multicultural society.

### **Sixth form**

46. Pupils in the sixth form have a programme of PSHE which includes a number of visiting speakers who provide information about relevant issues such as the Samaritans and taking a gap year.
47. Careers guidance for the post-16 students, is unsatisfactory and was criticised by students in their questionnaires. However, students embarking on courses of higher or further education and those electing to enter the world of work are satisfied with the advice they have received. This included the support they received on the completion of their university application forms and advice on qualifications needed to enter the world

of work. There are visitors to the school to talk on careers and students have access to the range of careers resources.

48. A strong ethos of inclusion permeates the sixth form and students are expected to take a full part in school life; expectations for their learning are high.

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

49. The provision for the care of pupils in the school is good. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. All members of staff show concern for the well-being of pupils, the quality of information kept on each pupil is detailed and members of staff know pupils and their medical and personal needs well. The school is supported very well by health professionals and by members of other agencies.
50. The school identifies and deals well with hazards found on the site and health and safety checks and inspections are regularly undertaken. The school's health and safety policy is being re-written and administrative arrangements for health and safety are being improved. The governors and members of staff on the safety committee take their responsibilities in this area seriously. Risk assessments have been made of the school's activities by a consultant and actions required to remedy any concerns are implemented and followed up by the school. Risk assessments are made by members of teaching staff within subject departments. Assessments of all school trips are made to comply with local authority guidelines.
51. Several members of staff are trained to administer first aid and the school's procedures for the care and treatment of pupils are very good. Appropriate records are kept regarding the care and medical needs of pupils. Thorough precautions are in place for dealing with emergencies arising from pupils' medical conditions and for dealing with accidents and injuries. The school nurse and other health professionals support the school well.
52. The school's arrangements for child protection are very good. The policy and procedures follow the guidelines of the local committee for the protection of children. An assistant head teacher is designated as the person responsible for child protection and co-ordinates very well with the external agencies involved in this sensitive aspect of the school's work. Other members of staff are regularly trained to ensure they understand the school's arrangements and procedures. The school monitors pupils very well, especially those pupils cared for by the authorities as well as those children whose welfare is causing concern. In line with local authority guidance, police checks are undertaken on new staff and helpers.
53. The school's ethos, the consistent use of positive behaviour strategies and good monitoring by the majority of the staff support the good behaviour seen in the school. In lessons where behaviour of pupils has not been as good, teachers do not always consistently apply the school's policies. The school has good procedures in place for encouraging good behaviour, with staff able to use a range of appropriate rewards or sanctions. Assemblies, class activities and tutorial time are also used to reinforce good behaviour. The pupils are encouraged to devise their own code of conduct rules and a range of certificates and merits is used to praise and encourage. The school supports pupils well in providing opportunities for them to acquire life skills, obtain careers advice and have work experience. The school provides personal development opportunities for all and this is evident with the very good work done in the Bartimaeus Area, the special education needs department, the Asperger Resource Centre and through the alternative curriculum opportunities provided for pupils.



54. The school makes good use of the unique “Planner and Day-book” issued to each pupil. This document is central to pupils’ life in school. It includes instructions for them, a code of conduct, rules on appearance and uniform requirements, prayers and a copy of the home-school agreement. Lists of awards and details of all events affecting the pupil’s day are entered in this book. This book is a very good record of a pupil’s performance, punctuality, behaviour and of rewards earned.
55. The school is good at monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour and parents and carers confirm that their children feel safe in the school. Parents also confirm that there are few incidents of bullying or racism and that the school deals with any issues speedily and sensitively.
56. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is satisfactory, despite significant difficulties with a recent upgrade to the computerised attendance records. Although the school has invested a significant amount of time in making calls home on the first day of any unreported absence, the computer problems have hampered follow up on unauthorised absences. The school communicates well with parents on arrangements for timekeeping and is monitoring pupil lateness.
57. The Educational Welfare Officer is in school twice a week and provides the school with very good support in its endeavours to maintain and improve attendance levels. There are incentives in place to improve pupils’ attendance and punctuality.
58. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils’ personal development are good. The teachers and support staff have good knowledge of pupils’ needs and work hard to improve pupils’ personal development. Much management and staff effort has been put into establishing a ‘self-esteem group’, a peer mentoring group for pupils and an ‘accessing potential’ scheme designed to help pupils with personal development, study skills and access to the curriculum. These schemes are inclusive and have successfully encouraged pupils to attend and remain in school. The help provided for pupils by the chaplaincy team is also supporting this aspect of the school’s work well.
59. The monitoring and support of pupils with special needs are good. For the pupils associated with the Asperger Resource Centre and Bartimaeus Area, the monitoring and support provided for them is very good.
60. Pupils join in a range of events in the school that contributes to their personal development including attending raising money for charities, visits and extra-curricular activities. There are opportunities for pupils to develop independence and to use their initiative, most notably through membership of the school council and by taking up duties in the upper school as prefects, however there are few opportunities to undertake research or take responsibility for their own learning.
61. Procedures for assessing attainment and progress and use of this information to develop appropriate schemes of work is adequate. However, procedures for monitoring and supporting progress remain insufficiently robust in some subjects. Planners are used well for many purposes but not for recording meaningful subject-related targets. In annual subject reports, comments are of variable usefulness, often being too vague to provide clear guidance on how to improve and setting imprecise targets. Monitoring sheets, which provide interim information, now indicate the improvement which the school believes can be made by each pupil in each subject. In some subjects, target grades are too often unambitious in repeating the predicted grade. When coursework deadlines are recorded as not being met, it is not clear what action will be taken.

62. All the students spoken to greatly appreciate the advice, support and guidance provided by the staff on personal and academic matters. The school is very sensitive to all the needs of groups of students from a range of diverse backgrounds and abilities. As in the rest of the school, students are well cared for, their welfare is assured and their working environment is safe.
63. The quality of recording and assessing the performance of pupils with special educational needs is good overall, although this rests largely with the learning support staff with little input from subject areas. Dialogue with staff ensures that pupils are involved in the setting of targets and are aware of their progress towards them. Statements are regularly reviewed and provision indicated is in place. Pupils are fully involved in the review of their individual education plan targets and statements. Progress towards literacy and numeracy targets is monitored through standardised tests and recording by special educational needs staff. Subject staff are insufficiently involved in the review of these pupils' targets and the setting of new ones.
64. There is very effective, flexible working between staff in the Special Educational Needs department, Asperger Resource Centre and Bartimaeus Area, who also link closely with the heads of year and heads of school to ensure consistent approach to pupils with both learning and behavioural difficulties. The flexibility of support allows pupils to receive the support they need and some of them receive peer mentoring or emotional support as they approach examinations. There is very good liaison with a wide range of outside agencies including health services, social services, educational psychology and the LEA's School Inclusion Service. Very close working with primary schools ensures that pupils needs are known prior to entering Year 7 and a series of assessments on entry provides further information for the identification of pupils' special educational needs. There is an established system of identification of these pupils when they are in subsequent years.
65. The referral process for pupils to have support from the Bartimaeus Area is clear and precisely used, and pupils regard the provision highly. They feel that they are valued because their learning is paramount, so that if they need to come out of lessons they are expected to continue with their work and achieve. The progress of these pupils is very well monitored and skilled support is always available.
66. The school has many contacts with outside agencies who provide help for the school in several pastoral initiatives and in maintaining the caring ethos of the school. The church supports the school and its chaplaincy team with advice and help and the organisation of the retreats for pupils.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

67. Statements are regularly reviewed and provision is implemented according to where the pupils need support. The quality of academic monitoring in the sixth form is generally good, but there are weaknesses related to poor teaching in physics.

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

68. The school's provision for the educational and personal support of sixth form students has all the features found in the main school and is good. Students are supported through the tutorial system; their tutors provide group and one-to-one contact and advice for both years in the sixth form. Students greatly appreciate both the effort put

into this aspect by teachers and the high quality of advice that they provide. All members of staff know their students and their needs very well and are able to tailor the help they provide accordingly.

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

69. Parents' views of the school are positive, an improvement since the previous inspection. The school has established good links with parents and provides satisfactory information for them. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is also satisfactory, as is their contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home.
70. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents were positive about the school and surveys undertaken by the school, suggest high levels of satisfaction. In their questionnaires, the majority of parents confirmed that the school works closely with them.
71. The school confirms that parents support school events well and that there is a high take up at curriculum meetings and other school events. Parents appreciate the accessibility of the head-teacher. Parents are invited to attend family Mass held at school and performances and concerts held throughout the year.
72. Parents spoken to during the inspection believe that the school communicates as well as it can and that the information they receive is good. In their questionnaires, a significant minority of parents did not feel well informed about the curriculum and the progress their children are making. The inspection findings are that while arrangements for reporting on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall the comments and targets in pupils' reports are too often imprecise. An important and successful element of the school's communication system is the provision of "Day books" to each pupil. These books are full of information about the school, are inspected and signed by parents, can be used to communicate with school and are greatly appreciated by parents.
73. The school's prospectus is detailed and well presented. The governors annual report to parents is a good source of information.
74. Parents are involved with the school "Friends Association" in organising social and fund raising events, however involvement is limited by the school's wide catchment area. Parents are involved in the life of the school as governors, employees and by helping with extra-curricular activities. A parent is involved in supporting the business links with the school and supporting the Young Enterprise group for pupils in Year 11. For the parents of children with special educational needs the school's work with them is good, for the parents of pupils linked to the Asperger resource centre or the Bartimaeus Area, co-operation with parents is very good through use of the day books and contact at home.
75. Parents feel that the transition from primary school is handled very well and that pupils settle quickly into their new school. Parents feel comfortable visiting school; they appreciate the warm welcome and professional manner with which their enquiries are handled by the school.
76. The special educational needs department has effective links with parents. Parents of statemented pupils are expected to attend their child's review. Parents of other pupils with special educational needs are invited to school parents' evenings to discuss their child's progress and the targets set. The Bartimaeus Area has excellent links with

parents because there are frequent meetings and telephone conversations to ensure consistency of approach towards these pupils' behaviour and to set targets.

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

77. The headteacher has, through his strong commitment and determination and by winning the support and confidence of staff, governors and parents, led the school most successfully through a period of considerable change and overall improvement since the last inspection. The relatively new senior group of staff work well together to continue to promote improvement. They recognise well the need to prioritise their actions to ensure that remaining concerns about teaching quality and pupil performance are quickly and effectively addressed. Roles and responsibilities are clearly laid out and understood.
78. The current improvement plan identifies the appropriate priorities. These are to improve the school climate, the standards pupils achieve, teaching quality and the effectiveness of leadership and management to further develop the partnership with parents and the community. Another priority is the continued development of the sixth form. The school's mission, which it succeeds in achieving, is to 'build a Catholic school community which is based firmly upon Gospel values'. As part of this mission there is the commitment to 'encourage all to recognise and develop their full potential'. Now that the school has achieved a climate and ethos which are fully conducive to learning, and has the strong support of parents, the leadership and management now need to sharpen further the focus on raising the standards attained by its willing learners.
79. The school improvement plan is overcomplex. It would benefit now from a refocusing which would place this task at the forefront. A reduction of the number of planned actions would help staff focus on those most likely to have significant impact on raising standards and promising effective teaching and learning.
80. Monitoring of teaching, leading to the identification of opportunities to share good practice or to the professional development needs of some staff, is effective in some parts of the school. It is a weakness in mathematics, science, art and modern languages and is not yet well enough co-ordinated by senior managers.
81. The plan contains clear targets at whole school levels for pupil performance in the next two years in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations. These are not well enough guided by analysis of prior attainment data and some are unrealistically high. Governors are sensibly revising them. There are targets for staying-on and retention rates in the sixth form plan, but none relating to students' performance. This is an important omission.
82. There is now a much improved supply of data and analysis to help departments to identify appropriately challenging targets for individual pupils. These data are already being used well in design and technology and geography but not as yet in mathematics, science, modern languages and physical education. Senior managers need to restate expectations of heads of department and provide necessary co-ordination.
83. Governors fulfil their statutory duties, save for a minor deficit in their annual report to parents. They are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They operate effectively in committees, one of which demonstrates exemplary practice in performing the role of 'critical friend'. They need to keep under review the relative costs and benefits to the provision for strategy age pupils of maintaining a sixth form. They should look to improve the curriculum breadth offered in the sixth form and cost

effectiveness of the sixth form by pursuing with more vigour the potential links with other providers.

84. Financial management is careful, but its relationship to the priorities in the school improvement plan is not explicit.
85. There is clear delegation and scope for key staff to show initiative. On the other hand, weaknesses in the leadership and management of some departments, most widespread in science, indicate a need for tighter supervision. Most departments, however, are making an effective contribution to the school's success, particularly design and technology, geography, English and ICT.
86. The special educational needs co-ordinator has clear ideas about the approach to special educational needs in the school and its future direction. She is aware of the steps that need to be taken to improve the already good provision. The co-ordinator of the Bartimaeus Area has set out clearly its purpose and use and these are understood by all staff.
87. The use of new technology is satisfactory. The systems for recording and reporting attendance proved difficult to implement effectively, causing some lack of efficiency. Systems are well used by the administration and work very well. Training for the teaching staff is in hand. Plans are in place to allow easy access to systems by teachers from departments and classrooms. Further enhancement is planned in terms of visual learning. The recent appointment of a network manager for the whole school will increase the use of new technology significantly.
88. There are many teachers who are well qualified and committed for the courses they teach. They do much to support their less experienced colleagues. However, the match of teachers overall to the curriculum is unsatisfactory as the school has experienced serious recruitment difficulties in recent years, adversely affecting the quality and continuity of learning. There are currently ten unqualified teachers on the staff and several teachers from overseas, adapting to new circumstances and methods of working. A high proportion of the unsatisfactory teaching and learning was observed in their lessons. In mathematics only three of the eight teachers are specialists and in science half the staff are inexperienced. In music nearly a quarter of lessons are taught by non-specialists. In design and technology, a skilled team lacks specialists in textiles and resistant materials.
89. There is a good match of teachers to those pupils who have special educational needs. Teachers of pupils with SEN or in the Asperger Resource Centre are well trained, experience and skilled. Learning Support Assistants are effectively deployed.
90. The main school accommodation has not expanded since the last inspection in 1996 although the number on roll has increased significantly, by a third. The site provided adequate space and facilities for the number on roll then and is coping now. There has been some updating of specialist accommodation since the last inspection, notably in design and technology and computer suites which now provide stimulating learning environments. The plans to extend classroom, dining and circulation space are essential to ensure that the quality of education provided is not adversely affected, should the school continue to grow. The lack of specialist space for drama remains a significant weakness. The teaching of some geography lessons, the GCSE physical education course and sociology in non-specialist areas hampers learning. Display in all areas of the school is good and most areas of the school are in good decorative order.

91. Accommodation for the Bartimaeus Area, in a specially converted part of the school is very good. Computers are available which are on the network, so that pupils can complete work they have started in lessons. The Asperger Resource Centre is very well equipped.
92. Best Value principles are appropriately applied to the award of contracts and the purchase of significant equipment, for instance computers.
93. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Significant recent investment has provided very good opportunities for pupils to work with state-of-the-art computer aided design and computer aided manufacture in design technology, although pupils in the same department use food technology equipment that is dated. Considerable investment in books and equipment has also transformed the business education department. The school has more than the national average numbers of computers. The absence of appropriate hardware and software is preventing full delivery of the National Curriculum in art. Further investment in computers and musical instruments is needed to support sixth form study and the rapidly growing GCSE music sets. The shortage of books, magazines and journals and access to appropriate television and video is unsatisfactory in history and sociology. The PE department has a good stock of quality equipment to support both indoor and outdoor activities. There is good quality information and communications technology to support pupils who have special educational needs and the teachers in the Asperger Resource Centre have used self-help and improvisation to create a range of good resources to ensure their pupils play a full role in the daily life of the school. The library, with its stock of approximately 8000 books, is being transformed into a learning resource centre with a further 1000 books borrowed each year from the LEA's Library Service and twelve computers with Internet access.
94. The special educational needs department is well resourced and has just received some computers, which are awaiting connection to the network. The accommodation is adequate. Learning support assistants receive a brief induction programme. They recognise their training needs and are concerned to meet these by attending courses whenever possible. They are invited to attend school training days, have in-house training and are developing subject specific skills.
95. Arrangements for the support and professional development of both newly qualified and newly appointed staff are satisfactory overall with a well-structured induction programme. However, there are serious shortcomings in the attention given by some managers to the needs of some inexperienced staff, particularly from overseas, in coming to terms with the curriculum and other expectations.

## **Sixth form**

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

96. Day-to-day management by the head of sixth form and her deputy is effective. The headteacher and the governing body have been deeply committed to the establishment of a Catholic Sixth Form in Reading and they are pleased with its success. Governors must, however, continue to reassure themselves and parents that the costs to the statutory-age provision are outweighed by the benefits of providing a sixth form. It should more actively explore links with other providers, so as both to keep down costs and broaden the curriculum.

### ***Staffing***

97. The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory, overall. It is very good in design and technology and history, and good in a further four areas. Only in physics is provision poor: there is just one unqualified teacher and this is detrimental to students' progress.

***Resources***

98. These are broadly adequate for the range of courses offered but there are shortcomings particularly in history and sociology.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

99. Since the last inspection, the school has made significant improvements, particularly in relation to pupils' attitudes and behaviour, the quality of leadership and management provided by senior staff and many other key staff. It has successfully established a sixth form. It is now in a strong position, given the skills and commitment of key managers, to sharpen its focus and move ahead on the following fronts.

(1) Improve the quality of teaching where there are identified weaknesses particularly in science and in other subjects where weaknesses are identified.  
(Paragraphs: 22, 24, 128, 136, 141, 157, 209.)

(2) Further develop the use of pupil data and their analysis to:

- ensure all subject teachers identify appropriate targets for each of the pupils;
- share with pupils (and their parents) better information about the progress they should expect to make, and what they need to do to improve the standard of their work;
- ensure that governors set appropriately challenging targets for the school's performance in public tests and exams.

(Paragraphs: 61, 81, 82.)

(3) Sharpen the focus of, and increase the staff's understanding and ownership of the school's improvement plan by:

- reducing the number of priorities;
- reducing the number of actions to be taken;
- sharpening the criteria for measuring success;
- giving further emphasis to the raising of pupils' and students' performance.

(Paragraphs: 77, 78, 79.)

(4) In so far as the school continues to rely on the employment of teachers on short-term contracts during current recruitment difficulties, ensure that the full range of induction and supervision needs of these staff are satisfied.  
(Paragraphs: 88, 95.)

(5) Through more focused line management, clarify the legitimate expectations on all heads of department and take steps to ensure that all are performing at the level of those very good practitioners in the school, particularly in relation to monitoring and development of the quality of teaching and the use of pupil performance data where these are not already in place.  
(Paragraph 85.)

(6) Ensure that all teaching staff are aware of the targets in the individual education plans of pupils with SEN and use these plans (i) to advise their teaching strategies with these pupils and (ii) to monitor the progress these pupils are making.  
(Paragraph 29.)

### Sixth form

(1) Improve its cost effectiveness and broaden the curriculum through links with other institutions.  
(Paragraphs: 83, 96.)

(2) Better resource the study needs of students where this is currently inadequate.  
(Paragraphs: 98, 204, 210, 245, 251.)



## ASPERGER RESOURCE CENTRE

100. The centre has places for 10 pupils in Years 7 to 11, but at present has 13 on roll, all of whom are boys and have statements of special educational needs, which indicate that they have Asperger Syndrome and need the provision of a special unit.
101. Pupils in the centre are making good progress in their lessons. When they are withdrawn for tuition their progress is very good. Staff know pupils very well, understand their needs and provide very good support. They also encourage pupils to be increasingly independent learners and to cope with social situations. When withdrawn, it is for extra help to support their learning, for example, social skills training to address their social and communication difficulties. Some pupils have shown very good progress towards targets for school attendance from being very reluctant to attend school to attending school regularly, taking a full part in school life and achieving in line with national levels when they are tested.
102. Support staff from the centre work with pupils where needed in their mainstream classes and provide very good support. They are experienced and very familiar with the pupils' targets and progress. Pupils from the centre are placed in sets according to their ability. Tuition within the centre for individual pupils towards their personal targets and for social skills is very good.
103. Pupils in the centre show very positive attitudes towards their learning. They have a good rapport with staff and are learning to develop friendships. Generally they behave very well, but sometimes they experience behavioural difficulties due to having Asperger Syndrome. They work constructively with centre staff to learn to deal with their emotions.
104. Pupils in the centre are extremely well integrated into all aspects of school life and are members of tutor groups. They are taught alongside their peers for the majority of lessons with the same expectations for learning and behaviour. Knowledgeable and sensitive support from the centre allows pupils to be withdrawn if they are stressed and to be taken back into lessons as soon as they are able to cope again. Lunchtime and break are used for further development of social skills and so pupils are encouraged to invite their friends into the centre.
105. There is a thorough system of target setting and monitoring of pupils' progress towards their targets, including video records of social skills development. The staff know the pupils very well and are in constant discussion with them. The targets set are clear and achievable. Pupils carry out regular monitoring of their own progress. There are carefully constructed structures to allow these pupils to develop their social skills and cope with mainstream school life, for example they have cards which explain their emotions if they are upset. The pupils are expected to collect their meals from the dining room, but have cards which give them priority if they find the situation demanding. Pupils from the centre and others in the school go into the centre if they need support, before they go to registration. Individual mentoring of pupils going into unknown situations is very good, as was seen with a very anxious pupil who was about to go out of school on a college visit.
106. There are very good links with outside agencies. Very close links between staff in the Special Educational Needs department and Bartimaeus Area allow a consistency of approach and flexible use of support staff.

107. The centre staff have very good links with parents through frequent telephone conversations, as well as detailed contact through the pupils' daybooks. This allows a consistent approach particularly in relation to the acquisition of social skills. Additionally, parents are expected to attend their child's annual review of statement.
108. The centre is staffed by skilled and experienced teachers and learning support assistants, who bring expertise from a variety of backgrounds. They willingly undertake further training. The centre leader provides very strong leadership, which promotes a consistency of approach. The accommodation is a purpose-built unit, which provides a very good range of facilities including workspace, teaching areas, sitting areas, a small teaching room and kitchen area. Resources are very good.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	118
	Sixth form	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		66

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
<b>Years 7-11</b>							
Number	3	21	40	42	11	1	0
Percentage	3	18	34	35	9	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	8	16	11	1	1	0
Percentage	8	20	40	28	2	2	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	706	114
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	109	3

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	31	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	96	11

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	51

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	40
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.3
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	73	65	138

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42	50	43
	Girls	47	40	42
	Total	89	90	85
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	65 (71)	66 (61)	62 (42)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (28)	37 (30)	29 (10)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	43 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	51	43
	Girls	45	42	40
	Total	88	93	83
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (63)	68 (60)	61 (46)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (32)	32 (35)	29 (16)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	64	60

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	19	50	59
	Girls	30	56	58
	Total	49	106	117
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 (40)	85 (84)	94 (90)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.5
	National	39.0

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

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	11	18	29
	Average point score per candidate	13.8	14.3	14.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

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

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

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
549	51	0
0	0	0
117	3	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
1	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
72	13	0
31	3	0
9	1	0
1	0	0
23	2	0
12	1	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

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

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	590.50

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.79
Key Stage 4	23.22

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	2698591
Total expenditure	2720423
Expenditure per pupil	3358
Balance brought forward from previous year	-7160
Balance carried forward to next year	-28992

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	6
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	10
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	820
Number of questionnaires returned	247

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	49	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	54	6	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	52	13	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	54	13	2	3
The teaching is good.	31	56	5	2	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	43	17	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	37	3	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	36	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	49	12	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	46	45	5	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	50	5	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	43	15	3	13



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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons.
- Progress of pupils with special education needs.
- The leadership and management of the department.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards in speaking and listening skills.
- Greater consistency in teaching.

109. Standards are satisfactory overall at the end of Year 9. Results in the standard attainment tests and teacher assessments are similar to national averages and have remained consistent over a three-year period. They are better than results in schools with a similar intake of pupils. Standards at the end of Year 11 are also broadly in line with what pupils achieve nationally. GCSE results have remained consistent over a three-year period. The lower standard in 2002 is attributable to a lower performance in two particular classes rather than being spread across the year group.

110. Achievement throughout Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The more able pupils in top sets understand what makes a piece of descriptive writing effective, for instance through the choice of long or short sentences and the choice of appropriate words. In work on the development of language, pupils show the beginnings of an understanding of the evolution of words and their derivation. Reading and writing skills are sound in top and middle sets with the more able pupils showing a good understanding of how to write in different forms for different audiences. Where pupils are provided with opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills these are satisfactory, for instance in group work where Year 7 and 8 pupils are producing the front page of a newspaper. Lower ability pupils make good progress in their language skills because of the intensive support received in small groups, through literacy booster classes and through information technology packages. In one very well taught lower ability set, pupils learned to arrange words alphabetically in order to use the thesaurus to select appropriate words for their own writing.

111. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, with reading and writing better developed than speaking and listening. An example of the effective link between reading and writing is in a higher-attaining Year 11 group, where there is a sound understanding of how Charlotte Bronte creates the menacing and gloomy atmosphere of the red room in *Jane Eyre*. Pupils show a sound grasp of how language can be used to create atmosphere and they make appropriate links with texts such as *I'm the King of the Castle* and their own writing. There is a good range of writing for above average pupils: well developed essays on *Lord of the Flies*, sound development of argument, such as a plea for television in teenagers' rooms, and an analysis of the bedroom scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. Middle and below average sets produce a sound range of writing covering narrative fiction, reports, articles and an evaluation of reading. Pupils in bottom sets have below average language skills but there is evidence of good progress in reading and writing especially.

112. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall from Years 7 to 11, although there is some inconsistency between teachers. This is being addressed by the head of department. Since the previous inspection, Key Stage 3 schemes of work have been rewritten to reflect the national strategy. This has contributed towards teachers setting clear objectives for lessons and an effective use of the hour-long lessons, providing good pace and variety of activity. As a result, pupils are challenged and engaged in their work. For instance in a middle set preparing to write a poem, pupils produced their own short poems as well as learning about forms of poetry and technical devices such as simile and metaphor. Teachers also make good use of their own writing which provides an effective role model for pupils. Teaching and learning is good in low-attaining groups, with effective support for pupils with special education needs and a good use of information technology to boost basic skills. The policy and practice in relation to spelling development and pupils' use of dictionaries has much improved since this was raised as an issue in the previous inspection. There is good learning in lessons where pupils are given the opportunity to contribute orally and work collaboratively. For instance, in the group work on developing newspaper front pages the links with spoken language, reading and writing were good. In some lessons, however, there are too few opportunities for challenging, extended discussion and this remains an area for development from the previous inspection.
113. The quality of teaching is good overall in Years 10 and 11, although there is some variation between teachers. Where teaching is good or very good, teachers provide a variety of activities, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and clear links are made between speaking and listening, reading and writing. For instance, in one Year 11 middle set, pupils were identifying the features of a piece of writing which make it effective. They were actively engaged and challenged through a quiz, group work, discussion, questioning and the structure to the lesson which used this preparatory work to start off their own writing. Where teaching is only satisfactory, objectives and planning are clear but there is less challenge through questioning and less variety of activities. Behaviour and attitudes in English lessons are good and personal development and relationships are very good. English lessons make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and the provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
114. The department is well led and managed by the recently appointed head of department. She has identified clear priorities to put into place training, monitoring and support for departmental staff, to produce exemplar folders of pupils' work to raise standards, and to further revise schemes of work for Years 10 and 11.

## **Drama**

115. The quality of provision for drama is good. Strengths are the above average GCSE results; the teaching throughout the school; the contribution of drama towards developing speaking and listening skills and the development of social skills through collaborative work. Areas for development are the accommodation for the teaching of drama and strengthening links with other subjects.
116. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is good overall. By the end of Year 9, pupils have the knowledge and confidence to use a range of dramatic techniques such as gesture, response and how to create atmosphere. They grow in confidence in speaking and listening skills and are able to express themselves clearly, take their own performances seriously and evaluate other pupils' contributions. In Years 10 and 11, pupils can perform and improvise well and with confidence. They increase their knowledge of techniques. For instance, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils understood about spatial

relationships and how these are expressed. In a Year 10 lesson, they understood the main features of non-naturalistic theatre.

117. Teaching and learning are very good. Pupils learn well because the teacher introduces concepts in a staged way and they build well from previous experience. Classroom management is very good so pupils move easily from group work to whole class sessions to listening to each other. The teacher has a good knowledge of techniques which she imparts with enthusiasm. The attitude and behaviour of pupils are very good. They are enthusiastic about drama and highly motivated.
118. The department is well managed. The main weakness of the drama provision is the shortage of accommodation. The hall has a noisy wooden floor and is booked to capacity. This means that a second GCSE drama group has to be scheduled after school, lunch clubs cannot take place and A-level drama and theatre studies are taught elsewhere.

### **Literacy**

119. The literacy co-ordinator has put into place a clear strategy for the development of literacy across the school. Training has taken place for all teachers and reference is made to literacy in all departmental schemes of work. The effectiveness of the strategy is monitored well through the regular analysis of samples of pupils` work across the school. The results of this analysis are then fed back to departments to take any further action.
120. The literacy strategy is beginning to make an impact on raising pupils` standards of literacy skills. However, at this point in time the learning in most subjects is only satisfactory. Mathematics makes a satisfactory contribution to literacy through the accurate use of technical vocabulary, helping pupils with the spelling of key mathematical words and explicit sharing of the key vocabulary with the students at the beginning of lessons. The contribution of science to literacy is likewise satisfactory with some reference to technical vocabulary and some opportunities for speaking and listening. Literacy is well developed in history, where pupils write in a range of styles from analytical to descriptive and narrative. In geography there is good development of vocabulary through key words, extended writing and key technical words displayed in classrooms. Music and ICT lessons also make a good contribution to literacy. In the remaining subjects the contribution is satisfactory.

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

121. The provision for supporting pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. The diagnosis of need is sound and good support for those pupils with the greatest need is provided by Local Education Authority Equality Services.
122. The school provides guidelines for all staff on the management and teaching of pupils whose second language is English. Learning Support Assistants provide good support in lessons. The strategy of placing pupils in top and middle sets is effective, and the pupils themselves when paired with new arrivals are very supportive. Pupils make sound progress overall although there is some inconsistency in the support provided in different lessons.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The more able at Key Stage 4 make good progress.
- There is some very good teaching.
- The implementation of the Key Stage 3 national strategy is contributing to improvements in teaching.
- The department is well organised.

### Areas for improvement

- To raise standards of attainment through:
  - differentiating the work so that it is better matched to all pupils' abilities, and the more able pupils at Key Stage 3 are appropriately challenged;
  - raising teachers' expectations for all pupils, especially the more able at Key Stage 3 and the middle ability pupils at Key Stage 4;
  - better use of assessment data to set targets, track progress and guide teaching;
  - high quality support for non-specialist teachers so that they have a clear understanding of what pupils need to learn, and effective ways of teaching;
  - increase the use of ICT so that statutory requirements are met.

123. Standards in the 2002 Key Stage 3 tests were below the national average and below the level of the previous year. However, the pupils made progress across the key stage in line with national expectations. Standards in the 2002 GCSE were below the national average and significantly below those of the previous year.
124. Pupils at or below average attainment on joining the school make satisfactory progress in the first three years. Those pupils who are above average attainment make insufficient progress in the first three years due to the lack of challenge in the teaching. For these pupils, the work is not well matched to their ability and they are not helped to learn at a higher level. They are expected to repeat work previously learnt and are not given the opportunity to access more demanding concepts in number and algebra.
125. The more able pupils in Year 10 are grouped together and they are taught well and make good progress. At the end of Year 10 they take the GCSE examination and this contributes to focussing their learning and securing good progress. They retake their GCSE at the end of Year 11 and they achieve in line with expectations. This process is helpful to those pupils in motivating them, and helping them focus their concentration on what they need to do to improve.
126. Pupils of middle and lower ability do not make sufficient progress during Key Stage 4 and do not achieve as much as they should. Overall, the teaching is insufficiently challenging and sometimes too slow. The teaching does not build on prior work sufficiently well so the pupils are learning topics at a level too low for their capability.
127. The introduction of the national strategy at Key Stage 3 has contributed to improving the quality of teaching. The good structure of lessons, direct interactive teaching methods and very good use of technical vocabulary are strengths of the teaching. All teaching in Key Stage 3 is well structured and in the best lessons engages and motivates the pupils. There is a high proportion of direct teaching including modelling and demonstrating which is clear. Questioning is too often not targeted appropriately to pupils of different abilities.

128. There are some key weaknesses which are directly impacting on standards. Teachers do not match the work well enough to individual pupils' level of understanding and the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow. Some pupils do not, therefore, make enough progress. Teachers are not yet using assessment information to guide their lesson planning and, in some cases, do not have high enough expectations of what pupils could understand and are able to do.
129. Although the department is well organised there are weaknesses in the leadership. Non-specialist teachers receive insufficient support in planning and teaching. Pupils' progress towards their targets is not monitored closely enough so that, when they are required, intervention strategies are not put in place quickly enough. The quality of teaching is not monitored and evaluated rigorously enough.
130. Statutory requirements for the use of ICT to support the teaching and learning of mathematics are not met.
131. There has been insufficient progress since the last inspection and the key issues identified at that time remain critical to raising standards.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching in some lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- The standards which pupils achieve.
- The quality of teaching.
- Schemes of work need to be completed, as planned, to ensure good quality guidance to teachers.
- More support for unqualified teachers.
- The use of ICT for data logging and modelling.
- Monitoring of teaching, planning and standards of work by the head of department.
- Tracking of pupils' progress.
- Review the GCSE course to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils.

132. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average in 2001. Standards declined in 2002. In recent years standards have been below the national average and in 2000 they were well below this benchmark.
133. GCSE results in 2001 were significantly below the national average. Results in previous years have been below average but increased in 2000 to equal the national figure. Standards have since declined and continued to fall in 2002. In 2000 and 2001, pupils obtained results in science which were significantly below those in most of their other subjects.
134. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 were below average. In a high proportion of lessons pupils make insufficient progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills because of unsatisfactory teaching. In Year 8 pupils making pinhole cameras did not explore the relationship between the size of the image and the distance to the object and explain this using ray diagrams. In another Year 8 group, the majority of pupils were unable to use the concept of density to explain convection currents. In a third Year 8

set, pupils made insufficient progress in developing their understanding of the laws of reflection because the instructions given were not clear and many pupils obtained erroneous results. A lot of pupils had difficulty measuring the relevant angles using protractors. In Year 9, higher-attaining pupils' notes described the processes involved in breathing without any explanation in terms of pressure changes when the diaphragm moves. Pupils' investigative skills are insufficiently developed. They do not always draw appropriate graphs and then give a clear description of the pattern in their results.

135. In Years 10 and 11 standards of work seen were also below average and this is related to unsatisfactory teaching. Many pupils in a Year 10 group were unable to explain the concept of resistance and to explain why this depended on factors such as the length and temperature of a wire. In another Year 10 set, pupils could not explain why the numbers of protons and electrons in an atom are equal. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress but pupils who are gifted and talented make unsatisfactory progress.
136. The quality of teaching in science ranges from very good at one extreme to poor at the other. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection was high and teaching as a whole is unsatisfactory. Behaviour is generally satisfactory and where the teaching is good pupils respond with enthusiasm. The good teaching seen has a number of features. Objectives are made clear to the pupils, explanation is lucid and brisk questioning is used to both check on, and build upon, pupils' understanding. Minor inattention is dealt with promptly. The lesson is well structured, with a variety of activities, and is conducted at a good pace with clear time-scales being set. The teacher has high expectations and the tasks set offer suitable challenge. Attention is paid to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, in a lower set in Year 8, pupils made good progress in developing their understanding of the refraction of light rays when they pass through a glass block. The pupils plotted the path of the rays accurately, measured the relevant angles and identified the pattern in the results. In a lower set in Year 11, the teacher had high expectations. Work on the concept of power was set in the interesting context of measuring personal power developed, for example, in climbing stairs. The teacher explained the concept clearly and this was reinforced effectively by the practical activity. Pupils made good progress in using relevant formulae and in developing their understanding of power, together with their numeracy skills. The features of unsatisfactory teaching seen are as follows: lesson planning is poor and the lesson is not well structured; objectives are not made clear to the pupils; clear time-scales are not set and progress is too slow; teachers' expectations are too low and the tasks set are insufficiently challenging; explanation lacks clarity and does not draw upon the use of suitable model, and the quality of the notes provided for pupils is poor; teachers' marking does not identify on pupils' errors. In a number of lessons, the pupils' behaviour was poor and this was not dealt with effectively. The range of learning opportunities for pupils is at present too restricted. In particular, statutory requirements for the use of ICT are not met. There is insufficient use of ICT for data logging and for simulations. Science makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.
137. Overall, management of the science department in recent years has not been satisfactory. Admittedly there have been significant staffing changes, but important issues such as improved tracking of pupils' progress have only recently begun to be addressed. The head of department has identified key areas that need to be tackled. This must be done as a matter of urgency. Overall, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

The progress pupils make, including :

- Standards of attainment in the GCSE course.
- The attainment of the most and the least capable pupils.
- Improvement since the last inspection.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT to create artwork.
- Teaching drawing for different purposes.
- Use of sketchbooks for investigation and experimentation.
- Detailed planning linked to the School Improvement Plan.

138. The results of National Curriculum teacher assessments for pupils aged 14 in 2002 were well below average. The GCSE results for those pupils aged 16 in 2001 were close to average and much improved since the last inspection. The 2002 GCSE results were below the national average.
139. The work seen in lessons is close to average overall. Pupils in Year 9 produce drawings of faces and hands in pencil, wool and wire after looking at drawings by Hockney and Dürer. Their tonal drawings and continuous line drawings of everyday objects demonstrate improving skills. They use their initiative less than usual and their sketchbooks contain much finished work rather than personal research. They draw without looking carefully or asking themselves what information they hope to gather through drawing. Their reliance on copying is too great at times. There is good evidence of them using a wide range of two and three-dimensional materials. They look at European and Japanese art, North American totem poles and Greek Attic vases but they seldom note what they think or feel about this work. Good quality, Escher-inspired painted constructions demonstrate tessellations; equally good Pop Art-style, collages of liquorice allsorts and pastel portraits in the style of Matisse and the Fauves, provide an understanding of artists' methods. Allowing for their very low skill levels when they arrive in school, pupils' achievements by the end of Year 9 are good but below national expectations.
140. The work of pupils in year 11 is close to average. Pupils start their research by drawing from observation or from photographs. A Cubist project resulted in good quality, highly finished work based on overlapped shapes of kitchen utensils or musical instruments with manuscript paper pasted onto the composition in the manner of Picasso, the colour showing the influence of Klee and Chagall. Pupils draw with chalk, charcoal, pencil and a wax 'scraper board' medium, but a general inability to be selective or to modify their drawing towards their preferred medium is preventing them knowing how well they are doing or how they might improve. Pupils make good use of colour, employing methods between thick acrylic impasto and watercolour washes. Development work does not enjoy the same high profile as initial studies or finished work. Three-dimensional work includes a 'fantasy shoe' project based on animals and avant-garde shoe design. An imaginative use of wire, plaster of Paris, and found materials results in brightly coloured, innovative sculptures. Pupils' achievements by the end of Year 11 are good. Those who are least capable make good progress in art. Teachers have good knowledge of their pupils and classwork is designed to allow many learning opportunities. Classroom assistants provide good support when they accompany those who experience learning difficulties. Those who are most capable

also make good progress. A Year 11 pupil produced carefully executed, original paintings based on Hundertwasser and Arcimboldo, although his developmental work was not so well considered as his finished work, thereby preventing his work reaching the highest level.

141. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although one of the nine lessons observed was unsatisfactory due to weaknesses in the management of the behaviour of small numbers of boys who interfere with the learning of others. Samples of pupils' work provide evidence that good teaching has been a feature since the last inspection. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Teachers' planning for lessons is good and tasks are well designed. Year 8 pupils took advantage of opportunities for independent development when comparing the work of Turner and Constable with Japanese compositions. Their teacher used her good subject knowledge, making reference to work on the walls, to help develop pupils' understanding of the different characteristics of Japanese and English landscapes. Her use of 'art' vocabulary was pitched well and the way she defined new words made a good contribution to her pupils' literacy. Boys and girls sat together and those children from ethnic minority groups were completely integrated. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. Year 10 pupils made rapid progress in a very good lesson when using collage materials challenged them to become increasingly experimental. The teacher's initial presentation, her management of the class and the activity, encouraged co-operation and there was a strong feeling that pupils and teacher were working together. The pupils contributed to the creative atmosphere, responding to their teacher's high expectations and were pleased to learn something new and different. Gossiping occasionally slows learning. The effectiveness of a lesson devoted to drawing especially for batik was reduced when Year 11 pupils' conversations interfered with general concentration. Occasionally there are missed opportunities to link the pupils' work with that of famous artists. The more mature attitudes of the girls often results in their making better progress than the boys. The girls' better attitudes and higher attainment in a Year 7 lesson devoted to rendering tone was noticeable.
142. The curriculum in art is broad and balanced, although inadequate opportunities for Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils to work with ICT is in breach of the National Curriculum. Apart from this, schemes of work are well planned. Pupils in Year 8 visit the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and Year 10 and 11 pupils occasionally visit the London museums. Assessment provides clear, detailed guidance of pupils' attainment and effort but data from assessment is not used to recognise weaknesses in the curriculum. The departmental management since the last inspection has been satisfactory although the current temporary arrangements have unsatisfactory features. The monitoring of teaching and learning require more rigour, and the monitoring, support and development of unqualified teachers is unsatisfactory. Strategic planning is not linked to the School Improvement Plan, or focused closely on raising standards. The accommodation is good and spacious. Displays of work in the department and the public areas of the school add to the cultural ethos.
143. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are close to the national average. GCSE examination results are much improved and are the best in the school. Progress is good. Teaching and learning have improved. Pupils continue to make less than effective use of computers and sketchbooks. There remain occasions when pupils' behaviour interferes with learning.



## CITIZENSHIP

144. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum has been redesigned to include citizenship from September 2002, but is at an early stage of development. It is being monitored throughout this year to ensure that the weight of other elements of the PSHE programme is balanced with those required for an effective citizenship programme. There is concern, for example, that the reduction in the careers and study skills elements for pupils in Years 10 and 11 might render them ineffective.
145. The teaching of PSHE by the form tutors is satisfactory overall throughout the school. There is some good teaching which is characterised by relating issues to real events, for example work experience, the provision of clear instructions, through visiting speakers and the use of a range of strategies. One lesson was unsatisfactory due to unclear learning objectives, closed questioning, the lack of engagement of pupils and an overall lack of challenge leading to unsatisfactory gains in understanding. Some pupils are withdrawn from citizenship to have extra tuition in basic skills. Their access to the curriculum needs to be carefully monitored.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The leadership and management of the department.
- The developing work in the use of information technology for designing, manufacture and in the presentation of pupils' work.
- The industrial experience of teaching staff and their knowledge of new technology and materials.
- The standards achieved in researching design situations and the development and modelling of proposed solutions, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Extend pupils' experience of materials to include more activities involving working with textiles, a wider range of woods and metals, systems and control.
- Develop the nature of the teaching and improve the standards achieved within food technology.
- Improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of Year 7,8 and 9 pupils' attainment information and the National Curriculum levels in order to help pupils understand where they are in their learning and what they must do to improve their work, particularly for pupils of higher ability.
- Continue to develop teaching strategies to include providing challenge, structuring learning and summarising lessons to help pupils in their understanding of what is expected of them.

146. Standards of work in design and technology are broadly in line with national averages at the end of Years 9 and 11. Food technology results are below both national and school results for other aspects of design and technology. Overall GCSE attainment in design and technology dropped in 2001 but rose again in 2002. Teachers' assessments are accurate and the attainment of boys and girls is in line with national trends. Pupils achieve well in this subject although there is the potential for further improvement and strategies are in place to achieve this. The limited range of materials experiences

provided does not allow all pupils to develop all the skills they need to achieve the higher levels by the end of Year 9 or GCSE grades by the end of Year 11.

147. Standards of work seen in lessons, related to expectations, are higher for pupils in Years 10 and 11 than for those in Years 7 to 9. Year 11 pupils produce research and three-dimensional models of their design proposals that are above national standards. Pupils' skills in two-dimensional drawing of three-dimensional objects is less well developed, as is their knowledge of resistant materials such as wood and metal and their practical skills when working with these materials. Up to half of the Year 11 pupils in 2002 did not attain their target result and coursework checklists have, rightly, been developed to help teachers and pupils monitor the work that has been completed and the standard achieved. This is also helping all pupils to make progress – boys and pupils with special educational needs in particular – and is intended inspire more pupils to aim for the higher GCSE grades.
148. The quality of teaching is good overall but ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. It was good or better in half of the lessons seen. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Where it is unsatisfactory it is linked to the lack of a clear learning focus with insufficient emphasis on the requirements of the National Curriculum. In the lessons where teaching is, at best, satisfactory, the pupils do not always understand what is expected of them or what they could do to improve their work. In some cases, the lesson content is also uninspiring.
149. Where teaching is a real strength it is often a result of the subject knowledge of the teacher. Many of the teachers draw upon their industrial experience or real life situations as a natural part of their teaching to make the lesson interesting and relevant. The best lessons are well planned, including the identification of learning outcomes from each lesson and the literacy, numeracy and information technology elements of the teaching. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high. The majority of lessons are well planned and contain many structured activities within a lesson. The most effective lessons are where teachers select tasks that challenge pupils, and time interventions to prompt pupils to think about what they have just done and what they need to do next. Relationships in all lessons are good. In the best lessons, teachers successfully assume a high level of maturity and responsibility from the pupils. Another feature of the best lessons is the teacher's knowledge of the pupils and their attainment and how they can develop their work further. This is usually a result of a higher standard of marking of pupils' work, although marking is inconsistent amongst the team of subject teachers. Homework is set regularly and tasks are usually imaginative, sometimes involving using the Internet for research purposes.
150. The overall quality of learning is good. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 and it is directly linked to the quality of the teaching. Pupils concentrate throughout lessons and they achieve a lot of work in the time available to them. There are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour, even in lessons where teaching is not strong. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are most productive and have a better knowledge of their own progress and level of achievement than in Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and those for whom English is not their first language make satisfactory progress in design and technology. Effective use is made of the learning support that is available. The spiritual development of pupils within design and technology is good. Pupils respect each other in the practical situation and show particular empathy for different groups and types of people when identifying who will use the products that they are designing and what their needs might be. Year 10 pupils working on the styrofoam modelling of door handles suitable for use by disabled people were confident when speaking about the particular requirements that they might have

and the design considerations of handle size and shape. Pupils' social development benefits in the best lessons seen when there is a need to work individually, in pairs or in groups. Teachers use this to create different working situations that will enable pupils to see the advantages of working singly or in groups, depending on the task.

151. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. There are effective systems in place to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to achieve at high levels. The head of department and key staff know the actions that the department needs to take to continue to improve standards and are implementing the necessary changes. There is a shared commitment amongst teaching and support staff to ensure that pupils have a high quality educational experience. There are many further developments that are planned for the short- and long-term future of the subject and the capacity for improvement is a particular strength of the department.
152. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although there are many good or very good features of the subject which have improved since 1996, the quality of provision is only satisfactory owing to the limited range of materials experiences that pupils have. There is an emphasis on designing, including modelling, at the expense of making things in a broad range of materials and the development of high quality practical skills.
153. The school has been unable to recruit the necessary specialist staff to ensure that the full range of materials areas required within the National Curriculum can be taught to all pupils. The lack of a specialist textiles teacher in particular is limiting opportunities for pupils, as is the lack of expertise in working with a wide range of different types of wood and metal.
154. The range and number of resources within the subject is very good, particularly the equipment and materials needed to introduce pupils to newer materials being developed for design and manufacture. The provision of computers and associated equipment for the teaching of information and communications technology is good. There is a very high level of staff expertise and pupils benefit from a planned curriculum that is constantly being extended to include new technologies.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Leadership by the head of department in driving improvements and raising the profile of the subject within the school.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject and examination requirements.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Consistency across the department so that all teachers make appropriate use of the school's behaviour management policy.
- Consistency in the teachers sharing their targets for improvement with pupils.
- ICT provision for all pupils.

155. At the end of Year 9 pupils' standards of attainment are close to national expectations. Their attainment on entry is below national expectations so they are therefore making at least satisfactory progress. Evidence from work seen during the inspection confirms this. Pupils in Year 7 were seen developing geographical skills with map interpretation, using scale, distance, direction and grid references. In Year 8, pupils were developing their geographical knowledge and understanding in a study of the United States. The most able pupils were able to demonstrate good knowledge of place and could demonstrate good research skills. Their written work and work in lessons concentrated largely upon description of processes of physical and human geography. In Year 9, while the most able and those of average ability are confident in explaining processes and patterns, the work of lower-attaining pupils is limited to being descriptive.
156. GCSE results in recent years show that pupils' performance has been close to and slightly above national expectations, representing good progress from below average standards on entry to the school. Pupils' performance at GCSE in 2002 was lower than in previous years due largely to the lower starting point at the beginning of Year 10 of this group than in the previous year. The analysis of pupils' performance in the examination shows that higher-attaining pupils perform better in geography than they do in their other subjects; this is not the case for lower-attaining pupils. The department's monitoring and analysis of results at GCSE shows that most pupils make at least satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11. Some higher-attaining pupils whose attendance is poor make unsatisfactory progress, when compared to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Some lower-attaining pupils make good progress. Evidence from work seen during the inspection confirms the progress being made. Pupils in Year 10 were observed describing coastal processes and recognising the defences used in attempts to manage coastal erosion, seen in a photograph. They explained why such defences are needed and how they help to slow the erosion. The pupils in the top set and in the mixed ability group were seen to be already working towards higher grades, explaining cause and effect. Top set pupils in Year 11 were seen working with urban zonation. They could account for the zonation seen in Burgess's model and explain the reasons for the attributes of each zone in terms of historical development, land values and accessibility. Pupils in the lower sets were much more descriptive in their work, some still struggling to use grid references to give the location of features seen. These pupils have made much less progress.
157. Teaching overall is good with a very small proportion less than satisfactory. The vast majority is good or better, much is very good and excellent. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in teaching. There is more challenge in lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 and is better in lessons taught by more established teachers. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers do not show the same understanding of National Curriculum assessment or use it to extend their pupils, and they do not apply the school's discipline policy.
158. Where teaching is very good or excellent teachers plan lessons to extend pupils. They have good subject knowledge, high expectations and good understanding of the requirements of the GCSE examination. This combined with good knowledge of the pupils' prior attainment is used well in setting group and individual targets in lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teachers make good use of well-focused questions to concentrate research and make good use of the board to summarise pupils' ideas in plenary sessions. Teachers are skilled at improving pupils' examination techniques. Pupils generally have a good attitude to learning and are well behaved. They respond well, participating in tasks set in lessons and sustaining concentration throughout the tasks. Pupils' good attitudes mean they respond well when encouraged to use group work or

work independently using presentation skills; researching texts selected by the teacher; extracting information from graphs and diagrams or producing extended written answers. In these lessons teachers can devote time to pupils with special educational needs and pupils to whom English is an additional language, knowing that all pupils are making good progress. Some Year 7 pupils have not yet developed these skills, or the confidence to work without constant teacher support. Time was wasted in one lesson due to the negative attitude to learning of some pupils which adversely affected other pupils' concentration. In other lessons, pupils display the higher level of maturity that is encouraged by the school's ethos and sustain concentration on the tasks set throughout the lesson.

159. The department is led well and leaders are good role models to their pupils and to other teachers, both as geographers and as teachers. The scheme of work incorporates regular end-of-topic assessments in Years 7 to 9, although only the last one in Year 9 is related to National Curriculum levels; the others just test for subject knowledge. There has been an increase the amount of field study that supports the curriculum and raises the profile of the subject. Courses offered now include the use of ICT, but booking of suitable rooms cannot be guaranteed to ensure all classes can use ICT at the same point for all classes in each year group. Courses also support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Most geography is taught in two specialist classrooms. There are too many classes and teachers for all geography lessons to take place in these rooms and this hampers the learning of some classes who lack access to the specialised material.
160. The head of department provides much support to an overseas-trained teacher. Teaching is monitored and evaluated to support improvement. However, more needs to be done to ensure consistency in teaching across the department.
161. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in the availability of resources to support the teaching and there are now enough opportunities for fieldwork. Strategies are in place to provide more challenge for pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and these now need to be extended to all classes in Years 7 to 9.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The achievements of pupils.
- The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for extended writing and for greater concentration on chronology and empathy in the teaching of pupils aged 11 to 14 and on encouraging them to make connections between different periods of history.
- Marking of the work of pupils aged 11 to 14.
- Aspects of leadership and management.
- Use of ICT to support learning.

162. In the GCSE results of 2001, the proportion of A\*-C grades awarded was well below the national average for maintained secondary schools. The proportion of A\*-G grades

was very close to the national average. In 2002 there was a small improvement in A\*-C grades.

163. In work seen, the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good and pupils are working towards levels of attainment in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. Progress is notable in four of the five key elements of the National Curriculum. From the early stage of Year 7, pupils gain an appreciation of differing interpretations of history. Their range and depth of knowledge is increased and they develop the necessary skills of enquiry. Analysis of pupils' notebooks indicates that they are competent with the organisation and communication of knowledge acquired. Chronological awareness and the ability to empathise with people of the past are weaker areas. Whilst pupils are to an extent able to communicate key features of different periods of history, this is another area for development. Average and higher-attaining pupils write about the subject with a standard of literacy that is either satisfactory or good; lower-attaining pupils demonstrate a poorer standard of literacy but they represent the subject well in illustrative form.
164. The attainment of pupils at the age of 16 is average. Good teaching is raising the standard of attainment above that indicated by the 2001 GCSE results due to the good progress being made. Enquiry skills are further developed through two coursework assignments which also provide opportunity to write about the subject at greater length. In the first of these, pupils consider the reasons why the Metropolitan Police found it difficult to apprehend 'Jack the Ripper'. In the second, they examine the ways in which the effects of the Blitz were reported in the media in 1940-1941. They gain a greater facility with the use of sources, especially with regard to interpretation, but skills of source evaluation are less developed.
165. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are good. They show a conspicuous interest in the subject and maintain a good level of concentration throughout lessons. Take-up rates at the start of Year 10 compare favourably with those for other optional subjects. Positive working relations are evident between teachers and pupils and among pupils themselves. Books, resources and equipment are treated with a proper respect and pupils are generally courteous and well mannered. They develop independent study skills, more markedly in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make a good level of progress with the help of their support assistants. Those who have English as an additional language make the same level of progress as pupils in general.
166. The quality of teaching of pupils aged 11 to 14 is good overall although very good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons were also seen during the inspection. The quality of teaching of pupils aged 14 to 16 is good. All teachers have a secure command of subject which enables them to engage a high level of pupil interest. They make a profitable use of resources in support of learning. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils first watched a video from start to finish and were then shown again, with appropriate comment from the teacher, those parts of it that would best help them with their task work. In a Year 10 lesson, a good level of collaborative learning was achieved towards the end when pupils extended and refined their answers to an examination question on the basis of individual contributions and shared ideas. Teachers set homework regularly to extend and enhance classroom learning. The marking of pupils' work is good in Years 10 and 11 but lacks consistency in giving pupils in Years 7 to 9 the guidance that is required to improve their attainment. All marking needs to be brought up to the standard of the best. In one lesson, a combination of weak pupil management, a restricted learning objective and a slow pace meant that teaching was unsatisfactory.

167. Leadership and management are satisfactory but with several features that are good. The raising of standards and of the quality of teaching feature prominently in the development plan. There is a compendious handbook that gives teachers guidance on how to question pupils productively. The ethos for learning is good. Departmental meetings are held regularly but without minutes and written agendas. The evaluation of teaching is carried out via a scrutiny of pupils' work but the head of department has not observed lessons. The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is not a feature either of teaching or learning except in so far as some pupils word-process their GCSE coursework.
168. The curriculum is thoroughly planned and satisfies all statutory requirements. However, it would be advantageous if schemes of work for each year indicated opportunities for extended writing, for encouraging empathy and for improving pupils' knowledge of chronology. There are good procedures in every year for assessing attainment and progress.
169. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection. There are now more specialist teachers of the subject, the range of teaching strategies has been widened and the quality of teaching has been further improved. However, the use of ICT remains unsatisfactory and there is still a need to share the good practice in teaching pupils aged 11 to 14, especially as regards the marking of their work and their ability to make valid comparisons between different periods of history.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Very good leadership, providing a very good direction for the subject at a time of staffing difficulties.
- The subject expertise of the teachers and the planning of lessons, providing the impetus for pupils' learning.
- The good support for pupils with special educational needs.

### Areas for improvement

- Effective delivery of ICT in all National Curriculum subjects.
- Access to computers in other subjects.
- Sharpen-up the beginning and end of lessons to increase the rate at which pupils learn.
- The use of assessment data to set appropriate targets for pupils.

170. The school's assessment of attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicates an average percentage of pupils reaching both the expected levels and the higher levels. The school's assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 showed a fall in standards to well below average, with no pupils at the higher levels. Co-ordination proved difficult in 2002; assessments were not moderated and the time allocation for the subject was below that normally expected. There was little difference in the performance of girls and boys. The subject was not assessed at the end of Year 11, as there was no course.
171. In the work seen in the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. However, achievement is satisfactory given pupils' below average standards on entry to the school in Year 7. That said, the implementation of recent strategies for the teaching of this subject nationally are in place in Years 7 and 8, and will be fully in place in Year 9 next year. Standards of work seen in Year 8 show that the strategy is being successful.

These pupils use computers with confidence, access the Internet in their learning and have the skill to design their own web page. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Achievement is good by these pupils and some are achieving very well. Standards are returning to those of 2001.

172. Year 11 pupils started their short GCSE course in September. They use computers with confidence, importing pictures, setting up a publishing window and inserting text into their own page design. They have made a satisfactory start to their course. One group of Year 10 pupils, mostly boys, started a double-award GCSE course in September. School assessment data indicates their standards are well below average generally. Their weaknesses in literacy skills inhibit a good pace of learning, for example in constructing formal letters to commercial organisations.
173. Literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily supported in the teaching. All pupils with special educational needs, those who are in an early stage of learning in the English language and the gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress. Support for their learning is good.
174. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and a minority of the teaching is good. Teachers have good subject expertise and plan their lessons well. As a result, lesson time is used satisfactorily which is the reason for the satisfactory learning in lessons. Overall the management of pupils is good, achieving satisfactory standards of behaviour. At times, management of pupils needs to be very good to achieve this outcome as pupils are not all willing learners and listening skills are not well developed. Teachers with relatively limited experience are assisted well in this respect by the head of department, other senior staff and the good support staff. Teaching methods are moving towards a three-part lesson plan, an introduction, development and a plenary in line with the national strategy for Key Stage 3. There needs to be a sharpening of this lesson structure if standards are to improve, as few lessons had an effective plenary.
175. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory in the discrete ICT lessons. However the use of ICT across the range of National Curriculum subjects does not satisfy the National Curriculum requirements in many subjects. In science, there are problems in data logging, use of the Internet and staff training. In geography, ICT is not used for exchanging information or control. All pupils have access to computers in English but their use is underdeveloped, especially as a tool for drafting and redrafting work. The use of ICT is very effective in music. It is good in design and technology with the potential to be excellent. The integration of computer-aided design to manufacturing products is excellent through Years 7 to 11, for example. There is ready computer access to research materials. The use of ICT in modern foreign languages is well developed, providing added enjoyment to pupils' learning. The contribution to pupils' learning in ICT from the different subjects needs to be precisely determined so that planning is better guided regarding pupils' assessment and course design.
176. The new head of department provides very good and clear leadership. A detailed handbook is already in place and priorities have been identified well, with a current focus on implementation and evaluation. The school's network of computers is maintained efficiently and plans for the future are clear. The number of computers in school is above the national average but access is still restricted in some subjects, geography for example. There is a good overview of pupils' standards within the discrete ICT lessons. The use of this assessment data to set appropriate targets for pupils' learning needs to improve if standards are to rise further. The teachers are keen and committed to raising standards. Most are new to the department and support for



them is good. The enthusiastic and committed head of department sets a very good example in teaching, giving up a generous amount of free time to satisfy the high demand for computer rooms at lunchtime and after school. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- The long experience and dedication of teaching staff.
- The generally good disciplinary climate of the school which enhances pupils' willingness to learn.
- The good level of accommodation and resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment data to target pupil development and focus on improvement.

177. Standards of work at the end of Year 9 have been steadily rising since the last inspection, with four out of ten pupils now gaining levels 5 and 6 at the end of Key Stage 3. At GCSE, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in French has risen slowly, compares well with other major subjects in the school, and is now close to the national average. A disappointing feature is the number of D grades.

178. Work seen during the course of the inspection reflects standards noted from public examinations. Pupils in Year 7 are full of enthusiasm for this new subject and, in one very good lesson seen, maintained this zest throughout the lesson. They were beginning to show attainment in the four major skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, with very accurate work from abler pupils. At the end of Year 9, the wide range of ability in the school is beginning to show in the standards attained, with some pupils struggling with basic vocabulary, while abler linguists are coping well with more abstract grammar. Listening is well developed, but pupils are diffident in speech, usually limiting themselves to very brief answers to questions put by the teacher. Pupils with special needs or for whom English is an additional language make good progress, particularly where support is available, and teachers are conscientious in attempting to involve every pupil in the work of the class.

179. Pupils generally concentrate well but attention often lapses towards the end of the hour-long lesson, particularly in the afternoon. Standards among abler pupils in Years 10 and 11 show appropriate progress towards higher grades at GCSE. In particular, they begin to write coherent and sustained pieces of prose in the foreign language, using three tenses of the verb.

180. Teaching in the department overall is satisfactory and sometimes good or very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers are experienced and have at least a satisfactory command of the languages they teach, but their use of the language as a means of classroom communication is of variable quality. More progress was made in lessons when teachers persisted in challenging and made sensible use of the target language than when they yielded to pupil demands to have life made easy for them. The real sense of achievement when a pupil finally "cracks the code" of foreign speech is a potent moment in his or her development. A good French lesson was observed in which an experienced teacher was working well and making progress with a less gifted group. His sympathetic approach and good teaching skills motivated the group.

However, it was clear from the level of work undertaken that the class had retained little of what they had studied over previous years.

181. The department is accommodated well in a suite of attractive rooms. Learning resources (books and equipment) are adequate and most pupils have a textbook of their own. The department makes better than usual use of ICT. A greater emphasis on marking, assessment and evaluation of pupils' work would enable teachers to target pupils' needs more accurately. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory in providing too little direction for the work of the department and too little focus on monitoring and developing the quality of the teaching.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve much better in GCSE music than in their other subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well.
- Where teaching is good, it challenges all pupils to attain high standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure all classes are taught by fully trained and qualified subject staff.
- Augment teaching resources to meet the needs of classes, especially regarding keyboards, computer technology and tuned percussion instruments.
- Make best use of homework opportunities to ensure greater practical engagement in class and to develop greater continuity in learning.
- The use of attainment data to target pupils appropriately.

182. In the GCSE examination in 2001, the results in music were much better than in pupils' other subjects. This trend was also maintained in 2002. Standards at the end of Year 9, measured by teachers' assessments in 2001 were above the national average. Work seen during the inspection does not, however, corroborate this although it is satisfactory. The teachers' assessments also indicate that girls' attainment was much better than that of boys at the end of Year 9. The difference is greater than that found nationally, and is not corroborated by evidence from this inspection.

183. Standards of work seen during the inspection were satisfactory for both the current Year 9 and Year 11. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve well, making good progress in their work from a level on entry which is below average. In Years 10 and 11, progress is satisfactory overall, although good for higher-attaining students.

184. In Years 7 to 9 most pupils are able to understand simple music written in both graphic and standard notation. They use appropriate vocabulary when appraising music they have heard. They perform and improvise rhythmic music with increasing accuracy and with growing awareness of how different parts fit together to achieve an overall effect. Higher-attaining pupils read simple melodies at the keyboard accurately and write fluently about music, giving both technical information and expressing personal responses. Pupils work together constructively in groups, exploring and developing musical ideas. They are able to identify simple musical structures, such as rondo form, and recall themes from within an extended piece of music.

185. In Years 10 and 11 pupils compose well-structured melodies, with accompaniments, reflecting the level of their performance skills. Higher-attaining pupils are able to

assimilate harmonic, textural and formal features of music they have studied into their own compositions. Although pupils draft their compositions by hand, they make increasing use of music technology and most finished submissions are edited and refined using score-writing software. They listen with varied levels of understanding to music related to the areas of study for GCSE, but do not express themselves very cogently in this area. Commentaries accompanying compositions and performance are good.

186. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in Years 7 to 9, taking an active role in all activities. In Years 10 and 11 their achievement is satisfactory, although individually some very good achievement was noted. One boy with a short attention span was able to sing expressively in a solo context.
187. Where teachers are qualified and experienced, the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good: in Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory. The good teaching is characterised by engaging and motivating the wide range of abilities of the pupils through well-structured and varied activities. In many lessons very good use is made of simple resources. Small whiteboards enable pupils to show responses quickly and clearly, in a way which creates challenge among individuals and groups. Twenty-litre plastic bottles, used as highly convincing drums for the Year 8 African music project, enhanced pupils' tonal awareness. Classroom management is very efficient. Movement and dance enhances pupils' responses to rhythms, although articulation of pupils' musical responses through gesture could be more rigorously developed. Pupils' attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is good. There are very good relations between teacher and pupils and this encourages the teacher to employ some daring strategies in diverse ability classes. Through skill and encouragement, a Year 10 singing class, for example, eventually realised an acceptable level of dialogue singing between boys and girls, setting the basis for greater group cohesion and giving all pupils clearer perspectives of essential performing skills. Orally, key concepts and vocabulary are taught well, as also are numerical and graphic concepts, but these are insufficiently reinforced through written work and key word posters. ICT is used effectively to enhance learning from Year 9. The lack of a short summary of learning at the end of many lessons constrains progress. Giving homework would free more time for practical activities, and the lack of it on a regular basis means that many pupils do not reflect on their learning between the lessons. Nearly one-quarter of lessons is given by non-specialists. From observation of one of these, there are clear weaknesses in this arrangement.
188. The curriculum is well balanced with ICT integrated well and some good world music projects, which open cultural horizons for the students. Good instrumental teaching was observed by visiting teachers. Music also features strongly in masses and assemblies. These offer students the opportunity to perform publicly and are not the exclusive realm of the talented.
189. The department is led well. The head of music has done much to develop the subject at all levels, including the sixth form. Although a system of lesson observation is in place, more rigour is needed in the development of departmental documentation and the application of analysis of attainment data to ensure continued success. Accommodation is good. While in part well-equipped, some key resources are lacking: computers and MIDI keyboards to facilitate individual composition with increasing numbers in Years 10 and 11; a range of tuned percussion instruments to realise projects in Years 7 to 9.
190. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Relationships between staff and pupils.
- Attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure curriculum planning is standardised and meets the needs of all pupils through continuity and progression.
- Employ a greater range of teaching styles to increase pupil independence and improve their knowledge and understanding.
- The involvement of pupils in their own assessment, together with the recording and monitoring of teacher assessments to more effectively set targets for future learning.

191. By the end of Year 9 standards are above national expectations. Teacher assessments in 2002 also show that pupils are working above national expectations. GCSE results in 2001 show that the number of pupils gaining A\* to C grades was well below the national average for similar schools. This poor figure does not reflect the trend over time, where standards are in line with national expectations. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
192. Pupils make very good progress as they move from Year 7 to through to Year 9. By the end of Year 9 they are able to perform well in netball and apply skills effectively into the game. Others know and understand the rules in netball and basketball and include them very effectively in a game. In dance, pupils are able to repeat and refine their sequences, and through practice, perform their movements with increased confidence. They are able to create and add their own motif to the set 'street dance' in order to produce an extended piece of work. Opportunities for the observation and evaluation of performances are very good in dance, where pupils are able to give constructive feedback and advice for improvement. In gymnastic activities pupils demonstrate good levels of skill, before selecting and applying appropriate movements into extended sequences.
193. During Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to make good progress. By the end of Year 11 higher-attaining pupils are able to demonstrate very good skill levels in football, being able to demonstrate control and apply disguise in their passing, whilst lower-attaining pupils are also able to apply accuracy and precision into the game. In badminton, they are able to demonstrate very good levels of skill to move their opponents around the court and begin to apply attacking and defensive formations effectively into their games. In both key stages, pupils know about the factors that affect fitness and can name and demonstrate the relevant muscle groups involved during stretching activities.
194. Social skills are well developed and pupils worked together very co-operatively in both partner and small group activities in all lessons seen. They listen and co-operate very well, and support each other, with on one occasion, spontaneous applause following a demonstration by a pupil in a gymnastic activities lesson. During games, they show consideration for each other, abide by the rules of the game and accept refereeing decisions. They sustain their concentration well, and when provided with the opportunity, they work independently very effectively, although more opportunities should be provided to promote pupils' independence during lessons through problem-solving and decision-making activities.

195. Teaching in physical education is mainly good or very good with no unsatisfactory lessons seen. There is an orderly start to every lesson, with good warm-up activities being used and due care being given to issues of safe practice. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, and when teaching is good, their planning shows progression and clearly identifies the learning objectives for the lesson. They review and make good use of previous work and learning objectives are reinforced through effective questioning. Teachers develop good knowledge and understanding in most lessons, again through the effective use of questioning, although the involvement of pupils in the evaluation of their own activities is not always used to reinforce their learning or develop understanding. Appropriate amounts of time are provided for pupils to consolidate learning and to improve their level of skill, although on some occasions demonstrations are not always used effectively, either to define the task or reinforce pupils' learning.
196. Pupils sustain their efforts and make very good progress although they are not aware of their own level of attainment and are not involved in their own assessment. They do not assess themselves in relation to the National Curriculum attainment target levels. Teachers generally have high expectations of the pupils and lessons often have appropriate challenge, although during isolated lessons the tasks were too difficult and there were no alternative activities provided, resulting in some pupils not making the kind of progress of which they were capable. In a number of lessons little opportunity was given to apply skills into a game. Generally, teachers demonstrate a sympathetic approach towards the needs of the pupils and provide good support whenever necessary. Where it is available, pupils with disabilities or specific needs benefit from the work of support staff. Relationships between teachers and pupils are always very good.
197. The head of department has only recently been appointed. Although improved since the last inspection, the departmental policies, guidelines and schemes of work do not yet show clear progression. The range of teaching styles and strategies does not always fully provide sufficient challenge, promote independence or improve pupils' knowledge and understanding. Assessment strategies, do not include the use of individual targets, or guide curriculum planning. Assessment data is not used to monitor the achievement and progress of different groups of pupils. The provision of ICT in the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The department does not identify within its planning where opportunities for the provision of cross-curricular issues such as literacy, numeracy, and ICT may be addressed.
198. Standards of achievement have improved in physical education since the last inspection. The curriculum now provides a more balanced programme of study and meets statutory requirements. Departmental documentation has been developed but schemes of work need to more accurately match the requirements of the National Curriculum.

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

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

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

### ***GCE AS-level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100	96	-	46	4.00	6.57
Biology	7	71	88	29	34	4.00	5.25
Business studies	8	50	92	-	32	2.25	5.50
Computer studies	9	100	86	-	23	3.56	4.62
English literature	9	100	95	56	37	6.22	5.91
English language	2	100	92	-	30	4.00	5.28
French	1	100	89	-	38	4.00	5.59
Full design and technology	3	100	91	67	30	8.67	5.38
Geography	13	100	92	38	38	6.62	5.74
History	4	100	88	-	35	5.00	5.45
Home economics	4	100	83	50	28	7.00	4.73
Mathematics	7	86	87	43	43	6.29	5.80
Physics	3	33	88	33	40	3.33	5.67
Sociology	6	100	86	33	35	6.00	5.32

### **SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

## MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

A detailed inspection was made of provision for mathematics and one science subject, physics. Biology was also sampled. Here, examination results were below average in 2001 and students performed less well in biology than in most of their other subjects. Standards improved in 2002. One lesson was observed. This was satisfactory. Questioning by the teacher led to a sound understanding of issues relating to eutrophication.

### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- Lessons are well prepared and the teaching is suited to student needs.
- The teaching encourages the students to work hard.
- A-level students are given a thorough preparation for the examinations.

#### Areas for improvement

- A-level students need more encouragement to contribute ideas and to discuss the work.
- More use should be made of graphic calculators and computer software.
- The Application of Number course needs more careful planning.

199. Two of the A-level and AS-level courses offered by the school were inspected: Mathematics with Mechanics and Pure Mathematics. Lessons in Application of Number as a key skill were not observed; judgements on this course are based on the most recent results and discussions with staff.
200. The department provides a sound mathematical education for A-level students. The teachers identify likely A-level students early. They provide extra help and support to encourage students to study mathematics at A-level, although in recent years only six or seven students have taken mathematics as an option. Not all students who take A-level mathematics obtain the top grades at GCSE.
201. The department has been successful in obtaining satisfactory grades since the start of A-level provision. In recent years, several students have obtained the highest grades (A and B) and the picture is similar at AS-level. The current A-level group is predicted to obtain good grades. Boys and girls do equally well and most students achieve well when compared with their attainment on entry. Results in the Application of Number course were unsatisfactory, with only a quarter of the entry achieving a pass at Level 2.
202. Written work is good. The students are clearly diligent in doing classwork exercises and produce a high volume of well-presented work. The A-level class showed a good understanding of Newton's laws of motion and their work benefited from their study of physics. AS-level students were less secure with algebraic techniques; these students generally had lower levels of attainment at GCSE. In both classes, oral work was poor, although the girls in the AS class made efforts to contribute to the lesson. When questioned by the teacher, the response was generally hesitant and monosyllabic and the teacher struggled to get the students to talk more widely.

203. The lessons are well prepared and conducted with attention to detail and to individual needs. The pace is sometimes slow, with little challenge or time given for reflection or discussion. However, the instruction is thorough and the students have good models on which to base approaches to problems. The work is marked with helpful instructions on how to improve. Individuals are given good support, although there are no individual targets set. In response, the students work hard and do their best to understand concepts which some find difficult. They work well together, discussing problems and helping each other with the exercises.
204. There is little use made of modern technology. Graphical calculators are occasionally used, but there is no software to support computer-based learning.
205. The head of department provides clear guidance on the courses being followed and supports the work of the students by giving extra help outside of normal hours and by providing a comprehensive bank of worked examples to support learning.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Year 13 students have a secure background from their AS work.
- Students are enthusiastic about the subject and keen to do well.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching, which is currently poor.
- Assessment is weak and students do not know their target grades.
- Management of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- Entry grades and mathematics background are weak among Year 12 students.

206. There was only one candidate for A-level physics in 2002; he obtained a D grade. In the AS examinations, there were seven candidates; all achieved a pass grade. These were lower than predicted from their GSCE grades, but not excessively so, in most cases because their GSCE was science, not physics. Very few candidates have been entered for physics in previous years; in 2001 only one out of three achieved a grade A at A-level. Of the six AS candidates that year, two gained grades A and C. The department had difficulty supplying examination results as they were not easily accessible in department records.
207. The standard of work of current Year 13 students was generally satisfactory in their AS year. Their work folders contained notes at an appropriate level with good evidence of problem-solving exercises, regularly marked by their teacher. There was little evidence of practical work, however; students did not have a practical logbook. In their current folders from the beginning of this academic year their standard of work is below what is expected at this level. Notes are muddled and superficial with too little evidence of teachers' marking or comment on their work.
208. In lessons seen, students in Year 13 appeared confused by the work they doing on gravitational and electromagnetic fields. Much of the time was spent putting figures into formulae supplied by the teacher, with little understanding of the principles involved. In Year 12, students were also using formulae to solve problems on momentum and energy. These were of a standard more expected in GCSE than A-level, which would have been understandable at the very beginning of the module, but students were a considerable way into it.



209. The quality of teaching seen was poor, and not of a sufficient standard to enable students to succeed at this level. The teacher had poor command of the subject; his explanations, for example, of the difference between elastic and non-elastic collisions were so unclear that they muddled students' perception. He allowed those in Year 13 to do problems without any guidance and accepted their answers as correct, although the students themselves remarked how bizarre they seemed. Later perusal of the textbook showed that all their answers were incorrect. In the lesson on velocity and momentum, a resource to be used was stated to be 'trolleys'. Students were not permitted to use these themselves in order to help them understand the concepts. At one point, the teacher banged the two dynamics trolleys together; whether this was an example of elastic or inelastic collisions was not clear and did nothing to help students understand the principle of conservation of momentum. Pace was extremely slow in both lessons seen. Students spent the whole time doing questions on a sheet supplied by the teacher, productivity was low and gains in knowledge and understanding well below that expected for Year 13 and below that for Year 12.
210. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There is currently no one who has sufficient knowledge of the subject to manage it satisfactorily. In the past, all has been left to the teacher in charge, of which there have been several over the past two years. The department does not have central records of assessments; the previous teacher has gone abroad and these assessments could not be found. Current students in Year 12 have been recruited with lower grades at GCSE double award science and mathematics than is normally acceptable. All previous and current students have been boys, which call into question whether girls are encouraged to aspire to careers for which the study of physics is necessary. The department's resources are not satisfactory. There is no evidence of ICT being used in laboratory work, or for independent research topics. The department does not have enough modern textbooks for all students to have their own copy.
211. There was no sixth form at the last inspection, so improvement cannot be judged.

### **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

212. No detailed inspections of courses in this area were conducted. One Year 12 lesson in Product Design was sampled and this was evidence of satisfactory provision for current students. From a very small number of candidates in the 2001 examination, results were well above the national average for good grades.

## BUSINESS

A detailed inspection was made of the A and AS-level business studies courses. There are no other courses in this curriculum area for sampling.

### Business studies

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

#### Strengths

- Leadership and management.
- The consistently very good quality of teaching that leads to effective learning by students.
- The high expectations of staff leading to year-on-year improvements in the average point scores achieved by students.
- Carefully planned lessons including a wide range of activities.
- The good progress made by students.
- Students' very good attitudes and maturity of approach.

#### Areas for improvement

- Work with the school management to prioritise the installation of new computers within the business studies area, to extend the learning opportunities for all students.
- Audit new staff training needs to ensure that subject knowledge meets the requirements of the syllabus.
- Develop strategies and resources to ensure that higher-attaining students achieve the highest possible grades.

213. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with national averages for the course. The current six Year 13 students, in the AS modules they took last year, achieved a range of grades largely in keeping with their prior attainment levels. These standards are achieved because the teaching is consistently very 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, the modules in Years 12 and 13.
214. The average point score achieved by students who completed an Advanced course in business last summer was above average. This was an improvement on the results for the previous two years. Inspection evidence, and the examination of students' coursework folios, indicates that the majority of the students currently in Year 13 will again be successful in attaining a C grade. All achieve high standards in this subject in relation to their prior attainment. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
215. An Intermediate GNVQ business course is also offered to students. The results attained by students following this course in 2001 and 2000 were higher, in line with predictions based on their prior attainment.
216. Students have a very good understanding of the main business functions of organisations. During the course they develop sound research skills, which enables them to gather a broad range of information to support the detailed written assignments they are required to produce. Within the research notes produced by the students there is evidence of analytical thinking as opposed to simply recording facts.

217. Teaching is very good. Teachers' expert subject knowledge underpins discussions and lends clarity to the explorations provided. They plan and sequence lessons well, with many having a practical focus that sustains interest and motivation in the topics being discussed. Teaching is lively and interactive. As a direct result, students are well motivated and display very positive attitudes to learning in lessons. Currently a module of work relating to finance is being taught. In one lesson observed, students were asked to undertake an exercise to prepare the end of year accounts for a company. The aim of the lesson was to further their understanding of how to enter financial transactions into ledgers. This highly complex exercise was successfully achieved by all due to the range of learning opportunities provided for them. They were encouraged to work in partnership with each other, to seek guidance from the teacher and present their results to the class for discussion. As a direct result of this strategy, all were able to undertake the task with confidence and make good progress. All lessons have a clear learning focus and this is shared with the students. They are regularly expected to recall knowledge gained from previous lessons and apply it to a new context.
218. In discussion with students, they are aware of their progress in relation to each 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 but all see this as an absolute minimum in terms of what they are working towards. A great deal is demanded of the students who follow courses in this department. A high level of commitment, particularly in the area of undertaking personal research, is expected.
219. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a good range of resources for the students to use. However, facilities to undertake personal research within the department are limited and students have only had access to three computers within the classroom since January 2002. This has placed severe limits on the learning opportunities available to them. The department development plan has a clear focus on raising attainment and the priorities identified reflect this. Current assessment procedures are good and students' work is assessed using the criteria set by the examination board. The department provides regular assessment opportunities to enable specific learning targets to be set for individual students. Teaching and learning is regularly monitored. Written formative feedback is provided for both students and staff. Accommodation and resources are good overall.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

In this curriculum area, detailed inspection took place of the A/AS-level course. The key skills course was also sampled.

Overall, the provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Standards at GCE A-level.
- Attitudes of students.

### Area for improvement

- Use of assessment in Year 12 to set individual targets for students.

220. The inspection covered the A/S-level GCE course in Year 12 and the A-level GCE course in Year 13. The key skills course, level 1, was also inspected.

221. Standards in GCE A-level in 2001 were below average although all students earned a pass grade. There was no difference in the performance of male and female students. Standards in GCE A-level in 2002 improved to be broadly in line with provisional results nationally, all students earning a pass grade and approximately two-thirds earning the higher grades A to C. Students on the A/S-level course found the work demanding and there were difficulties with coursework, so results in 2002 were well below average.
222. Standards seen in the inspection in Year 13 are above average and rising as a result of very good teaching. Achievement is good. Students access a variety of Internet sites in order to determine how technology impacts on a variety of businesses. Year 12 students have begun their course satisfactorily. They search the Internet efficiently for future technologies, for example robotics, in order to produce reports. Standards on the key skills course are as expected and satisfactory progress is being made, currently working on Power Point presentations, including the use of sound.
223. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and occasionally excellent. Excellent discussion at the outset of lessons leads to very good learning gains in understanding because students prepare very well in advance. They contribute very well. Lesson planning is also very good so the lesson time is used very effectively, impacting on learning by providing clear objectives for learning and an enthusiasm 'to get on'. Teaching methods are very good, providing a variety of activities so that all aspects of learning are addressed, fostered through students' very good attitudes. Subject expertise seen in lessons is very good and occasionally excellent.
224. The quality of teaching and learning on the key skills course is good. The management of students is good, so that students know what to do and how to 'get on with it', consolidating earlier learning well and learning new skills, often by trial and error or as a result of intervention by the teacher. Planning in lessons is satisfactory (no better), as there are not sufficient opportunities for students to make oral contributions in whole class discussions.
225. Leadership in the sixth form is very good and set by the personal example of the head of department. Assessment in A-level lessons is very good as the group is small. The use of assessment on the A/AS-level and key skills courses in terms of target setting needs to improve if standards are to improve further. The increased emphasis on course work, identified as the cause of disappointing results in A/S-level in 2002, is having a good impact on learning and progress. Students have easy access to the equipment.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

In this curriculum area, the A/AS-level course in physical education was inspected in detail, together with sampling of the Community Sports Leader Award course.

### Physical education

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

#### Strengths

- The application of the theoretical content of lessons is transferred very well into the practical context.
- Teachers make very good use of questioning and discussion to promote learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Opportunities for the development of leadership skills and voluntary work in the community.

#### Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning and teaching approaches to meet the needs of all students.
- The learning environment for theory lessons.

226. The results of students who completed the AS physical education examination course in 2002 were well below national expectations. This was the first year this course was followed in the school and, subsequently, some students have been advised to follow more appropriate courses. Year 13 students have not yet participated in an A-level examination. The A-level course is new, added within the last year, and a more appropriate group of students are following this course. These students are working in line with national expectations.

227. Students show good knowledge of aerobic processes and energy systems during anatomy lessons. They think clearly and in depth about their answers showing very clear gains in knowledge and understanding during their theoretical based lessons, particularly when considering the definition of sport. They answer questions very well, often volunteering extended answers. All students make good progress and apply skills very effectively into different contexts. The Year 12 students who follow the Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA) course are provided with a very good opportunity to develop their leadership skills. They learn how to develop games activities for young children and their ten-hour community service is spent working in local primary school.

228. Overall, the teaching of CSLA, AS and A-level physical education is good. Good use is made of previous learning gained during Key Stage 4. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and relate the theoretical content very well into the practical context. This was particularly the case when the effects of exercise were considered in relation to the aerobic and anaerobic systems. All teachers have very good relationships with the students. Lessons are well planned and are taught at a brisk pace. In some isolated instances, opportunities were missed to extend students' understanding through paired or group discussions. Planning needs to be developed to include a greater range of teaching and learning strategies as well as providing opportunities for students to improve their key skills.

229. In all lessons seen behaviour was very good. Students apply themselves well, showing good levels of concentration. During practical activities they demonstrate very good sporting attitudes and very good relationships are evident between the teachers and the

students. Students speak very positively about their experiences within the physical education curriculum.

230. Good resources are available for the examination courses. A designated physical education classroom for theoretical lessons and the provision of a fitness suite would further develop the possibilities of the examination curriculum. The deployment of the expertise of the various staff within the department is very effective.
231. Very good levels of support and guidance are available to ensure that students complete the most appropriate courses, according to their needs. Assessments are recorded and are used to set targets for further study in order to raise standards even higher. Good links have been established between the school and local primary schools, where the students complete their community service as part of their Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA). The proposed use of local leisure facilities should be an effective additional opportunity to further enhance the curriculum.
232. There was no sixth form in the school at the time of the previous inspection. Since that time, the examination courses, as well as the CSLA course have been established. These courses provide pupils with a very good learning opportunity and the provision for further specialist study.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

No courses from this area were included in the inspection.

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

No courses from this area were subject to detailed inspection although art and music A/AS-level courses were sampled.

In art, the provision is **good**.

Considering their GCSE results, students did as well as expected at both A-level and AS-level in 2002. A lesson for both upper and lower sixth was observed and teaching and learning were good. Students were developing individual styles based on improving technical skills and personal views of the work of famous artists.

In music, the provision is also **good**. Year 12 and 13 students are taught the Music Technology advanced course together. The teacher sets good challenges for the students who respond well. In a lesson observed, students were readily able to recognise up to six chords in progression, and were aware of the combinations of major and minor chords.

## HUMANITIES

In this curriculum area, three subjects were inspected in detail, i.e. geography, history and sociology. Inspection of the religious studies course was undertaken by the Diocesan inspectors (see their report).

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Examination Results at A2 level.
- Quality of teaching.
- Students' attitude to the subject.
- The tracking and monitoring of students performance in the subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation.

233. Results in public examinations have risen recently. With open enrolment to the A/S course in Year 12, the results in this examination are expected to be lower than in Year 13. The school provides extra support for those Year 12 students who need it, producing different tasks to suit the needs of students with varying needs and by running after school 'catch up lessons' once a week. The subject is popular with students and classes are large enough, with 15 students in Year 12 and 10 in Year 13, for lively and meaningful discussion of the topics studied.
234. Results in 2002 show an improvement on the previous year and evidence from work seen during the inspection confirms this trend. Students in Year 12 showed good understanding of river rejuvenation, relating its causes to changes in sea level or rate of water flow, and gave many reasons for each in class discussions. Their written work shows quick adaptation to the demands of the course. End of unit test results also show rapid progress being made with examination technique. Year 13 students have made more progress and in their study of seismology they showed a good depth of background knowledge prior to their case studies research on earthquakes.
235. Teaching is very good or excellent and is a key factor in raising standards. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, of the examination system and of their students' prior attainment. They use this knowledge well to set targets and to guide their students' thoughts and ensure they consider all aspects when discussing issues. Students learn to anticipate their teachers' questions and thereby give more fully reasoned answers. For example, when Year 13 students were discussing information about the conflict between conservation and development. By the end of a lesson, they were able to give reasoned arguments supporting one method and against others, with a minimum of teacher intervention. Teachers encourage students to use ICT to present information to support hypotheses generated in their coursework. Teachers have good knowledge of the software and help students gain the capabilities needed. Students also use ICT to research topics and use the Internet, visiting sites given by the teacher to find information to support their arguments.
236. Where teaching is very good teachers ensure students have the opportunity to apply newly developed skills to a practical situation. In a Year 12 class the teacher gave feedback and praise to students for their answers when identifying hydrographs and

relating them to locations. This ensured accuracy and encouraged students to deeper thought, more understanding, and better identification of features on maps. The teacher had high expectations of verbal responses to questions linking the geographical features of the river to flood hydrographs.

237. Students are very positive about the school and the department. They speak highly of the opportunities given to develop their writing and number skills in lessons, the access given to them for research within the department, the guidance given to them in the form of shared mark schemes, and information on how to research and time to assess critically their own work.
238. The department is well led and managed. The head of department gives clear direction. Teaching is observed as part of performance management and targets are set for individual and department performance.

## History

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

### Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Examination results, especially in 2002.
- The high level of commitment of students.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support learning.
- Resources – the availability of a wider range of suitable textbooks.

239. The A-level results in 2002 showed some improvement over the previous year, although only a small proportion achieved higher grades. At AS-level in 2002, 91 per cent of entrants achieved A – E grades whilst 45 per cent were awarded A - C.
240. Standards of work in Year 13 are close to those expected nationally. The continuity of work from GCSE level as regards areas of study is appreciated by students, as it gives them confidence and allows them to make good progress.
241. Analysis of the work of students in both Year 12 and Year 13 demonstrates good organisation of work in files or folders with clear highlighting of key facts and lines of argument in printed sources as well as in their written notes. They develop the ability to collect and collate information from a range of source material, primary and secondary and to use this effectively in their note making, essay writing and other assignments. They write discursive essays on international relations post-World War 2, and accounts surveying and summarising developments over time, such as the expansion of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century. They gain an understanding of imperialism but some of them do not fully appreciate the links between the imperial, foreign and domestic policies of Gladstone and Disraeli.
242. A Year 12 lesson revealed another facet of their developing abilities. In this lesson, pairs of students presented talks on various aspects of the history of Italy from 1860 to 1960, making excellent use of resources including transparencies on the overhead projector. The high standard of these presentations attested not only to the keenness of the students but also to the quality of teaching in encouraging and preparing them for this demanding task.



243. Teaching is good overall with elements that are very good. The tasks that students are set in lessons and for homework help them to gain a full insight of the topics being studied. In a Year 13 lesson for instance, in which the breakdown of the wartime alliance was examined, students were invited to prioritise a number of likely causes: this close consideration helped to give them an accurate understanding of the rapid unfolding of key developments over a relatively brief time scale. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage students to develop their own ideas through structured discussion of issues, although the interchange of ideas is sometimes rather limited, obliging teachers to be leaders of the discussions rather than presiding over them. The marking of essays is closely focused on their limitations where appropriate, and on strategies for improving structure, although a singular feature is that sometimes they are marked out of ten rather than being allocated an 'A' level grade. No use is made in the teaching of information and communications technology.
244. Students in both year groups demonstrate a very mature approach to their studies and a high level of commitment. They are keen to learn and take a distinct pride in presenting material when they are given opportunity to do this. They are complimentary about the quality of teaching they receive and say that they were given considerable help in adjusting to the demands of an A-level course.
245. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a need for the provision of a larger number of A-level history books in the school library to encourage wider reading amongst students.

## Sociology

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

### Strengths

- Overall, results that are good, with the more able students doing especially well.
- Good teaching.
- Assessment and marking.
- A committed teacher-in-charge with high expectations.
- Students' research and independent learning skills are very well developed.

### Areas for improvement

- Year 12 classes do not always benefit from a wide range of teaching and learning styles and materials that reflect their needs.
- The range of textbooks for specific aspects of the syllabus is limited and the library does not offer good support.
- A base for the subject where a range of support materials that can be easily accessed.

246. The results of the students taking the newly introduced A-level Sociology course in 2001 were above the national average. Generally, the performance was better than in their other subjects. The provisional 2002 results indicate that the number of top grades, A and B, has continued to be above the national average, although other results were not as good as in 2001. The school has queried these results with the examination board. Two thirds of the students did at least as well or better than in their other subjects. In 2001 the AS results were noticeable for the high number of top grades obtained. This is also a feature of the 2002 results, although it is less strong and more candidates obtained the lower grades. The department is in contention with the examination board over the marking of the coursework.

247. The attainment of the current Year 13 A2 class is good, as reflected in their written work over time and by responses in class. In one class, students responded well to the teacher's expert subject knowledge and well prepared learning tasks. The teacher had high expectations of their academic potential and they responded accordingly. By the end of the lesson, the students had carefully researched a range of religious ideas such as the characteristics of a theodicy and a theocracy. They discussed them well. A scrutiny of previous work also indicated a brisk pace of learning and good progress, especially in students' explanations of concepts exemplified in various studies. There was good work on linking Becker's labelling theory with ideas about pupil achievement. Although essay writing was taught well, some students found the transition to A2 standards difficult.
248. Students in Year 12 have only studied the subject for a few weeks. The class is making good progress in understanding basic ideas as shown by their written work, including some well-structured essays and performance in regular tests. They have begun to effectively apply some theories, such as Marxism, to a scrutiny of the mass media. This augurs well for their future performance.
249. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Students benefit from the teachers' enthusiasm and ability to communicate effectively up-to-date, expert subject knowledge. Skilful reference to violence as portrayed in the soap operas enabled a Year 12 AS class to more fully appreciate the ethical considerations that can permeate sociological studies. Feedback and good questioning were used well to test, reinforce and extend learning. There is a strong stress on literacy and numeracy and students do well in key skills. The department is particularly strong in promoting independent learning. Students comment favourably on the continuous assessment and marking to pinpoint difficulties and highlight areas that need improving. In the odd lesson, teaching and learning styles were too limited to ensure the fullest participation by the wide range of students, new to the subject. Tasks were not always sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all.
250. Students generally learn well. They are appreciative of the teacher's willingness to give time to run workshops and a sociology club. Students are engaged by the relevance of their studies to the real world and the stimulating discussions that occur. They work well in lessons and do good research for their coursework and particular topics, confidently using ICT to access additional material on, for example, new religious sects.
251. The subject is well managed. There is a vision that encompasses high academic standards. A commitment to continuous improvement is realised through effective action taken as the result of rigorous departmental self-review. Resources, including the local university and membership of professional associations, are used very well to enhance learning. There is a wide range of well-prepared teaching materials but a lack of textbooks, especially for specific aspects of the course. The library lacks newspapers and a wide range of books for background reading. Teaching mainly occurs in design and technology rooms which do not provide a stimulating environment or easy access to equipment and resources.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

In this curriculum area, the A/AS-level English course was inspected in detail and the key skills course was sampled. The A/AS-level French course was also sampled. Provision here is **satisfactory** for the very few students involved.

Four candidates gained creditable grades at AS-level in 2002, three of them proceeding to the A2 stage for 2003. No candidates came forward to take French in the current Year 12.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Students' results in A/AS-level examinations.
- Very good teaching in A/AS-level course.

#### Areas for improvement

- Further development of the quality of the key skills course in order to actively engage students in the application of their communication skills.

252. Standards in AS and A-level examinations were good in 2002 and an improvement on the previous two years where they were close to national averages.
253. Achievement for the Year 12 students observed at the beginning of their AS course are sound. Their reading of *Anthony and Cleopatra* shows an understanding of the key events and students are beginning to grasp some of the complexities of the relationship between the characters. Students show a good understanding of how to gather evidence for a point of view and how to argue for it. Year 13 A-level students are studying Marlowe and show a good grasp of the perceptions of *Dr Faustus* and how the audience of the day would interpret the seven deadly sins. The text is understood well and students have the confidence to express a personal response to literature. Written work is good and extended essays make effective use of the language of literary criticism.
254. The students in key skills communication lessons have below average achievements in reading, writing and speaking and listening. They need to develop and practice these skills in active work related contexts.
255. The teaching of A and AS students is very good. Teachers know their subject very well, planning is very good and there are carefully structured stages in lessons. For instance, in a Year 13 group, the teacher introduced the concept of sin through a detailed exploration of a Bosch painting, relating this to the text and finally to how students could symbolically represent each sin through colour, gesture and mask. In another lesson for Year 12 students the teacher facilitated a good discussion about how we understand the character of a character through speech, action, gesture and what is said about them. This led to a detailed discussion of Cleopatra and her relationship with Anthony.
256. Teaching is sound for the key skill of communication, although independent learning and the use of communication skills in real contexts is not well developed.

257. Attitudes in all A and AS-level classes are very good. Students work effectively together in groups, participate in whole class discussions and take responsibility for their own independent reading and writing.
258. The leadership and management of English teaching in the sixth form are good. There is careful co-ordination of A and AS-level work and accurate internal moderation of assessment. Some thought needs to be given to key skills and how the link with GNVQ courses can be more effectively made to provide real contexts for learning and practising communication skills.