

INSPECTION REPORT

GREAT WYRLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Walsall, West Midlands

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124402

Headteacher: Mr John Large

Reporting inspector: Mr David Darwood

Dates of inspection: 24th – 28th March 2003

Inspection number: 251151

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hall Lane Great Wyrley Walsall
Postcode:	WS6 6LQ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Watson
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

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14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Inclusion
30317	Elizabeth Barthaud	Team inspector	History	How high are standards? How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
32305	Matthew Pike	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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32581	Jo Fageant	Team inspector	Religious education	
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30215	Helen Feasey	Team inspector	Geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
23137	Ron Fewtrell	Team inspector	Physical education Business education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Great Wyrley High School is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive school situated in the urban area of South Staffordshire. The school takes students from the immediate area as well as from the northern part of Walsall and the areas of Bloxwich and Heath Hayes. There are 1163 students on roll, of which 142 are in the sixth form. There are 590 boys and 573 girls. This is larger than the national average for secondary schools. The school is oversubscribed. The attainment of students when they first come to the school is broadly average. There are 10.6 per cent of pupils on the special educational needs register of which 2.2 per cent have statements of special educational need. These figures are below the national average. The percentage of students claiming free school meals, at 6.9 per cent, is low compared to the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Great Wyrley has maintained the good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. It is an effective school. The quality of teaching is good, with a significant proportion of teaching that is very good. Students achieve results, which are in line with the national average. The school has a clear set of values and aims, which direct its work. Students' behaviour and attitudes towards their learning are very good. The headteacher is an experienced leader who has not only raised standards but also improved the popularity of the school in the local community. The governing body of the school provides effective support and has a clear commitment to further improvement. Overall the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The provision for the sixth form is very good.
- Students show very positive attitudes towards their learning. Relationships between staff and students are a strength of the school.
- It provides a caring and supportive ethos in which individuals are valued.
- It provides a curriculum that is well matched to the needs of its students.
- The overall quality of teaching is good and this contributes to the progress students make in lessons.
- The headteacher has provided good leadership over many years and established a strong sense of commitment amongst the staff to the welfare and personal development of the students.
- Strong links with the community are used effectively to enhance students' learning and to increase their knowledge of the world of work.

What could be improved

- The overall provision to support students with special educational needs.
- The overall effectiveness of management to ensure that monitoring procedures are effective in identifying, sharing and developing good practice across the school.
- A shared and clear strategy to further improve the school over the next three to four years.
- More effective use of assessment and evaluation data to help establish targets and strategies to improve standards further.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in December 1997. Since that time it has made satisfactory progress overall. There are a clear set of priorities which are known and shared by staff and a structure which links departmental development planning to overall school priorities. However, the strategies for achieving these priorities are less clear. As a consequence there is inconsistency in practice in implementing school policies. The school has worked hard to improve standards, particularly in Years 7-9 and the overall trend in results in these years is higher than that found nationally. A range of strategies have been put in place to improve the performance of boys and, although the 2002 results showed boys doing significantly less well than girls in some subjects, in lessons this was not the case. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have been maintained but the overall trend, in terms of the average point scores of students, is less than that seen nationally. There have been improvements in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form by the introduction of more vocationally based courses. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT),

has improved and statutory requirements are now met. Despite financial limitations there have been considerable improvements in the refurbishment and effective use of the available accommodation.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	D
A-levels/AS-levels		A	A	

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

In 2002 standards of attainment, by the end of Year 9, were above the national average in mathematics and science but in line in English. In 2002 the results in mathematics and science were below those of similar schools and well below in English. Boys did better than girls in mathematics and science, whilst girls did better in English. These results are not typical of previous years when the gap between girls and boys was not significantly different to that nationally. The trend in results for the last few years has been improving at a slightly higher rate than that nationally. Students' progress in the first three years of school is good overall.

In 2002 GCSE examination results, in terms of average point scores, were at the national average but below similar schools. In part this was because of a small but significant number of unmotivated boys and a slightly poorer year group academically. In the previous year the school achieved better results and, in terms of average point scores, did better than might be expected from those students' attainment at the end of Year 9. However, whilst the overall standard of results has been maintained, the trend over the last few years has been below that nationally. In mathematics and science GCSE results were in line the national average. In English they were well below.

Standards in the sixth form are very good and well above the national average. Students' performances show very good progress from their results at GCSE.

In the work seen in lessons the standards reached by students in Year 9 meet the national expectations for their age apart from in music, modern foreign languages, geography and art where students exceed expectations. The work of students in Year 11 shows that attainment is average for their age apart from art, modern foreign languages and music where it is above the national average.

The progress of students with special educational needs is variable but unsatisfactory overall. In some cases it is good due to the support given by teaching assistants and the commitment of individual staff. It is less effective where there is no additional support. Students for whom English is not the home language are sufficiently fluent in the language to make satisfactory progress. The school set itself ambitious targets for 2002, which it did not achieve. Those set for 2003 are realistic based upon students' prior performance and the use of national performance data.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students are keen to come to school and their attitudes to lessons and learning are very positive. They have mutual respect for other students and adults.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Students are courteous, friendly and the vast majority are very well behaved in lessons and about the school.
Personal development and relationships	The quality of relationships between students and between students and staff is a strength and supports learning. When offered the opportunity to be involved and take responsibility, students respond well.
Attendance	Very good

One of the key strengths of the school is the standard of behaviour of students and their positive approach towards school. This contributes to the standards students achieve and their overall personal development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in all years although the percentage of very good lessons is significantly higher for Years 7 to 9. This, in part, explains the better test results at the end of Year 9 compared to those at the end of Year 11. In Years 7 to 9 teachers use a greater range of methods and have higher expectations of what students can achieve. Teaching, however, is variable both within and between departments. Teachers' knowledge of their subject and their planning are good.

The overall quality of teaching in English and science is good. It is good in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of literacy is good and well supported by the majority of subjects of the curriculum. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics lessons but less effectively planned in other subjects of the curriculum.

The school is successful in meeting the needs of the majority of students although there is some concern regarding the level of challenge for high ability students in English, history, design and technology, mathematics and religious education. The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. It is variable because their precise learning needs are not always specifically identified, which limits their further progress.

Work seen during the inspection indicates that students make good progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly in art, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. In Years 10 to 11, progress is satisfactory overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a wide range of subjects in Years 7 and 9 and the new vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 provide pupils with greater choice. There is also a wide range of extra curricular activities. The school does not, however, meet statutory requirements with regards to providing religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. The provision does not meet all the needs of the students, as identified in their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The few students for whom English is an additional language are sufficiently fluent so as not to be disadvantaged in their studies.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Students are provided with very good opportunities for the development of moral and social awareness and there are opportunities provided in lessons and assemblies for students to reflect and develop their spiritual awareness. Students have access to a range of different cultural traditions in art, modern foreign languages, religious education and English. The very good moral and social provision has a positive impact on the way students learn together.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school works hard to take good care of its students. Staff know them well and are generous in offering their time and energy to meeting their individual needs.

The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form has improved since the previous inspection with the introduction of a range of vocational courses and better links with the local college. Presently, however, the school does not effectively use assessment information to help identify strategies and targets for further improvement.

Parents are supportive of the school. The vast majority speak positively about the way in which the school helps their children to become more responsible. The school provides a caring and supportive atmosphere.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher has worked hard to maintain standards and build the school's reputation within the community. He has a vision for how the school should move forward. Currently, however, there is no clear strategy to achieve it. The headteacher and his management team provide good routine management of the school and its finances.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors are well informed and appropriately involved in the life of the school, acting as effective critical friends. Their financial oversight is good but aspects of the school's special educational needs provision are not fully in place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The school's approach to monitoring and evaluation is inconsistent and currently key areas for development are not being effectively implemented.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages and uses its available resources well but financial restraints over the last few years have led to a lack of learning resources in some areas and this has an adverse impact on standards.

The school has sufficient, appropriately qualified staff to teach the curriculum. There are, however, concerns about the way in which some departments are led and managed, the inconsistency in the implementation of whole school policies and the identification of strategies to bring about further improvement in the classroom.

The school makes very good use of the accommodation. The day-to-day management of resources is good and the principles of best value are effectively applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress • The good behaviour of students • The good standard of teaching • The school is approachable and listens to parents • The school's high expectations • Their children are helped to be considerate, mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and appropriateness of homework. • The level of information received on children's progress • Closer working links with parents • The range of extra-curricular activities.

Twenty-three parents attended the inspectors' meeting with parents and 348 returned the inspectors' questionnaire. Inspectors endorse the positive views of the parents about the attitudes and behaviour of the students and the overall standard of teaching. The school provides a welcoming atmosphere and has high expectations of students. The setting and appropriateness of homework present a mixed picture. There is some very good practice as well as occasions when homework lacks challenge and relevance. Overall it is satisfactory. The level of information given to parents is satisfactory although more detail could be given on the topics their children are currently studying. The range of extra curricular activities is judged to be good. At the parents' meeting some raised their concerns about the school's provision for those children with special educational needs. Currently the overall provision for these children is unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are currently 142 students in the sixth form, which is slightly below the national average. It offers a wide range of courses. In 2001, students took, Advanced subsidiary/Advanced level (AS/A) examinations in more than 15 subjects. There is also a range of vocational courses on offer. The number of female sixth form students is above the national average and the number of male students is 15 per cent below the national average. Entry to the sixth form is open to all students for whom there are appropriate courses and in 2002, 42 per cent of students from the main school continued their education in the sixth form. More than 90 per cent continue from Year 12 to Year 13. Fifty six per cent of sixth form students follow AS/A level courses and a further 32 per cent follow a mixture of AS/A level and vocational courses. In 2001 79 per cent of students entered higher education which was a significant increase from the 61 per cent in 2000. This figure fell slightly to 74 per cent in 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very good in promoting both students' academic success and their personal development. The students' attitudes, behaviour, and relationships are all very good and the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is also very good. The leadership provided by the head of sixth form is excellent in ensuring clear educational direction.

In 2001 the attainment of students at AS/A level, measured by the average points score per student was well above the national average for both boys and girls. Students who took AS/A and Advanced vocational courses achieved a similar level of attainment. The small number of students who took one year intermediate and foundation vocational courses also achieved results that were better than national averages. The school's results are within the range of the top quarter of schools across the country. These figures indicate that the standards achieved by students have improved significantly since the previous inspection report in 1997, when the report concluded that 'the standards achieved by students need some improvement'. In 2001 especially good results were achieved in biology, English literature, geography, psychology and physical education. Results in psychology were within the top 5 per cent of schools in the country.

Strengths

- The leadership and management by the head of sixth form are excellent and she has good support from tutors.
- Students achieve very well and their levels of attainment are above the national average overall.
- Communication with parents and students is a strong feature.
- Results in psychology are particularly strong.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities outside students' normal examination work in which students participate.

What could be improved

- The level of resources in the new sixth form centre and its design as an effective learning centre.
- The level of recruitment from the main school and expansion of academic and vocational courses.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is good and students make good progress. Lessons are well prepared and teachers offer extra help willingly. Examination results are well monitored and students achieve close to their predicted grades.
English	Good. Standards in national examinations and the work seen are above average and students' achievement over time is good. This is because of the challenging teaching and the very positive attitudes of students to the subject.
Information and communication technology	Good. Excellent subject knowledge and very good teaching enable students to make above average progress. Very good assessment procedures make a positive contribution to students' learning.
Art and design	Good. The consistently good quality teaching tailored to the needs of the individual encourages and inspires students and has a positive effect on achievement and standards.
Chemistry	Good. Examination results have been above average. Current students are working at above average standards as a result of the good teaching and effective support. Practical work is good but there is little use of information and communication technology in lessons.
Geography	Good. Teaching and learning are good. Standards of work are above average and a variety of fieldwork activities enhances students' understanding and enjoyment of geography.
Health and Social Care	Very good. Very good teaching enables students to learn well and attain high standards. The department is well led and managed.
Psychology	Very good. Supported by very good and sometimes excellent teaching the students achieve and learn very well. Relationships and equality of opportunity and inclusion are excellent.
Business education	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with national averages. Teaching and learning are good.

In other subjects work was sampled. Teaching was never less than good and it was very good in physical education

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	There is a good induction programme for students when they enter the sixth form. Target grades are set for students based on their GCSE results and these are reviewed each half term. The students receive very good support and guidance from their teachers. The head of sixth form and tutors know their students especially well and offer excellent support.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The commitment and leadership of the head of sixth form are excellent. There is a very good sense of direction and purpose to its work. The tutors and staff responsible for overseeing the work of the sixth form carefully monitor and evaluate both policies and practice. The governors have a sound insight into both the efficiency and effectiveness of the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The helpful way in which the students are inducted into the sixth form.• The encouragement, support and advice given by tutors and subject teachers.• The commitment and leadership of the Head of sixth form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The level of careers advice.• The range of activities provided.• The response from the school about their views.

Students are very positive about the sixth form, especially the support and guidance they receive. The inspection evidence confirms these opinions. However the views expressed by students through the questionnaire, regarding what could be improved, were not confirmed by the inspection team. The quality of the relationships between staff and students is a major strength of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Standards overall are good, although they are not consistently so in all subjects. **Most** students are achieving well in relation to their attainment, which is average when they first come to the school. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the results overall were above average, although not as high as those achieved in 2001. Since the previous inspection, however, the improvement in the school's results has increased at a slightly higher rate than results nationally. The school's results in 2002 were above the national average in mathematics and science and were in line with the average in English. In mathematics and science, the proportion of boys achieving the national standard of Level 5 or above was higher than that of the girls. In English, the girls did better. This reflects the national picture. However, the gap in mathematics and science between the attainment of boys and girls was greater than that found nationally
2. When the 2002 results are compared with those schools with students from a similar background (based on the proportion of students claiming free school meals), the school's performance overall was below average in mathematics and science and well below average in English. The 2002 results, however, were not typical of previous years when the gap between girls and boys was more typical of that nationally. In work seen in lessons, the standards reached by students in English were in line with national expectations and above them in mathematics and science. The percentage of students reaching the higher levels in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was above average in science, in line with national figures in mathematics and well below in English.
3. In other subjects the standards reached by students in Year 9 meet the national expectations for their age apart from art, geography, modern foreign languages and music where students exceed them. Students make good progress in art, music, modern foreign languages, geography, history and physical education. In other subjects progress is satisfactory. There is little difference between the achievement of girls and boys.
4. The GCSE examination results in 2002 were at the national average but below those for similar schools and well below in the number of students achieving five or more grades A*-C. The overall trend in results over the last four years is below that found nationally. The school did not meet its challenging target of 51 per cent for the number of students gaining five or more grades at A*-C in 2002. When account is taken of the students' performance in their Year 9 national tests, the GCSE results show unsatisfactory progress. However, this is in part the result of a slightly weaker year group. In 2001 the progress made by students was good.
5. In 2002, the GCSE examination results in English were significantly below the national average and below those in mathematics and science. Results in mathematics and science were in line with those nationally. In other subjects, the results were better than average in English literature, modern foreign languages and slightly below average in history, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), religious studies and physical education/sport studies. In all other subjects results were similar to the national average. The work seen in all lessons indicates that standards of attainment are average, except in art, modern foreign languages and music where they are above the national average and in religious education, where they are below. These variations in standards are, in part, due to the

lack of strong leadership and management in some subject areas and inconsistent monitoring procedures. In addition there are significant variations in the quality of teaching, both within and between departments, which impede further progress. Overall, however, students make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11.

6. Standards of literacy throughout the main school are good. Most students write fluently and accurately and are able to adapt their writing to the demands of different subjects. In history, for example, students are taught to annotate and amend a text and in so doing they develop their writing skills. Reading skills are well developed and in all subjects students make good use of a wide range of increasingly difficult texts. In geography, Year 8 students' reading of the poem 'Requiem for a Rainforest' extended their understanding of conservation and gave them insight into the customs of primitive cultures. Standards of speaking and listening are above average and contribute significantly to how well students learn. Listening in particular is highly developed and students can even make inferences when meaning is obscure. All are confident and articulate when speaking. This was seen in science lessons when students in all years used appropriate scientific terminology when speaking about their work.
7. Students' use of numeracy when needed in other subject areas is satisfactory. Their basic arithmetic is good and some teachers are increasing the accurate use of numeracy skills by exploring different strategies, using mental, written and calculator methods. Overall, however, there is little evidence of numeracy being developed in any systematic way and pupils are, therefore, not given sufficient opportunity to improve and develop their numeracy skills in different contexts.
8. Whilst there have been improvements in the cross-curricular provision of ICT since the previous inspection, overall standards across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, standards of achievement are satisfactory. They are confident when using hardware. Year 7 students can create spreadsheets and have little problem when performing calculations. These skills improve throughout Years 8 and 9. However in Years 10 and 11, attainment is below average and not well supported by other subject areas.
9. Students with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress overall. Most receive satisfactory levels of assistance in their classes from teaching and support staff. This is, however, inconsistent and in many cases does not give an appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and in meeting their needs as identified in their individual education plans. Where these plans are in place, and students have relevant targets to meet their needs, they are well supported by teaching assistants and make good progress. However, there are some students who are registered as having special educational needs who do not have individual education plans and others have targets that are not relevant to their needs. This reduces the overall progress they make.
10. There are a very small number of students across the school for whom English is not their home language. In all cases, they are sufficiently competent in the use of language to be able to make satisfactory progress in their lessons.
11. The higher-attaining students are making satisfactory progress overall. Their progress is generally better in Years 7 through to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In some subjects, however, they are not given sufficiently demanding and challenging work. This restricts their progress. This is of particular concern in English, mathematics, history, design and technology and geography.

Sixth form

12. Standards in the sixth form are very good and the average point score obtained by students is well above the national average. Boys and girls reach comparable standards in most subjects. Analysis of students' performance shows that overall they added significantly to their attainment at GCSE level. This represents very good progress. Results over the last few years show a steady improvement since the previous inspection.
13. In 2001 the attainment of students at AS/A level, measured by the average points score per student was well above the national average for both boys and girls. Boys averaged 18.9 points compared with a national average of 16.9 points and girls averaged 19.5 points compared with a national average of 17.7 points. Students who took AS/A and Advanced vocational courses achieved a similar level of attainment. Overall students averaged 19.2 points per candidate in 2001 compared with a national average of 17.5 points. In the targeted subjects inspected, standards in 2002 were above the national average in English, mathematics, geography, chemistry and health and social care. In psychology results were well above. In ICT and business studies results were at the national average but many of these students achieved grades above those predicted by the school based upon their previous GCSE work. Other subjects were also sampled during the inspection. Here results were well above the national average in sports studies, above in biology, physics and environmental science and at the national average in history. Work seen during the inspection confirms these good results. The school has worked hard to increase the retention rate and has been successful in doing so with over 52 per cent of the current Year 11 opting to stay on into the sixth form.
14. In the sixth form students' communication skills are particularly well developed. Most students write fluently and accurately and are able to adapt their writing to the demands of different subjects. In history, for example, students are taught to annotate and amend a text and in so doing they develop their writing skills. In psychology in the sixth form students' extended writing is fluent and clear because they make extensive use of drafting and redrafting techniques.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development.

15. The previous inspection found that students enjoyed coming to school and were very well behaved. The school has maintained this very positive picture. Students of all ages and abilities work hard and are keen to do their best; they speak highly of the staff and are very loyal towards their school. The school has a successful policy for social and educational inclusion and teachers lead by example. They share a wholehearted commitment to their students and encourage boys and girls of all abilities to achieve their very best. This positive 'can do' attitude is clearly rubbing off and the students are very enthusiastic about both the academic and social sides of school life. Relationships between students and with adults are very good and are based upon mutual trust and respect. The number of fixed term exclusions is similar to other schools but there are far fewer permanent exclusions. Attendance is well above the national average and there are very few unauthorised absences. These elements combine to create a very positive and enterprising atmosphere and this inspires students to do well in their work.
16. Students' attitudes to school are very good. They are keen to take part in the wide range of clubs and use their initiative to create additional opportunities whenever they feel the need arises. Year councils have been running for several years and students come up with very sensible suggestions as to how they can improve school life. For example, students in Year 11 have managed to reduce congestion at lunchtime by

increasing the number of points at which food is sold. In addition, a whole school council has recently been set up and representatives have suggested the introduction of a system of peer counselling. This is an example of the way in which students are aware of each other's needs and of the extent to which they are prepared to assume personal responsibility for their ideas and suggestions.

17. Students are very well behaved during lessons and at other times. Teachers are consistent in their expectations of behaviour and the result is a lively but harmonious community. Although some of the students can be passive during lessons and difficult to motivate, most are willing 'to have a go'. Students of all ages are articulate and most are able to voice and justify their views clearly.
18. Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good. Members of staff provide very good examples of how to behave and address the students with the respect and consideration they deserve. Students, in turn, speak highly of their teachers and feel that they are firm, but fair. This is reflected in the friendly atmosphere and the low incidence of bullying.
19. The school is a lively community where students relate equally well with adults. They enjoy talking with adults and enjoy chatting and sharing humour and light-hearted banter with staff. They show great respect for the feelings and concerns of others. For example they raise very large sums of money each year for charity by organising a wide range of fund raising events ranging from a 'Top of the Pops 2' talent competition to a 'Fair Trade' coffee morning. They also show an active interest in current issues such as the Gulf War. The school acknowledges the importance of developing students as individuals and ensures that they make good gains in their personal development. Good opportunities are provided for students to develop self-esteem and to discuss sensitive issues in lessons whether that be about preserving the environment, the morality of war or abortion. As a consequence they show appropriate levels of maturity for their age. When given the opportunity they enjoy taking responsibility for aspects of school life, such as their participation in the year and whole school councils. School trips and residential visits also help students to become more self-reliant and encourage them to use their initiative and to become increasingly aware of the wider world.
20. The personal, social and health education programme is satisfactory. There is, however, variation in the quality of teaching the programme. Students explore a relevant and interesting range of moral, social and health issues, such as how to deal with bullying and the implications of solvent and alcohol abuse. Links with the community are good and they are used effectively. For example, drama groups perform plays and members of staff from Featherstone Prison come in to talk to students about their experiences. These visitors widen students' knowledge of the community at large and foster their understanding of the importance of being a reliable and responsible citizen.
21. Overall attendance is well above the national average and students usually arrive in good time at the start of the school day and for their lessons. There are very few unauthorised absences.

Sixth form

22. Sixth form students have very good attitudes to the school and to their work. Around half of those in Year 11 are currently applying to stay on for the sixth form and those who remain are very well motivated. Students who spoke to inspectors are thoroughly enjoying this phase of their education and would recommend the sixth form to others. Around nine out of ten of those in Year 12 carry on into Year 13; this is well above the

national average. Relationships with each other and with members of staff are very good. Students are proud of their school and are friendly and helpful towards visitors. Students with physical difficulties and other special educational needs are fully included in the day-to-day life of the sixth form. Students' personal development is very good; they develop into responsible young adults and can be relied upon to get on with their work both at home and at school. This mature approach is reflected in the very good progress they make and the fact that there have been no permanent exclusions from the sixth form.

23. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. The planned programme consists of an appropriate range of activities and themed' days, such as a careers convention and visits to open days held at, for example, Keele University. In Year 12, all the students spend one week at Bangor University and stay in self-catering accommodation. This gives them a good idea as to what it would be like to live independently and students say that they thoroughly enjoy this part of the programme. Students are encouraged to adopt an active role in the running of the school, for example through the sixth form council or by acting as a 'buddy' to younger schoolmates in Years 7 and 8. Sixth formers may also volunteer to help younger students during tutorial time and, insofar as, their timetable allows, during some lessons. The school's good links with the local community and other education providers are used effectively. For example, students are offered a careers interview with the Connexions careers adviser and many undertake voluntary work within the community; for some, this leads to the award of the Millennium Volunteers' Award. Many students are also involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme and a significant number achieve the gold level.
24. Students' attendance is good. They are given increasing autonomy during Years 12 and 13. Provided students attend their lessons and come along to one or two designated tutor periods and their assembly each week, they are free to come and go as they please during the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. Overall the quality of teaching in the school is good and is one of the main reasons why student attainment and progress in Years 7 to 9 is good. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection in the proportion of very good or excellent teaching. Of the lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons. It was good in 62 per cent and very good or excellent in 20 per cent of lessons. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Years 7 to 9 have a higher proportion of very good or excellent teaching. As a result of the predominantly good teaching throughout the school students' learning is good overall. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching not only between but also within departments and good practice is not shared as effectively as it should be.
26. Overall, the quality of teaching in art, English, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and science is good throughout the school. In other subjects, there are differences between the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The teaching of mathematics, design and technology, and information and communication technology (ICT) is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in religious education. Some excellent teaching was seen in English, history, and physical education in Years 7 to 9. The small amount of unsatisfactory (4.5 per cent) and occasionally poor (1.5 per cent) teaching results from unclear expectations, poor management of students and a lack of challenge so that the work does not sufficiently meet students' needs.

27. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan the majority of lessons carefully with a clear purpose, to ensure that students' learning is developed in a systematic way, through the provision of a range of focused and varied tasks and activities. Lesson objectives are clearly articulated and shared with the class so that the students know what the lesson is about and what is expected. These lessons frequently start with a sharply focused whole-class introduction that builds on previous learning and checks and reinforces what students have learned in previous sessions. They end with a review of what has been learned whilst setting a context for the next lesson. Such approaches were seen to good effect in English, music, physical education and some history lessons.
28. In most subjects the teaching of literacy is good overall although not all subject teachers are clear about their role in developing students' literacy skills and their contribution is not as explicit or as planned as it should be. Literacy skills are regularly practised in design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Overall the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. It is good in mathematics and science. In other subjects it is not as explicitly planned for or delivered as it should be.
29. Many teachers make insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning in their subjects particularly in Years 10 and 11. Consequently, students' skills are not as well developed as they might be and opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills in different contexts are missed.
30. Teachers use a good variety of effective teaching methods to interest and motivate their students. Most lessons include an appropriate balance between whole-class activities, individual and group work, with discussion used effectively to support learning. This is particularly true throughout Years 7 to 9. Students respond well in these circumstances and this leads to very positive attitudes to learning in the majority of lessons. Explanations by teachers are usually clear and well focused. The best teaching challenges students with thought provoking questions, which make them think more deeply, explain their reasoning or consider alternative solutions to problems. In such lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace while giving students adequate time to reflect and respond. They instil a sense of purpose, which effectively maintains students' interest and concentration and as a result a great deal of subject content is covered in the lesson. In these lessons high standards of learning and behaviour can be identified. This is more evident in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 to 11 there is more teacher directed work and less opportunity to develop independent learning skills.
31. In the majority of lessons, teachers manage and organise their students very well, ensuring that they remain focused and on task. They praise and encourage their students and have high expectations of behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and this contributes to a relaxed yet purposeful learning atmosphere within lessons and about the school. In most cases, teachers insist on, and secure, high standards of attention and effort. On those few occasions when the work lacks challenge and interest, or when expectations are not clear enough, some students do not behave as well as they might and are sometimes disruptive.
32. Lessons begin promptly and on time. Lesson time is normally used well, ensuring that students remain on task and work effectively. In some lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, too little time is allowed at the end of the lesson to sum up, check what has been learned or to indicate what is to be covered in the next lesson. There are inconsistencies in marking styles and the quality of diagnostic comment is poor.

33. Homework is used appropriately to reinforce, extend and enhance class work. Inspectors found little evidence to support the concerns of some parents about the amount and appropriateness of homework set.
34. Students make good progress in developing and consolidating their knowledge, skills and understanding in most subjects. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls except in religious education. Good relationships allow boys and girls to work co-operatively together to enhance learning. The school is successful in meeting the needs of the majority of students although there is some concern regarding the level of challenge with regard to the work set for the higher ability students in design and technology, English, history, mathematics and religious education.
35. The great majority of students apply themselves well to their work, are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They work well on their own and with others, making the best of the time available in lessons. Most are willing and able to research information for themselves and to undertake a range of activities without direct support and guidance from the teacher. Occasionally, a small minority of students lack self-discipline and a commitment to doing their best. Consequently, they make unsatisfactory progress in their learning.
36. Overall, the learning of students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. This is as a result of insufficient information about their individual education plans. When teachers and support staff are informed of students' needs, by relevant targets in their individual education plans, the students usually learn effectively and make good progress. This support enables students with special educational needs to complete similar work to the rest of the students in the class.

Sixth form

37. Teaching is good in the sixth form. Students make very good progress and have very positive relationships with staff and other students. Of the lessons seen, 70 per cent were good and 30 per cent were very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. One of the key strengths of teaching was the way in which staff provide challenging tasks. They build progressively on students' knowledge when they start in Year 12 to meet the demands of the advanced study courses.
38. In the subjects that formed the focus for the inspection of the sixth form, teaching was very good in psychology, health and social care and ICT. It was good in English, mathematics, chemistry, business education, art and design and geography. In other subjects sampled, teaching was good. The key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are generally well taught, although there is some variation, particularly when taught by different tutors.
39. Teachers have high expectations both in terms of academic achievement, students' attitude and involvement in their work. Lesson planning is thorough and carefully linked to course specifications and the different needs of students. Teachers use skilful questioning and probing to help students develop their critical and evaluative skills. They frequently review what is covered in lessons and ensure that key ideas are explained and interrelated. Teachers make good use of assessment to check on students' progress as well as to set challenging targets.
40. Students learn well in the sixth form. Teachers help them to acquire good study habits and students are confident in seeking advice on how to improve their work and extend their understanding. They are encouraged to develop and use investigative and

research skills although in some subjects this is restricted because of the shortage of either resource materials, or lack of easy access to computers. This is particularly true in psychology, ICT and health and social care.

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

41. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities that are designed to meet the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of its students. At the time of the previous inspection, although the strengths of the curriculum outweighed the weaknesses, some statutory requirements were not met and there was no clear evaluation of the changes. This situation has now improved and the current curriculum meets the statutory requirements.
42. The school is committed to the provision for equal opportunity and social inclusion. Members of staff work hard getting to know each individual and the school provides a community within which everyone matters. Incoming Year 7 students are well prepared for their move to secondary education and they receive a warm welcome. Relationships are very good and students have the opportunity to be fully involved in school life.
43. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum lies with the school management team, the curriculum group, individual departments and the governors' curriculum committee. The implementation of this process is variable and inconsistent. It does not enable best practice to be shared effectively or weaker practice improved. The development plan does not contain specific criteria for success linked to precise dates and there is variable practice within departments in setting targets for development and in the analysis of examination results. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy¹, designed to improve teaching and learning, has not yet been fully implemented across all subjects.
44. The current arrangement of a two-week timetable with additional tutorial time, allows for flexibility within the curriculum. For example, it gives more time for personal, social and health education, for twilight sessions and for adult education evening classes. The daily pattern of fewer, longer lessons with built-in breaks between all sessions means that students arrive punctually and there is time for extending the range of activities in lessons. Arrangements for allocating students into separate sets for most subjects from Year 7 onwards, with smaller sets for lower attainers, enables teachers to provide appropriately for all abilities. However, the particular needs of the most gifted and talented students are not formally identified although the school is now reviewing this.
45. The school provides clear guidance to parents and students in Year 9 relating to the range of courses available for study in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is enriched by the inclusion of drama, business studies and child development as optional GCSE courses. Students can study three separate sciences but not a second modern foreign language. Next year sees the introduction of a full GCSE information and communication technology (ICT) course for the most talented ICT specialists, with opportunities to continue this study into the sixth form.

¹ [The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools, in particular in English and mathematics, but also by ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3)

46. A variety of initiatives provide worthwhile vocational experiences for pupils with different needs in Years 10 and 11. The school is keen to develop its vocational provision further, in line with national plans to integrate students' learning between the ages of 14 and 19 years. Leisure and tourism and health and social care are already part of the school curriculum. The school will add applied business studies next year. It makes good use of community and vocational placements in both GCSE and vocational courses. A recent development allows a small group of Year 10 students to follow a reduced curriculum in school with part of their studies in subjects such as motor vehicle maintenance and horticulture provided by a local college. A well-established youth award scheme focused on communication and problem solving skills provides a successful alternative to the standard curriculum in school for some students who are experiencing difficulties with their studies.
47. There is good extra-curricular provision in this school. A wide range of well-attended sporting, dramatic and musical activities enriches the curriculum. Visits and fieldwork trips, sometimes overseas, are built into individual subject plans. Homework clubs and opportunities for extra help, for example with completing course work requirements, are available in all subjects. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is very well established and attracts in the region of 200 students from many local schools who work towards bronze, silver and gold level.
48. The school recently received a curriculum award based on its good contribution to the local community. A newly appointed co-ordinator has the responsibility for promoting community links and developing the curriculum more widely, for example through the adult education programme. Many links with local businesses have been established, through a Young Enterprise scheme, an industry day and the provision of work experience. Some local companies provide sponsorship, for example of the production of the school year book and the provision of some sporting equipment. In return, students do a great deal to raise money and to offer practical help to local charities and initiatives. The sixth form Millennium Volunteers have an impressive record of community service. The school orchestra plays at local civic functions. The school premises and facilities such as the swimming pool and the Youth and Community centre are open regularly for local school and community use.
49. Links between the school and other educational institutions are satisfactory and improving. Some subjects such as leisure and tourism combine with other schools for joint training and local visits. Other developments include opportunities to work in partnership with other schools in pursuit of specialist status, for example through business studies and ICT. Training providers and local colleges are already involved in the school's plan to increase the flexibility of its curriculum. There are good contacts with primary schools sending students to this school. Two-way visits and the exchange of information result in increasingly accurate setting arrangements and a smoother transition from primary to secondary education.
50. Students enter the school with good levels of literacy and improve further because of the way the school helps them build up this skill. Subject areas have taken account of the school's literacy policy when developing their schemes of work and there is a commitment from all teachers to address literacy issues in their teaching. The school has organised training for all staff on developing literacy skills and this is ongoing. A member of the school management team who has done much to raise the profile of literacy in the school oversees the strategy.
51. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the mathematics strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy are less effectively widespread across the school. There is evidence of data handling work in modern foreign languages, ICT and geography as

well as improved collaboration between science and mathematics teachers regarding students' application of numerical methods.

52. The recent developments in accommodation and the increase in the number of computers throughout the school have gone some way to improving the use of ICT through subjects. The favourable ratio of one computer to every four students ensures that access is much improved. The subject areas plan for the use of ICT but some are not fully implementing those plans. Art and music make good use of ICT. Satisfactory use is made in geography, modern foreign languages and design and technology. Evidence suggests ICT supports the English curriculum in Years 10 and 11 but to a limited extent in the lower years. Use is unsatisfactory in mathematics, history, science and psychology. In design and technology students do not receive their full entitlement because of the limited equipment to cover computer aided manufacturing. Science experiences similar difficulties with data logging and there are inconsistencies that result in inequitable provision for students.
53. The provision for students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. The school provides its students with full access to the National Curriculum. However, there are many instances where the taught curriculum is not appropriate to their needs. Many of the students' individual education plans are unsatisfactory and do not fully express their needs. There are some students on the register of special educational needs who do not have individual education plans and targets to meet their needs. Others have targets that are not specific enough or relevant to their needs. There are some who should not be on the register and others are placed at the wrong stage on the register. Many individual education plans are not appropriately reviewed within a defined time-scale. The reviews for students who have a statement of their special education needs are not always up to date and some do not have the appropriate involvement of parents and specialists from agencies outside the school.
54. Individual form tutors provide the personal, social and health education programme. They prepare their lessons using a long-term plan that outlines the topics to be covered during each school year. Students' personal, social and health education is based upon a rolling programme of study, life and health skills. It covers all the aspects that it should, including citizenship, sex and drug education. This is a significant amount of time, amounting to more than one hour per week. While these sessions are also used for routine administration, some tutors use the time more effectively than others to discuss current moral and ethical issues. The overall experiences of each class, therefore varies according to the way in which their tutor uses the time set aside for tutorials. There is some variation according to the interests of the tutor and this leads to inconsistencies in learning within each year group
55. Careers guidance is good and is provided for students in Years 9 to 11. The programme for Year 9 has recently been overhauled and the same is planned for Years 10 and 11. Work experience is undertaken in Year 10 and the school works closely with the specialist agency, Connexions. The school, however, has been, until recently without a careers adviser for some time and this has meant that some students have not received the specialist support they would have liked.

Provision of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

56. Overall, the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and a strength of the school as it was at the time of the previous inspection. The school makes good provision for its students' spiritual development. Classrooms and public spaces around the school have attractive displays that celebrate students' work. The school buildings and grounds are well cared for and provide a pleasant environment that is respected by all. The good conduct policy focuses on the worth of

individuals by emphasising praise and encouragement. Good relationships based on mutual respect permeate the life of the school and self-esteem is fostered. In design and technology students learn the value of supporting one another. In music lessons they are taught to express their own ideas and value their own and others' music making.

57. Students have opportunities to reflect upon meaning in collective worship and a wide range of lessons. For example, Year 8 students listened respectfully to a thought provoking reading in collective worship about a doctor's reflections on the death of his father. This invited thoughts about self-esteem and loving others. They then thought quietly about people involved in the conflict in Iraq while a candle burned. Sometimes an atmosphere of calm and reflection is created by the use of music. In English, Year 8 students thought about death following their reading of *'The Highwayman'* by Alfred Noyes. Year 12 students analysed Philip Larkin's treatment of time and its impact on people's lives. Students develop an awareness and understanding of their own and others beliefs in a way that helps them respect difference. For example, in religious education, Year 9 students study Christian and Sikh responses to prejudice, discrimination and service. In geography, students reflect on the beliefs and values of rain forest tribes and in history they think about the importance of religious beliefs for slaves.
58. The provision for the moral development of students is very good. The ethos of the school is firmly based on respect and care for others. The school effectively teaches the values that distinguish right from wrong in a range of situations. Year 11 students explore the nature of evil in relation to their reading of *'Macbeth'* and issues of right and wrong arising from William Golding's *'Lord of the Flies'*. In geography, students explore dilemmas resulting from the impact of acid rain on the environment. In a consideration of slavery in history, students discuss the question, 'Is it right to own another person?' Religious education encourages them to explore the moral codes of different religious traditions. For example, students in Year 7 discuss the Ten Commandments of Judaism and Christianity. In Year 8 tutor periods students discuss moral issues such as the use and abuse of alcohol.
59. The school makes very good provision for the social development of students. The statement known as 'The Wyrley Way' underpins this aspect of school life. It sets out what students and parents are asked to do and what the school aims to do for the benefit of all. They raise substantial amounts of money for charities and learn about others less fortunate than themselves. Students engage in, and experience, democratic processes through involvement in the school and year councils, which include staff, although all the officers are students. Meetings are run as discussions by equals and include topics such as the amount of healthy food available at lunch times and how students can help to create new plans for personal and social education. The Year 11 council organises the end of year 'prom' and yearbook. Senior students are involved in a 'buddy' system with younger students and they are also encouraged to undertake community service. There are also good opportunities for social development in lessons with successful co-operative pair and group work in geography and physical education. Year group assemblies help to foster a sense of community.
60. The provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. A number of subject areas including music, geography, and design and technology incorporate information about a range of cultures in their teaching programmes. Students encounter music and literature from a variety of cultural traditions. They develop their understanding of the daily lives and contributions of minority religious groups within the United Kingdom. For example, Year 9 students consider the importance to Sikhs of community service. Students also learn about the symbolism associated with a variety of religions. There

are many opportunities for students to take part in musical activities such as a wind band, guitar club and music and drama evenings. Visits to Lichfield in Year 10 and Ludlow and Stokesay in Year 7 are part of the history curriculum. Opportunities for further exploration of both European and non-European cultures through the use of role models and visitors to the school are missed.

Sixth form

61. The sixth form offers a wide range of courses given the number of students on role. This consists of mainly AS and A level courses, with more than 15 subjects being offered and a small number of vocational courses. More than 50 per cent of the students choose to remain in the sixth form in order to pursue a two-year course prior to going on to higher education. Some tuition in key skills is provided during tutor time and through subject areas. However, there is some variability in the teaching and impact on students' learning.
62. In addition there are many opportunities for students to broaden their experience by involving themselves in opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, the school based 'buddies' initiative and the 'Millennium Volunteers'. A very high proportion of sixth formers make valuable contributions to the community through their excellent involvement with charitable work. The Head of sixth form and the curriculum deputy work closely in ensuring that worthwhile opportunities are provided that meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of students, including those with special educational needs. All those involved in teaching and supporting the students give freely of their time and energy in promoting learning both during and outside the school day. All students have access to suitable careers advice, develop a strong sense of responsibility and increasingly use their initiative to develop their own learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

63. Members of staff work together as a good team in order to provide students with the personal day-to-day care and support they need. Close liaison with a wide range of external agencies underpins a well co-ordinated pastoral system and this supports students' learning effectively. Many of the routine health and safety procedures are in place although several concerns, including risk assessment and monitoring by the governors, were raised with the headteacher during the inspection. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and statutory requirements are met.
64. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are good. Teachers know their students well because members of staff within each year team remain the same from Year 7 to Year 11. Tutors closely monitor their students' attendance, punctuality and their personal organisers. As well as encouraging a basic work ethic, this also helps tutors to spot any personal problems and deal with them at an early stage. At regular intervals, students of all ages have informal one-to-one reviews with their tutors. Students reflect upon their personal strengths and weaknesses and on the academic progress that they have made over the intervening period. As a result, they are helped to have a good idea of how well they are progressing and to identify targets that will help them to improve in the future. No written records are kept but this system of self-review helps students and tutors alike to monitor progress and to identify when additional support is needed.
65. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. An effective electronic system, developed by the school, is available to support the assessment process. This is widely available to subject areas through the school's

network. Currently the system is not well used. The school's assessment policy, adopted in 1997, has not been revised to take account of the increased level of data or changes affecting the curriculum, particularly Curriculum 2000. Senior managers do not systematically monitor assessment arrangements in subject areas. Through the recently developed electronic system all areas, with the exception of mathematics, have the potential to analyse student, subject and teacher performance. The national data analysis programs (Yellis, Midyis and Alis), together with school and national performance data, provide a range of useful information which is currently underused. Some subject areas, for example information and communication technology make very good use of the school's system. They assess students' work and monitor their progress closely as part of the subject's strategy to raise attainment. The music and science departments also use assessment information very well to support learning. Across the majority of subjects, however, there are wide inconsistencies, which contributes to the unsatisfactory picture. In English the policy is poor and attainment grades used in Years 7 to 9 do not relate to National Curriculum levels. Assessment is equally unsatisfactory in mathematics, design and technology, history and religious education. Neither subject teachers nor form tutors use data regularly to help students understand how well they are achieving. Target setting is ad hoc. There is no cohesive approach to using the information available to support the professional development of teachers.

66. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are effective. Members of staff provide good examples of how to behave and they consistently support the ideals of 'The Wyrley Way'. Students have a very good idea of what is, and what is not, acceptable and the school's high expectations are reflected in the very good behaviour seen during the inspection. Students who have worked or behaved particularly well are awarded merits and these are totalled each week. The winning class receives a shield and individuals can also accumulate these merits in order to qualify for colour coded merit certificates. Multi-agency meetings are held each month and a wide range of specialists attend in order to discuss the most appropriate ways of meeting the needs of particular individuals. For example, personal counsellors from Relate and Connexions come in to school several times a week in order to see individual students. Specialists from the health, social and welfare services support their work well and contribute to the school's successful policy for social and educational inclusion. Students who are at risk of exclusion receive good support and this is reflected in a level of permanent exclusions that is well below the national average. Procedures for dealing with bullying are similarly effective and parents and students are confident that such behaviour is dealt with firmly. Should students behave inappropriately, or be late to class, they may be placed on report or given a detention. This system of sanctions is very flexible and can be adapted to suit the individual misdemeanour.
67. The school has appropriate procedures to recognise and provide for students with special educational needs. However, it does not effectively use the information it receives from test results and concerns expressed by class teachers, to decide where extra support should be provided. Assessment information and progress reports from lessons are rarely used to plan further tasks matched to the students' needs. Provision for students with special educational needs is therefore unsatisfactory.
68. There are only a few students who have English as a second language, and they are sufficiently fluent to take part in their lessons. The school is successful in recognising and promoting respect for differing cultural and religious customs and this is reflected in the good levels of tolerance and understanding. The few students from minority ethnic and religious groups are well supported, including those from the travelling community and those who choose not to attend collective worship. The school promotes racial

harmony effectively, although it is still in the process of preparing a written racial awareness policy. This has been a statutory requirement for almost a year.

69. The school devotes considerable time to the monitoring and promotion of attendance and current procedures are good. An electronic registration system enables the school to monitor overall trends in attendance, as well as individual tutor groups and students. A good range of rewards and prizes is available for those who manage particularly good or improved attendance. For example, students who have achieved a full month's attendance receive a raffle ticket and there is a 'prize draw' at the end of the school year.
70. The quality of reports to parents is variable but generally satisfactory. However, the many different approaches used by departments to report attainment reduce the overall effectiveness of the reporting process.

Sixth form

71. This school provides very good academic and personal guidance and support for sixth form students. The overwhelming majority of those who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire are very pleased with the way they were helped to settle at the start of Year 12. Students feel very well supported and indicate that teachers are very willing to help them if they are having difficulties with their work. Students also feel that the range of courses is well suited to their talents and career aspirations and that they received good advice when deciding which subjects to study.
72. Students are kept closely informed of their progress and receive an academic report each half term. The standard at which they are working in each subject is detailed, along with the student's own targets for the next half term. In addition, they receive a comprehensive written academic review at the start of Year 13. This document includes their past and forecast exam grades, along with targets for improvement. Students say they find these reports to be most helpful. Students speak highly of the help they receive and feel that they have a clear idea of what is needed to improve their work.
73. Some students say they receive inadequate advice and guidance about courses and career opportunities available after they have left school. Over the last school year, careers provision has indeed been affected by the long-term illness of the designated Connexions careers adviser. This situation is now resolved and the previous level of advice and information is to be resumed.
74. Good procedures for the assessment of the students' work and progress are in place. All students receive five half-term reports during their two-year courses. These are very informative. They include information on standards of attainment in terms of examination grades, targets and attitudes towards learning. In addition all students receive a very detailed assessment profile, after the publication of AS results, and before they submit their applications to higher education. Each department is familiar with the value added analysis used to measure the effectiveness of the provision and overall, good use is made of assessment in order to guide curriculum planning. Homework is used very effectively in the sixth form in order to consolidate learning and promote independent study.
75. Although students are registered at the start of each lesson, if they arrive, for example, to use the library or to see a friend, they are not. At present, teachers cross reference

the signing in and out book with the registers, or check students' whereabouts retrospectively. This constitutes a potential health and safety hazard should there be an emergency evacuation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

76. This school places great emphasis on working closely with parents and is keen to involve them as much as possible. The majority of parents hold the school in high regard and they support its code of expectations. Parents and staff provide each other with strong mutual support and links between home and school are very good. Most of the parents do their best to ensure that their children attend regularly and that they arrive on time at the start of the school day.
77. This school enjoys a good reputation with parents and its community and is regularly over-subscribed. Around one third of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and their responses indicate that they are pleased with many aspect of the school's work. Views expressed by the relatively small number of parents who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting were mixed and some concerns were expressed. One example related to the support given to students with special educational needs. The inspectors agree with this concern. Some parents also felt that, although they regard members of staff as approachable, they receive insufficient information about the progress their child is making. Inspectors do not agree; reports are detailed and informative and the overall quality of information contained within is good. Parents have regular opportunities to meet with their children's teachers. The school provides a good range of information evenings, and these meetings are usually well attended. There are, however, omissions from the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.
78. Around one quarter of those who voiced an opinion have misgivings about the amount of homework set and the closeness of the partnership between home and school. Although there are some inconsistencies between subjects, the amount of homework is similar to that provided in other schools. In addition, inspectors feel that the partnership between home and school is constructive and mutually supportive.
79. The impact of parents' involvement in the day-to-day life of the school is very good. The school association also organises various social and fund-raising events, such as the summer fair and monthly discos for Years 7, 8 and 9. The funds raised are put to very good use. For example, parents have helped to landscape the old quad, pay for the lease of one of the school's mini-buses, fund the mobile phones that are taken on school trips and are helping to redecorate specific parts of the school, such as the foyer.

Sixth form - Students' views

80. As part of the inspection process, sixth form students were asked to complete a questionnaire. In addition, several groups met inspectors in order to discuss their views on the subjects they are studying and on the sixth form in general. Most of the students said that they are enjoying this period of their education and are particularly pleased with the way in which they were helped to settle in at the start of Year 12. They are also very pleased with the readiness of teachers to give advice when it is needed and they feel very well informed as to how they are getting on with their work. Inspectors agree with these views.
81. Analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire, however, also indicates that students have several areas of concern. These were mainly about the level of careers advice provided, the extent to which they are treated as responsible young people, the range

of extra enrichment activities and a perceived reluctance on the part of the school to listen to their views. Inspectors disagree with these concerns and are of the opinion that provision in each of these areas is very similar to other schools.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

82. The headteacher and the leadership group manage the school well. They have maintained the good standards from the time of the previous inspection and have worked in a purposeful and determined way to create a strong sense of loyalty across the school. The headteacher has a vision for what could be achieved by the school in the future. This includes the need for a broader curriculum for students in Years 10 through to Year 13, the continuing expansion of the sixth form and the further encouragement of the greater community to use the school for both learning and social activities. However, this long-term vision for the school is not generally shared or specifically planned, as the current school improvement plan addresses priorities year by year. The school is in a good position to build upon its present strengths. Presently, however, further improvements in the school are impeded by inconsistencies in the interpretation and implementation of school policies and practices. There are also inconsistent and incoherent approaches to monitoring and evaluating school practice. In some areas this is very good, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages and music. In other areas specifically history, special educational needs and religious education it is unsatisfactory and overall, practice across the school is variable. This was an issue raised at the time of the previous inspection.
83. The school's aims and values are well articulated in 'The Wyrley Way', the document which is shared widely with staff, parents, governors and students. These aims, which are comprehensive, place significant emphasis on students' personal development. The ethos of the school positively reflects these values and aspirations in its day-to-day work. However, the aims currently do not place sufficient emphasis on students' academic development.
84. Governors understand the school's priorities and are regularly involved in various aspects of school life. They have a clear view of the strengths of the school and the positive changes introduced by the headteacher since the previous inspection. They are very supportive of the headteacher whilst recognising the areas of school management which are their responsibility, and those which are his. They carry out their routine responsibilities effectively for the most part, but are not fully involved in long term planning. As a result they are less effective in determining the future direction for the school and the setting of priorities. There is a tradition within the governing body for individual governors to be linked to specific subject areas within the school. Their role in this partnership arrangement has been to discuss particular issues with the heads of department and report back to the full governing body through the staffing and curriculum committee. However, the outcomes of these links are variable. In some cases the links are effective and help governors identify strengths and weaknesses, for example, the recent work of the special educational needs governor. However, in other areas the links are vague and do not have a direct input in helping governors in their monitoring of the curriculum.
85. Many aspects of school management are good. The administrative and support staff have a range of skills that provides an effective support system for the headteacher, teaching staff, students and visitors. They work well as a team and make an effective contribution to the day-to-day management systems operating within the school.

86. The effectiveness of staff with leadership responsibilities is satisfactory overall but varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. Leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent and particularly effective in ICT, modern foreign languages and music. The management and co-ordination of history, religious education and special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are more effective where there is greater co-ordination and consistency of approach in areas such as planning for improvement and assessment. For a number of years there has been a system in place whereby members of the school's leadership group are linked to subject areas, using a similar model to that established by the governing body. This system is very effective in the subject areas of design and technology, music and physical education. However, there is a lack of consistency in the way in which the work of all departments is monitored. Whilst there are agreed working procedures in place, at present they are not systematically implemented or their effectiveness monitored. As a result there is no effective system in place to identify and share good practice throughout the school.
87. The use of performance data within the school relating to the current and potential ability of all students is unsatisfactory overall. There are, however, examples of good practice in music and science. Many departmental improvement plans lack focus and insufficient use is made of the analysis of examination, test and assessment results. Consequently, there is inconsistency in the performance of students within and between different subject areas. Standards and expectations are inconsistent and not all middle managers are aware of what needs to be done, by whom, or how to do it.
88. Staff with leadership responsibilities are aware of the priorities identified within the current school development plan. However, timescales and success criteria are not sharp enough to enable the school effectively to monitor and evaluate its progress in meeting priorities. The plan does not identify specific strategies or costings. Nor does it specify systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work of the school.
89. The management and leadership for students with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. The special educational needs co-ordinator spends much of her time teaching English sets and co-ordinating the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network scheme (ASDAN.) The provision was monitored and evaluated by senior staff in 2000. They identified relevant targets for development. Most of these targets have not been met. The school reports that it monitors provision on a three-year rolling programme. There are no targets in the school's action plan for provision to be monitored in 2003. The support assistants are effectively deployed and they make a good contribution to supporting students in class. The school has ensured they receive relevant training. However, they work across too many subjects of the curriculum and are left to interpret what to do in their own way. They have no agreed means of recording students' progress to inform their future learning. Furthermore the school has an insufficient number and match of teachers with expertise in special educational needs to assist the satisfactory management and progress of students across the curriculum. The management of resources for special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Insufficient funds are provided to provide learning resources for students in class. The allocation of money is ineffectively monitored. The newly appointed governor for special educational needs is starting to develop a good awareness of her role. She is being frequently contacted by dissatisfied parents and by staff of the school and is in the process of bringing their concerns to the governing body for their action.
90. Financial resources are well managed. Sensible and prudent financial decisions have reduced a large deficit budget. Recent planned refurbishments in the school have led

however to a small deficit to be carried over into the next financial year. The recent auditors' report is favourable. Systems are efficiently implemented and operated. Specific grants are used well. Whilst short-term financial management is good, longer term strategic planning linked to the school development plan is less effective. For example, the school's desire to increase the size of its sixth form has not been fully analysed in terms of staffing, accommodation and resources. The school operates according to the principles of best value and does what it can to compare what and how it does with other schools in similar circumstances. It has also questioned the appropriateness of its current curriculum, particularly in the sixth form, and made changes as necessary. For example it has introduced a range of vocational courses.

91. There is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to teach the full range of the curriculum, however there are concerns with regard to staffing for special educational needs. The school's policy on performance management has been implemented satisfactorily. However, some staff have not yet been given a mid-term review to monitor their progress towards their objectives.
92. Due to financial pressures the school has been forced to cut back on the amount of money available for learning resources. There are just enough resources to meet general curricular needs but there are shortages in geography, history, psychology and special educational needs which reduce the range of teaching strategies and investigative work which can be undertaken.
93. The school makes good use of the available accommodation and there has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Three new science laboratories have been built incorporating a full ICT room. The former library has been converted into four new ICT rooms, giving more computer availability for students. There is a new library area which provides a good area for students to work. There is also new specialist accommodation for history, geography and design and technology with increased storage provision. Despite these improvements, the school still has little spare accommodation. Presently there is no purpose built dining room. Two lifts provide access for the disabled. The school is clean and free of graffiti. There are very attractive displays of students' work in the classrooms and in the reception and corridor areas, which create a warm and interesting environment.
94. The school has made satisfactory progress overall against the key issues for action identified within the last inspection report. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and excellent in the sixth form. The budget and finances are well managed. Students' attainment and achievement is good overall. These results are achieved as a result of the good teaching they receive. In view of all these factors, the school provides good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

95. The head of sixth form provides excellent leadership. She is well supported by the tutors and subject teachers ensuring a very clear direction for the work and development of the sixth form. Teaching is monitored and evaluated systematically and the outcomes are used appropriately to plan developments. Teachers' qualifications and experiences are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. The parents are very well informed about their child's sixth form education and all parties sign 'the sixth form contract' at the beginning of their courses. Good use is made of available resources, which are generally adequate for the effective teaching of the

courses. Teaching accommodation is also presently adequate and there are good facilities available within the sixth form area for private study, including access to ICT. However, as the sixth form grows the current level of resources and accommodation will not be adequate, particularly in the more popular courses. The governors are kept aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form provision. One governor accepts specific responsibility for this area of school life. The sixth form has economic class sizes in nearly all subjects and efficient financial management appropriately supports priorities. The sixth form is cost effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

96. The school governors in conjunction with the headteacher and staff should take the following action to further improve the quality of education by:

1. Improving the provision for students with special educational needs by:
 - Ensuring that the arrangements for meeting students' special educational needs comply with the guidance in the special needs Code of Practice (2001) and that all interested parties understand their obligations.
 - Providing appropriate individual education plans (IEPs) that identify students' specific learning needs and describe support strategies that will help teachers in their planning
 - Developing close working links between the special educational needs and other departments to ensure coherent and consistent support for students with special educational needs.
 - Providing adequate staff training and deployment of specialist support staff to ensure that students with special educational needs are supported in the classroom to help them achieve their IEP targets.
(Paragraphs 9, 36, 53, 67, 89, 115 and 147)

2. Improving the overall effectiveness of those with management responsibilities to ensure that monitoring procedures are effective in identifying, sharing and developing good practice across the school by:
 - Providing the opportunities for middle managers to monitor and evaluate the provision in their areas and establish clear and agreed criteria for doing so.
 - Providing support and training for middle managers in monitoring and evaluation procedures.
 - Strengthening line management so that areas for developing teaching and learning are identified and acted upon.
 - Identifying and disseminating the good practice that exists in some departments so that it is spread throughout all subjects.
(Paragraphs 5, 25, 43, 82, 86, 88, 103, 129, 137, 142, 149, 155, 182 and 194)

3. Establishing a shared and clear strategy to improve the school further over the next three years by:
 - Identifying longer-term objectives for the school.
 - Ensuring that these are shared and understood by staff, governors and parents.
 - Planning strategies that will enable these objectives to be met.
 - Ensuring objectives and priorities are supported by a clear series of actions, time scales and appropriate resources.
(Paragraphs 82, 83, 84, 88, 90, 111 and 182)

4. Making greater use of assessment information to establish targets and strategies to improve standards by:
 - Providing further training for staff on the analysis and use of assessment data.
 - Ensuring that the outcomes of data analysis are used to plan the curriculum and lessons
 - Enabling both individual student and departmental targets to be based on the available data.(Paragraphs 65, 87, 103, 120, 141, 149, 153, 171, 182 and 194)

Sixth form

Key Issues in the sixth form –

1. In the light of the expanding numbers entering the sixth form, improve the level of resources in the new sixth form centre to enable it to become an effective learning area.
(Paragraphs 13, 62, 95, 197, 210, 224 and 233)
2. Increase the level of recruitment from the main school and expand the provision of academic and vocational courses by:
 - Continuing to canvass those in Year 11 on their preferred areas of study.
 - Giving further consideration to courses in drama and media studies at advanced level.
 - Promoting one year, vocational GNVQ courses for those less suited to AS/A level studies.
 - Promoting the many advantages to the students of following courses at the school.(Paragraphs 61, 95 and 204)

In addition the school should consider the following issues in its action plan:

- The use of tutorial time at the beginning of the day. (Paragraphs 20 and 54)
- The health and safety issues raised with the headteacher and governing body during the inspection. (Paragraph 63)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	132
	Sixth form	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	5	22	55	42	6	2	0
Percentage	4	17	42	32	4	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	9	14	10	0	0	0
Percentage	3	26	42	29	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than 3 percentage points [

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y 7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1021	142
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	67	3

Special educational needs	Y7 - 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	25	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	109	14

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.2

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	2002	117	88	205

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	68	89	85
	Girls	68	71	70
	Total	136	160	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66(73)	78(78)	76(81)
	National	66(64)	67(66)	66(66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16(43)	47(50)	36(38)
	National	32(31)	45(43)	33(34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	87	89
	Girls	78	69	72
	Total	157	156	161
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77(78)	76(81)	79(66)
	National	67(65)	70(68)	67(64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27(39)	40(54)	33(21)
	National	32(31)	44(42)	34(33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2003	198	106	214

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	44	104	109
	Girls	50	89	91
	Total	94	193	200
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	46 (44)	94 (91)	97 (94)
	National	50 (48)	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	40.8 (38.4)
	National	39.8 (39)

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	12 93
	National	N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13) 2001 Figures

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	27	38	65
	Average point score per candidate	18.9	19.5	19.2
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	27	38	65	16	16	32
	Average point score per candidate	18.9	19.5	19.2	6.87	9	7.93
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1132	28	1
White – Irish	0		
White – any other White background	0		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6		
Mixed – White and Black African	2		
Mixed – White and Asian	1		
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	6		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		
Black or Black British – African	2		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded	8		

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	70
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4

Financial year	2001/2
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Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	436

	£
Total income	3196580
Total expenditure	3200272
Expenditure per pupil	2714.17
Balance brought forward from previous year	40691
Balance carried forward to next year	-20873

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.6%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 - 13

Key Stage 3	24.5
Key Stage 4	22.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	27.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19.1
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.5
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5
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 34%

Number of questionnaires sent out	1020
Number of questionnaires returned	348

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	24	57	13	4	2
My child is making good progress in school.	33	59	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	55	7	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	54	20	7	3
The teaching is good.	16	68	7	2	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	48	22	7	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	54	6	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	45	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	15	53	20	8	4
The school is well led and managed.	19	55	8	6	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	65	9	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	43	15	3	19

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 **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- There is a purposeful learning atmosphere in all lessons because teachers have established very strong working relationships with the students.
- Students' listening skills are highly developed and contribute significantly to how well they learn in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The standards attained in national tests and examinations are too low.
- The methods to share the very good teaching practice which exists are not sufficiently developed.

97. The proportion of pupils obtaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2002 GCSE English Language examinations was well below average for the girls and very low for the boys. Achievement in relation to the progress made over the two years of the course was unsatisfactory for most students except those with special educational needs. They made satisfactory progress and obtained at least a pass grade. The results compare unfavourably with what was attained at the time of the previous inspection when standards were in line with national averages. The English Literature results in terms of those attaining a grade in the A* to C range were well above average although it should be noted that far fewer boys were entered for the subject than is the case nationally.
98. Results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with national averages but were well below the average for similar schools and below what was attained at the time of the previous inspection. Achievement in terms of the progress students have made since entering the school was satisfactory. Attainment and achievement of those students with special educational needs met expectations. Standards have fluctuated over recent years from below average in 1999 to above average in 2001. The results were below the standards attained in mathematics and science, especially in terms of the numbers of students obtaining Levels 6 and 7. Girls did better than the boys. However, girls did less well than the boys when compared to their peers nationally.
99. The standards of written work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection are close to national averages and achievement over time is therefore satisfactory. These standards are an improvement on what was attained in the 2002 GCSE examinations because staffing difficulties have been resolved and boys' attitudes to their work have improved.
100. Standards of writing by the end of Year 9 are also average. They reflect the attainment in the national tests and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils learn well and the progress they made in the lessons observed during the inspection was good. This improvement in the progress being made now compared to achievement over time is because there is greater stability and continuity in the teaching. By the end of Year 9 students write at length fluently and with reasonable accuracy and the organisation and presentation of their work is good. Students with special educational needs also make good progress in developing their literacy skills because they are well supported through the teaching

of the progress units. The range of writing by the younger students is limited, however, and there are insufficient opportunities for them to write in various styles for different purposes. By the end of Year 11 students' analytical skills are well developed and this is reflected in their work on the set texts. Their understanding of William Golding's '*Lord of the Flies*', for example, showed sensitivity to complex issues of right and wrong and the breakdown of civilised behaviour when normal social props are removed from a community. They were imaginative and articulate in their treatment of the issues.

101. Standards of speaking and listening are above average. Students are confident and articulate when speaking and use standard, English appropriately. They collaborate well in group discussions and so learn from each other. The one area for development is to improve their formal debating skills. Students' listening skills are very good and contribute significantly to how well they learn in lessons. Such skills reflect the excellent behaviour seen in lessons and the very positive attitudes students display to their work. Their moral and spiritual awareness is evident in the respect they show for the values and beliefs of others. Standards of reading are at expected levels across all years and students respond with interest and understanding to the increasingly challenging texts they encounter as they move through the school. The nature of the issues they encounter in their reading affords many opportunities for them to develop socially and culturally. The progress students make throughout the main school in developing the skills of reading, speaking and listening is therefore good.
102. Overall, the standard of teaching throughout Years 7 to 11 is good and as a result students learn well. There is, however, a marked gap between the best practice seen and that which failed to make sufficient demands of students. In the best lessons teaching was lively and challenging and therefore students learnt a great deal. The pace was brisk, the questioning rigorous and the students were totally engaged in their work. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson on Shakespeare's '*Macbeth*' where students displayed a mature understanding of the deterioration in Lady Macbeth's state of mind towards the end of the play. They were taught to be analytical in their reading of the text and they were constantly challenged to think more critically and to secure the evidence to justify their views. Students were enthusiastic in their response to such high expectations and so learnt a great deal in the lesson. There were occasions, however, when the teaching was pedestrian and undemanding, particularly for the more competent students. This is an issue for the department to address because, although the progress of such students is satisfactory over time, they are not being challenged with sufficient rigour in class. In one lesson, for example, the more competent students had no opportunity to develop their own writing skills because of an over-reliance on worksheets. Teachers' marking is regular and supportive but there is no consistent approach to guiding students on how to improve their work. All teachers know their subject well and the level of planning seen during the inspection was very good. Teachers have established excellent working relationships with the students and their classroom management skills are of a high order.
103. The leadership of the subject is good in terms of the energy and drive the head of department brings to his work and his commitment to raising standards. He has moved the department forward in the short time he has been in post. He has been successful in achieving a greater sense of common purpose after recent staffing difficulties. He provides effective support to colleagues, who are newly appointed. Management is less effective than leadership because the lines of accountability are not clearly defined and followed. He would be strengthened in his management role, for example, if his senior colleagues worked more closely with him on strategic planning. This was an issue at the time of the previous inspection and it has not been resolved. The monitoring of teaching, however, has improved and is now undertaken regularly. The means to disseminate the very good teaching practice that exist are not yet sufficiently

developed. The school's assessment policy is followed but it does not enable the department to monitor and evaluate students' progress over time in an effective manner. Changes need to be made to ensure there is clear provision for identifying and tracking students of all levels of competency. The department is aware of the need to extend the use of computers as an aid to learning. The department is also exploring ways to improve teaching and learning and recognises the need to have clear teaching strategies for improving students' writing skills.

104. There is good accommodation and the resources meet the needs of teachers and students. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. There is the capacity to improve on the current provision because of the commitment of the staff to raise standards in national tests and examinations.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject. They have a good rapport with students.
- Examination results for 14 and 16 year olds have risen at a faster rate than the national figures.
- Students have ready access to suitable textbooks that match the examination courses taught.

Areas for improvement

- Work is not appropriate to the needs of all pupils and at times lacks challenge.
- Teachers do not provide written feedback to students on how to improve their work.
- Student access to information and communication technology (ICT) is not consistent.

105. Standards at the end of Year 9 are good. They are above those achieved nationally and have changed little in the last three years. The percentage of students gaining the nationally expected level is below that of students in similar schools. The results of boys are better than those of girls. The results in mathematics are similar to science and above those in English.

106. Standards at the end of Year 11 are satisfactory and in line with the national results. The number of students gaining an A*-C grade improved by 10 percentage points from 1998 to 2001 but is now expected to remain at just over 50 per cent. Departmental analysis shows that many students achieve a higher result in mathematics than they did in their other subjects

107. The attainment seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 was in line with that expected for the ages of pupils, and the progress of students in Years 7 to 9 is good. Where teachers have high expectations of students very good progress is made in lessons. For example by the end of one lesson on ratio a Year 8 lower group were able to make insightful comments on calculating equivalent ratios.

108. In Years 10 and 11 progress is more variable. Weaker and higher ability students make good progress and learn well. However the middle ability students only make satisfactory progress in the two years. Some of the teaching does not demonstrate high enough expectations of students and requires too much unnecessary recording of known facts and insufficient time exploring new ideas. Other lessons have too much teacher directed activity and very long explanations that slow the pace of learning. The

use of homework is inconsistent and setting and marking is not monitored. There are few written comments to students on how to improve their work, and during the inspection little verbal feedback was observed.

109. Students' attitudes to their work are good. No poor behaviour was seen and some very good teaching provoked enthusiastic responses from students. All students enjoyed lessons where they had to participate actively. For example, in a Year 10 low ability set they were able to understand how the median and mode changed as more of them joined a group of students arranged by height. Students are keen to contribute orally in lessons and develop good mathematical language as they progress through the school. For example, high-attaining students in Year 10 were able to explain clearly why the sequence generated by $u_n = 1/n$ was best explored in its fractional form.
110. Overall the quality of teaching is good. All the teaching observed was at least satisfactory with 75 per cent good or better. Some very good lessons were seen and in these the teacher had very high expectations of what students could achieve. Teachers also used a range of interesting tasks and quick fire questions to promote rapid learning. In the best lessons teachers give clear time targets and ensure frequent changes of activity. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on measures the teacher used laminated word cards to make ordering the size of units quick and fun and ensured it was easy for students to alter any incorrect answers. However, the department does not have adequate strategies for providing work to suit students with different abilities in the same class. In particular, there is insufficient challenge for the most able in any set of students.
111. The department is effectively managed and currently has a full complement of mathematics specialists. The head of department has managed nationally imposed changes to all areas of mathematical teaching. For example most teachers are beginning to use the three part lessons recommended up to Year 9 and those teachers that use a full plenary help students to consolidate their new learning. The head of department keeps full records of students' achievements during their time at the school, however this information is not used to set targets or alter teaching strategies. Insufficient written feedback is given to students when work is assessed and targets for improvement are not recorded. The present development plan only runs for one year and is too vague in its intended outcomes. There is no written long-term vision for how the department can continue to raise standards. For example, there are no strategies for developing lessons that meet the needs of all students. The best practice in the team is not disseminated across for all teachers.
112. Numeracy skills are used well when needed by students in other subject areas. Students' basic arithmetic is good and some mathematics teachers are increasing levels of understanding by allowing students to explore a range of different strategies. For example a Year 11 group discussed three efficient ways mentally to calculate 9 per cent of £12 and were then able to use their chosen method to perform other mental calculations.
113. The department has many textbooks as their main resource for teaching. All mathematics classrooms are equipped with overhead projectors. When used, these are effective at improving the pace of students' learning. The local education authority support has been well used in school for two years and external courses attended. Teachers value technology and good lessons were seen when teachers taught students specific calculator skills including how to use a graphical calculator to help solve trigonometric equations. The department does not fully meet the statutory requirements for ICT. Its use is not sufficiently established in schemes of work or classroom practice and access depends on which teaching group a student is in.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved and achievement is good.
- Teachers have very good specialist subject knowledge.
- Good relationships between students and staff helps students to enjoy science and take a pride in their work.
- The science department is using the Science Strategy well to make improvements in science.

Areas for improvement

- There are inconsistent opportunities for information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching in science.
- The provision of strategic planning for science so that progress can be evaluated.
- To ensure all marking helps students to improve their work.

114. The attainment of students when they enter the school is average. Standards at age 14 are above average. In the end of Year 9 tests, standards are improving at a faster rate than the national average. In 2002, the proportion of students who reached the expected level was above average but below schools with a similar intake of students. Students' progress was also unsatisfactory compared to their prior achievement at the end of Year 6. However, in 2002, the science department experienced staffing difficulties, which affected some students' results. In science, students perform as well as students in mathematics and better than in English. In 2002, boys achieved better results than girls, but over a number of years and in lessons girls and boys achieve equally well in science.
115. The science department has maintained the standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. At age 16, the overall science results achieved are average. In 2002 in double award science, the proportion of students awarded higher grades A*-C was just above the national average. In single science, the proportion of students obtaining A*-C was below average. The proportion of students achieving A*-G was above average in both double and single award science. The school enters almost all students for science and almost all obtain a result. In 2002, the results were lower than 2001 due to staffing difficulties which meant unlike previous years, students performed worse in science than in some other subjects. Overall students' achievement in science from the time they join the school to the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 students' achievement is good. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in science but this is variable depending on the level of support received. Overall teachers and teaching assistants provide good support in class.
116. Students' standard of work seen during the inspection confirms the picture given by the results at the end of Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve well in all aspects of science. High-attaining Year 7 students are achieving standards above the expected level. They have a good understanding of electricity and good practical skills. They confidently connected a rheostat into a circuit and collected results to show where the resistance is highest. The achievement of some low-attaining Year 7 students is restricted by their low numeracy skills. By Year 9, high-attaining students have a good understanding of abstract concepts such as refraction

and moments. Low-attaining Year 9 students have a sound understanding of energy transfer in a power station.

117. In Years 10 and 11, students' achievement is satisfactory. High-attaining Year 10 and Year 11 students are achieving standards that are above the national expectation in all areas of science. Year 10 students give correct scientific explanations for a variety of scientific experiments. Year 11 students have a good understanding of digestion and can name all the major enzymes. They know that cellulose is a long chain molecule and forms part of the cell wall. They balance symbol equations. The middle attaining students in Year 11 understand atomic structure. Students' achievement in scientific enquiry has improved and is similar to that in other areas of science. Students complete investigations in a range of contexts. High-attaining students can evaluate their results whilst other students find the skill of evaluation more difficult.
118. Students' attitudes to science are good. They enjoy science lessons; behave well and in the majority of lessons work hard. There are well-established routines and good classroom management. In almost all lessons there is a co-operative atmosphere and students listen to teachers, ask and answer questions and enjoy learning. Students of all abilities carry out practical work in a safe manner. In Years 10 to 11 there is some evidence that some students, mainly boys, do not work equally well at home. For example, in triple science biology lesson a number of students had not completed the homework task.
119. Teaching continues to be satisfactory overall. It is good in almost half of the lessons, which is a significant factor in maintaining standards. The strengths of teaching include the teachers' knowledge and understanding and their commitment to the subject. This knowledge was used effectively in a physics revision lesson to provide a range of stimulating practical tasks, which interested and challenged the students and helped their learning. Most teachers plan their lessons effectively and expect students to work hard and to behave well. Teachers set and mark homework, which enhances learning started in the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers use their knowledge to capture the students' attention or set the scene and explain clearly what the students have learnt previously. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher made the students think about how energy is transformed in a lighted Bunsen burner before moving on to energy transformation in a power station. This challenge was combined with effective support and encouragement for some students who found the work difficult. As a result, the students made good progress in their learning. Teachers pay attention to keywords and their meaning as well as to the teaching of numeracy and students learn how to draw graphs and manipulate formulae. In a minority of lessons, limited teaching and learning styles restricted teaching; it was 'flat' and lacked pace. Students became bored and learning was less effective.
120. The science curriculum is appropriate and schemes of work are satisfactory. The scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 is in the process of being adapted to fit the requirements of the Key Stage 3 science strategy. The department is using the 'Science Strategy' effectively to enhance teaching and learning further. Systems for assessment in science are in place. Students have a good understanding of what they know through regular marking and tests. Teachers correct students' work and some, but not all, explain how students can improve. All teachers have good records of students' progress in their class. In Years 7 to 9 the science department has developed a good system of tracking students' progress from their attainment on entry to the school and is starting to use this information to set targets and involve students in their own learning. All students are aware of their National Curriculum level or GCSE grade. Some teachers use their knowledge of students' progress to plan future work, but this is not done consistently.

121. Leadership and management in science are satisfactory. The head of science continues to be successful in securing a commitment to science from both the students and staff. He manages the department well. He finds out what is going on by monitoring teaching, as well as analysing test and examination results. The department is in the process of implementing the Science Strategy and has produced a good action plan. This will provide a model of good practice for planning and monitoring strategic developments within all phases of science. The current science plan does not include what is to be achieved and how success will be monitored. The students' tracking system is being extended into Years 10 and 11 and will enable students' progress to be monitored and underachievement identified. Provision of resources is satisfactory although the department lacks the finance to replace large items of physics equipment. The provision of computers has recently been improved, but there are shortages of ICT resources such as data loggers and CD ROMs for science. This means that there is improving but inconsistent use of ICT in science. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Accommodation has been improved although some of the laboratories are old. The technicians work efficiently and effectively and provide very good support to teachers.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Consistently good quality teaching has a positive impact on students' learning, attitudes, progress and achievement.
- Detailed planning caters for a wide range of abilities and backgrounds.
- There are very good relationships between students and staff with the needs of individuals given a high priority.
- There are challenging tasks and a strong emphasis on quality.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ongoing assessment to ensure it is an integral part of teaching and learning.
- Review monitoring and evaluation procedures

122. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection in all years. By the end of Year 9 the majority of students are working at levels above the national expectation. They are making good progress and achieving well. By the end of Year 11 attainment and GCSE results, A*-C grades, are above the national average and the trend has been upwards since the previous inspection. The numbers of students taking GCSE art have increased considerably since the previous inspection. Effective strategies are in place to reduce the difference between boys' and girls' achievement at GCSE.

123. There is a comprehensive scheme of work with a strong emphasis on the teaching of skills in Year 7. This compensates well for the low skills and knowledge base of many students on entry to the school. As students move through the school in Years 8 and 9 the skills emphasis continues with activities that build on students' earlier learning and the needs of the individual.

124. During Years 7 to 9 students' knowledge and understanding of art and design is increasing, as is their use of a wide range of media and materials including graded pencils, pastels, paint and clay. Students work with increasing skill and imagination making intuitive responses to a range of tasks and activities. For example in a Year 7 fruit and vegetable project they use Batik to produce shape and pattern. Students have

knowledge of a wide range of artists and designers from different cultures and times. They use the quality of line, colour, and texture from artists work in many of their projects as a stimulus or starting point. One such example is the Year 8 project on using colour to modify a surface and imply depth, using the work of Van Gogh and his vibrant use of colour. During Year 9 students bring together ideas and skills learnt, work with confidence and produce quality outcomes in two and three dimensions.

125. In Years 10 and 11 students build upon the rich and varied experiences gained in Years 7 to 9 making good progress and achieving well. Students adapt quickly to a more independent way of working producing coursework for their examination. They develop ideas and use a variety of media with skill and understanding of how shape, space and colour can be used to convey moods and feelings. Students discuss their work with confidence and give reasons for visual decisions made. They take pride in their work and its presentation.
126. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is consistently good and is a strength of the department. Teachers teach with confidence, imagination, and sensitivity to the needs of the individual. This has a positive impact on students' learning, attitudes, and achievement. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Students with learning difficulties are well supported. Teachers have a depth of specialist knowledge and expertise. Tasks are challenging and there is a strong emphasis on improving the quality of students' work. Lessons are well planned, ensuring that all are involved and engaged in the activities whatever their background or ability. Good visual material is used to support learning and good use is made of discussion and directed questioning to ensure understanding. Students' learning is well supported and enhanced by a good balance between whole group and individual help and guidance. Students respond well, working with pace and creative effort in a friendly supportive atmosphere where they feel valued.
127. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Relationships are good, students enjoy their art and design, and they work with interest and growing confidence. They are prepared to experiment with media in different ways, show initiative and organise themselves.
128. The course in Years 7 to 9 fully meets National Curriculum requirements and offers the opportunity for all to follow a GCSE course in art and design. Assessment and recording systems are in place with end of project and key stage assessment handled well using National Curriculum levels. The use of ongoing assessments as an integral part of teaching and learning is not, however, as effective as it should be in informing pupils of specific targets or in helping staff review their teaching approaches. The use of information and communication technology is developing well and is planned into projects in Years 7 to 9.
129. The art and design department is well managed. The head of department has a clear view of the subject's direction and its contribution to the whole curriculum. Art and design staff are well qualified and experienced with a range of expertise in all aspects of the art and design curriculum. Staff meet regularly and work well together. Documentation, especially the schemes of work, is detailed, informative, and well presented. Staff value their subject and have the enthusiasm and capacity to move forward and improve standards further. Currently there is a lack of strategic planning and systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the department. Accommodation is very good. Teaching areas provide a stimulating environment that supports individual investigation. A good range of quality resources is available. Very good displays in the department and around the school celebrate students' achievements at all levels.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Planning for citizenship is good.
- Good citizenship topics have been developed within other subjects.
- Good leadership has ensured citizenship has a high profile within the school.
- Assessment and recording procedures are good.

Areas for improvement

- Increase opportunities for students to become more actively involved in the life of the school.

130. Students including those with special educational needs are acquiring good knowledge and understanding about the responsibilities of being citizens. They develop an understanding as a member of a school community where relationships are good and there is mutual respect. Many subjects teach issues that have an impact upon students' awareness of citizenship. For example, Year 7 students are aware of the consequences of antisocial behaviour. In Year 8 science students discuss the environmental and social implications of the development of the M6 toll road. In religious education, Year 9 students consider the importance of understanding and respecting other people's beliefs and values. In geography, Year 9 students examine how the media present information. In Year 10 students of information and communication technology (ICT) investigate and reflect upon the implications of global warming. In religious education, Year 11 students are taught and discuss the different sexual ethics in the principal religions.
131. Students' attitudes to citizenship are good. They enjoy their lessons and behave well. In almost all the lessons students willingly complete the tasks required. There is a co-operative atmosphere and students listen to teachers, ask and answer questions and enjoy learning. Students of all abilities make a contribution to discussions and feedback.
132. Teaching is good. The strengths of teaching include different subject teachers' commitment to the development of citizenship, particularly in science, religious education, geography and ICT. Here there are specifically designed units of work to focus on people's rights and responsibilities as citizens. The policy for citizenship is good and draws together existing good practice in personal, social and health education, community and charity work. Schemes of work are clear and well produced. The school's personal, health and social education programme is used to address specific issues and give coherence to the learning of the subject. Work is a combination of cross-curricular topics in science, religious education, history and geography, together with discrete topics in personal, social and health education. The citizenship curriculum has been mapped and all areas are covered. The cross-curricular topics are planned in detail by the departments and cover key elements of the citizenship programmes of study. Other departments such as ICT have also included citizenship in their planning. Visitors are involved in the planned programme.
133. The school has developed systems for assessment in citizenship although these are still in the early days of development. Each student is expected to build up a portfolio of evidence. Students also complete a self-assessment sheet based on knowledge and understanding of the key themes as well as commenting on their investigative skills

and participation in discussion. There are clear learning outcomes, which are, whenever possible, linked to National Curriculum levels of the individual subjects. A citizenship activity record sheet has also been developed for those students who take part in extra-curricular activities.

134. Students also have opportunities to become more actively involved as stakeholders in the school through the work of the year and school councils. This, however, only involves a relatively small number of students.
135. Leadership and management of citizenship are good. The co-ordinator for citizenship has a clear brief and effectively introduced the subject into the school curriculum. There has been a thorough audit of current practice and staff involvement through a development working party. This has helped produce the schemes of work and the assessment procedures. The co-ordinator works closely with one of the deputy headteachers.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Teaching is good. It is supported by good lesson planning to meet the needs of students. Making skills are good resulting in quality products in a variety of materials.
- Good relationships between teachers' and students create a relaxed learning environment where there is mutual respect.
- Students have positive attitudes towards the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The identification of clear priorities for action to raise the achievement of students.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and the progress of all students.
- Strategies to challenge high ability students.

136. Overall standards of work are below the national average by Year 9 and Year 11. In food, textiles and graphics standards are better than in resistant materials. When students start at the school their experiences in design and technology are variable. Achievement and progress is satisfactory. This is as a result of good teaching, positive management of behaviour and the good relationships established with pupils.
137. The teacher assessments of standards being achieved by students at the end of Year 9 in 2002 are in line with the national average. This was not reflected in the work seen during the inspection which indicated that standards achieved in 'making' by the end of Year 9 are good. In all material areas students gain a good foundation in a range of practical skills. They are able to select and use the correct tools and equipment confidently and competently. Students' ability to generate a variety of ideas and develop a final design from which to make a product, are improving. Their evaluative skills are also improving but these are inconsistently developed across the different aspects of design and technology. Students tend to repeat rather than build on what they have learnt in the previous unit on design skills, and the application of the design process is below national averages. Research and analytical skills are underdeveloped as is a depth of knowledge of materials.

138. The GCSE short course results of students aged 16 in 2002 are below national averages. Results in food, textiles and graphics are close to national expectations but results for resistant materials are well below. The low standards in resistant materials are due in part to the number of lower ability pupils who opt for this course.
139. The standards of work seen on the inspection are in line with national averages. Examples were seen of lower-attaining pupils in textiles and food achieving better than expected. In lessons and in work seen Year 11 students demonstrate a significant improvement in their understanding and application of the design process. Their final products demonstrate a good range of practical and presentation skills. They are able to explain the planning and processes used and ideas to modify and improve their final products. Standards in graphic products in Year 11 are affected by the limited development in previous years but these are improving. Many students recall and apply what they have learnt in earlier lessons and extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students make good progress in lessons and when appropriately supported, this is also true for those with special educational needs. This is due to the good individual support they receive from teachers. Higher-attaining students are not always challenged to enable them to make maximum progress.
140. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan and organise their lessons well. This enables students to access resources and move from one activity to another effectively and with the minimum of disruption. Relationships with students in lessons are good and teachers manage their learning well. In the best lessons, teachers share clear objectives for learning with pupils and use probing questioning to check and deepen students' understanding. Teachers give good individual support to students. However there is a limited range of teaching strategies used across the department to support the learning of high ability students. The development of listening skills and the use of technical and extended language is good as is the application of numeracy skills. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is improving. There are increasing opportunities for students to develop a range of skills and understand computer aided design. Lack of access to computer aided manufacture facilities results in this aspect being underdeveloped.
141. The assessment of students' work against the course objectives in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. In Years 7, 8 and 9, end of unit assessments are carried out. However the assessment requirements are not specified in the unit planning and are not specifically related to the National Curriculum. This limits the extent to which students can build on their previous learning and improve their work. Marking is completed regularly but the comments do not give information to students on how well they are doing.
142. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department, with existing and recently appointed teachers, is developing a good team approach to teaching design and technology effectively and to improving standards. The department recognises that a structured improvement plan needs to be developed in order that priorities are set, responsibilities identified and monitoring and review procedures formalised.
143. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved. Support for lower-attaining pupils is good and the use of ICT has also improved. Students making skills remain better than their design skills.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work at the end of Year 9 are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' very good attitudes and behaviour make a significant contribution to their good progress.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students increase students' interest and enjoyment in their work.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessing students' work to track progress and to develop the curriculum are incomplete.
- There are no formal systems in place for monitoring the department's performance and for planning for the future.
- Learning resources, particularly textbooks and atlases, are insufficient.

144. Standards of work at the end of Year 9 are above the national average and have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers' assessments in 2002 showed that girls reached higher levels than boys, as is seen nationally. Students achieve well in geography during the first three years at this school. Teachers' knowledge of their students and the provision of appropriate resources enable students with special educational needs to make the same good progress.

145. Results in the GCSE examination in 2002 at grades A* to C were below average overall and well below for boys compared with boys nationally. However, the small proportion of girls who chose to study geography reached the national average. Results at grades A* to G exceeded the national average both for girls and boys. In the previous year results were just below the national average with very little difference in the performance of boys compared with girls. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 reach nationally expected levels and achievement is satisfactory. Teachers are developing strategies to improve the performance of boys who still represent a significant proportion of students in most groups at this level.

146. Students' experience of geography in their primary schools is varied but overall they enter this school with average levels of attainment. During Years 7 to 9, they learn essential map reading skills and how to extract and use statistics, for example, in their studies of retail patterns. Discussion and debate is a common feature of many lessons so that students develop their questioning skills very well. A group of the most capable students in Year 9 used the teacher's skilfully planned activities and stimulating information to discover the difference between fact and opinion in their research on Antarctica. They listened very well to each other and reflected on the perilous future for fragile environments. Year 8 students showed the same degree of sensitivity as they explored inequalities in Brazil. They responded maturely to the vocabulary and sentiments expressed in a poem written about the destruction of the rainforest. Less able students and those with special educational needs respond well to their teachers' high expectations. For example, students in Year 7 understand the essential elements of settlement patterns and use structured frameworks to write short explanatory paragraphs. In Year 9, they construct and complete their own investigations on aspects of environmental concern such as recycling and pollution. Throughout Years 7 to 9, students' very good behaviour and positive attitudes to their work enhance their progress.

147. Students who opt to study geography in Years 10 and 11 develop very good relationships with their teachers and respond enthusiastically in lessons. A very good example of this was seen when a Year 11 group gave a dramatic production of cultural contrasts in Italy to an audience of Year 7 students. The older students were then able to answer questions from Year 7 on wider aspects of their learning on this topic. There is a wide range of attainment when students start Year 10 but most students make sound progress by the end of Year 11. They show a good grasp of practical skills and a clear understanding of case studies. Some students, particularly boys, find it difficult to achieve the required standards in their written work and organise large quantities of photocopied material. Opportunities to carry out computer-based research on urban areas of their choice help them to understand how to produce accurate course work. Some students with special educational needs make good progress in their learning when they have additional teacher support in lessons. When there is insufficient support learning is often unsatisfactory. There is no formal identification of the most able students, nor planned strategies to ensure that they receive sufficiently challenging tasks. Throughout all year groups, students' interest and understanding are encouraged by high quality displays of their current work and topical geographical issues in classrooms.
148. Teaching and learning is good overall. A high proportion of lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 were very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Detailed planning, imaginative tasks and opportunities for students to develop their thinking skills characterise the most successful lessons. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the timing of lessons is unbalanced so that some activities are either rushed or over-long. Generally, however, the unusually lengthy time allotted for lessons is well used and students maintain their concentration. Teachers mark students' work regularly, often with helpful comments for improvement. In Years 10 and 11, students are aware of their predicted performance and the level at which they are working, enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning. However, although students' work is assessed using National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, the use of this data to set targets for individual improvement and to track progress is inconsistent. Although teachers show considerable initiative in the production of learning resources, there are too few recent books and atlases available to encourage independent learning. There are also insufficient opportunities in lessons to use information and communication technology in order to develop computer skills.
149. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Although there is much informal dialogue between colleagues, there is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of teaching. Very supportive teamwork amongst experienced colleagues encourages a shared vision for future directions in order to improve the achievement of all students. Formal policies and structures to reach this goal are incomplete. Students' performance is not rigorously analysed and detailed schemes of work are not adapted in the light of this information.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The positive relationships between students and their teachers with the result that students in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good progress.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Teachers' very good planning promotes positive attitudes to learning.
- Good teaching which contributes to rising standards at the end of Year 9.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.
- The schemes of work to ensure compliance with the requirements of the National curriculum are not in place.
- Assessment and monitoring systems to ensure each student achieves the highest possible standard in relation to their earlier attainment.
- Teachers' marking, so that students are given very clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Monitoring of teaching to consolidate and share good practice to bring about further improvement in examination results.

150. Standards of work seen during the inspection are satisfactory overall, and good in Years 7, 8 and 9. In national tests, standards by the end of Year 9 are above the national average but below at the end of Year 11. When students enter the school their knowledge and skills in history are in line with national expectation. They make good progress as they move through Years 7, 8 and 9 and therefore their achievement, compared to their attainment when they enter the school, is good. Students make good progress as a result of their very good attitudes to learning coupled with the teachers' skills in imaginatively using the limited range of resources available to them. Progress made by students in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.
151. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicated that students' attainment is above the national average. This has been the trend since June 2000. GCSE results within the A* to C range have improved steadily since 2000 but are still below those achieved nationally. In 2002, for the first time in three years, no student gained an A* grade in history. Inspection evidence indicates that standards throughout Years 7 to 11 are improving and that students currently in Years 10 and 11 are achieving in line with the national picture. This rise in achievement is the result of the good and sometimes very good and excellent teaching they receive. There is, however, evidence of unsatisfactory and poor teaching. The subject knowledge of all teachers is very good. In lessons, which are at least good, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan lessons and produce resources that provide an effective balance between developing the knowledge, skills and understanding of all students. Where lessons are at best unsatisfactory, neither the activities nor the resources provided, meet the learning styles or educational needs of the students. As a direct result, learning is unsatisfactory.
152. Homework is routinely set and like class work, regularly marked. However, the way in which work is currently marked does not enable students to understand how they achieved the grade awarded or give clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. With the exception of work produced for the purpose of assessment, marking does not inform students of the National Curriculum level they have achieved or the potential GCSE grade.

153. The department makes a significant contribution to the development of students' literacy levels. Great emphasis is placed on their skills in oracy and reading. Where teaching is at least good, opportunities are provided to enable all students to develop their oracy skills through role-play, whole class reading and rigorous question and answer sessions. Students with special educational needs are given particularly good support through one-to-one guidance. As a consequence, they make progress in line with all other students. The development of the skills relating to numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are less well developed. The current schemes of work used by teachers in this department have not been reviewed over recent years. As a result, they do not specifically state what the learning outcomes for each unit of study are or specify assessment tasks to be completed to enable teachers to monitor the progress of students individually. Targets to improve students' performance therefore cannot be set. The appropriate statutory curriculum requirements, in relation to assessing how well the students use ICT through this subject, are neither planned for nor effectively taught. The result of poor planning at departmental rather than individual teacher level severely limits the range of learning opportunities for students and as a consequence, the higher grades at public examination level are not achieved.
154. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Some areas remain outstanding and new areas have emerged. At the time of the previous inspection, the departmental handbook, an essential tool of management was judged to be ineffective. Currently, there is no departmental handbook in use. As a direct result there is no consistent approach to marking, to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning or for assessing the progress made by students. At the time of the previous inspection use of ICT across the department was unsatisfactory. This statement remains true. Accommodation has improved considerably and this is now good. The number of teachers working within the department with management responsibilities elsewhere, have been reduced. As a result teachers currently working within the department can now focus their energies on teaching history.
155. Both the leadership and management of this curriculum area are unsatisfactory. The current head of department has been in post since September 2002. The department development plan was not written by him and since his appointment, this has not been reviewed. Whilst there are plans to produce a detailed departmental handbook and scheme of work by the end of this academic year, there is no evidence to indicate work has started. As a result, there are no systems or procedures in place against which the monitoring of the effectiveness of the department can take place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- High quality leadership and management are starting to take the department forward.
- Assessment and recording systems are helping to raise students' attainment
- The very good subject knowledge of teachers underpins the good learning that takes place.

Areas for improvement

- The consistent use of the three-part lesson as part of the strategy to raise attainment in all years.
- The establishment of clear learning objectives to ensure that the needs of all students are met
- The balance between teacher direction and student focused activity.

156. The level of attainment of the majority of students entering the school is below the level expected for their age. They have a range of ICT skills and a basic knowledge of hardware along with some understanding of the generic software. However, by the end of Year 9, students are below the national average. Boys perform less well than girls. By the end of Year 11 students have further developed their ICT capability but remain below average when compared with short course GCSE results nationally. Girls attained a greater number of higher-grade passes than boys.

157. Achievement in the first three years is satisfactory. When given appropriate support, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. All students benefit from the well-planned programmes, which reflect the requirements of the Key Stage 3 Strategy for ICT. The programmes enable students to improve on the basic skill levels when they come to the school. Very good procedures to monitor progress are beginning to work well in the subject's drive to raise the attainment. The department is aware of the need to target boys in particular. Students are confident in the use of the hardware and even the lower-attainers have a sound working knowledge that enables them to access the well-prepared exercises held electronically. Most students in Year 7 have little difficulty in creating spreadsheets to perform calculations. The work seen indicates that the subject should meet performance targets set for this year group by the time they reach Year 9.

158. The below average attainment at the end of Year 11 reflects the limited time available for students to generate the coursework necessary and particular difficulties with specific software requirements. The subject staff are addressing both aspects as part of the strategy to improve results.

159. Students acquire good knowledge and understanding as a result of the very good subject knowledge of teachers and the very well planned lessons. Planning takes good account of broader development by addressing aspects of literacy and numeracy through specific topics. Opportunity is taken to cover parts of the citizenship curriculum; for example when students in the upper years considered topics such as blood sports, they prepared PowerPoint presentations as part of their coursework.

160. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour which are realised, and students' attitudes are good. Teachers use their knowledge of students well in supporting their learning. Good relationships exist between students

and teachers. In some of the less effective lessons learning is compromised by not having work to match the stage of development of different students. The department makes very good use of the assessment system developed internally. Students' attitudes and progress are monitored lesson by lesson. Teachers see at a glance how consistently students are achieving. The subject leader is continuing to develop the monitoring processes in order to analyse all aspects of student and subject performance. Students' work is generally well marked but inconsistencies do exist where teachers do not follow the department policy of providing comment for students on how to improve and annotating coursework to a standard format. Although relatively recent the assessment system is producing improvements in curriculum planning and students' achievement.

161. The subject leader has a very clear idea of what she wants to achieve for the subject. She has endeavoured to provide comprehensive schemes of work to help the department meet its targets. Staffing difficulties have had an impact on overall attainment. The school is aware of the problems and is taking action to resolve the problems. The subject is fortunate to have a strong leader who manages her team with a commitment that is reciprocated. Technician support has only improved marginally since the previous inspection. This creates considerable demands on the staff in the department and is not an effective use of their time. This situation should improve with a network manager joining the department next term. Much has been achieved in a short period of time.
162. Computer resources have improved and the number of specialist rooms has grown since the previous inspection. Other specialist equipment is limited. For example, only one projector is available in school and there are no interactive whiteboards. Achievement has improved in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is now good. Overall, developments in the subject indicate satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their lessons.
- Teachers have a consistently good approach to lesson planning.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work are not specific or clear. This affects their use.
- Some resources are outdated.
- The analysis and use of data.

163. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average for lower-attainers and above average for higher-attainers. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 11. GCSE examination results have improved since the previous inspection. In 2002, 62% of students gained grades A*- C. Sixty-six per cent of the year group were entered. This is well above the national average. Girls achieved 75 per cent A*-C grades and boys achieved just above the national average at 48 per cent.

164. Standards achieved by both boys and girls at the end of Year 9 are good. Most students are able to repeat and answer words and phrases in the target language and a large number put together two or three sentences, sometimes using complex structures. In a Year 8 German lesson students used correct word order in complex subordinate clauses. Students with special educational needs achieve well when supported by teaching assistants.
165. In Years 10 and 11 students are prepared thoroughly for their GCSE examinations, but standards vary between the work of the boys and the girls. Students produce coursework varying from good to very good and the higher-attainers use complex structures and vocabulary. Accuracy varies – the girls keep to learnt structures, the boys take risks with new language, which is not always correct.
166. Teaching is good overall and often very good. A small amount of satisfactory teaching was observed when students were not given sufficient opportunities to use and practise the foreign language actively. The subject knowledge and expertise of the teachers is a strength of the department. Nearly all teachers teach two languages confidently. A high level of lesson planning and good use of resources are consistent across the department, with activities matching students' abilities. In a Year 7 French lesson the teacher used flashcards to introduce new vocabulary as part of the topic of 'Personality'. This topic was reinforced with class repetition, individual questioning and group work. In a Year 9 French lesson on comparative adjectives, good use of planning by the teacher ensured smooth progression from the introduction of new language using the overhead projector to group work comparing the work and comments of fellow students.
167. Teachers ensure that boys and girls are included in the lesson and participate equally. The support given to lower-attainers and special educational needs students is evident in the step-by-step guidance. This was observed in a Year 10 German lesson when the teacher used spider diagrams to prepare students' coursework. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work. Classroom management is very good. Praise is used effectively in lessons, when students pronounce the foreign language correctly.
168. The department has worked hard this year to ensure that information and communication technology (ICT) is used to enhance, reinforce and motivate students as observed in a Year 7 French lesson on descriptions. The department has further plans to extend provision to other year groups.
169. Teachers use the department marking policy consistently with comments written in the modern foreign language and in English. The quality of the comments however varies between the teachers. The assessment of the GCSE coursework is very good, but the lack of targets for further improvement in Years 7 – 9 is a weak area of the assessment procedures.
170. Students' very positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language are a strength of the department. They listen attentively to the teacher and to each other. Both boys and girls volunteer to answer in the foreign language being studied. The majority of students participate actively and help and support each other. When participating in pair and group work students stay on task.
171. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Communication within the department is very good. The collaborative atmosphere within the department has a positive impact on teaching and learning. Strategies are discussed at weekly meetings and ideas for raising standards are shared. There is a comprehensive

handbook with helpful guidance on policies and relevant departmental information. Schemes of work would benefit from the inclusion of more specific details such as the availability of resources, the time allocation to topics and a core element of vocabulary and structures. Some of the textbooks within the department are now out-dated. The department is to be commended for the preparation of materials which enable active learning to take place. Assessment data needs to be used more precisely and more effectively to set targets in order to drive up standards.

172. The department has made progress since the previous inspection. Students, both boys and girls, are now more confident in speaking and responding in the target language. Higher-attainers are able to manipulate language independently. GCSE examination results are improving and the use of ICT is increasing. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural development of students by offering annual visits to France or Germany.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are above average. Those at GCSE are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good and promote enthusiasm for music.
- The very good relationships that promote students' personal development.
- The good opportunities to perform in public.
- The procedures for assessing students' achievements are very good.

Areas for improvement

- More practice rooms to improve the quality of learning.
- Further growth of extra music making activities and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities.

173. Music is a successful and increasingly popular subject in the school. This is largely due to good teaching, the very positive relationships that students enjoy through practical music making, and the progressive way in which their work is assessed. The department is planning to encourage more students than at present to take advantage of the range of extra instrumental tuition available. There are good opportunities for students to develop their musical skills beyond classroom activities. A significant number use the facilities in the music rooms each day outside lesson times to practice individually. Much of this extra-curricular music making is at present only informal. The wind band, however, is a very successful and well-organised group. They were heard during the inspection rehearsing and playing to a good standard. The department is keen to develop other formal ensembles along similar lines. There are many opportunities for students to perform in public each year at concerts and other events both in school and for the community.

174. Standards of attainment are above average by the end of Year 9. A high proportion of students achieve the levels expected nationally. Boys are as enthusiastic as girls and there is no significant difference in their level of achievements. All students learn to understand and use musical notation and describe what they hear in the correct musical terms. They use keyboard technology well to enhance their performing and improvising skills. They develop a good sense of rhythm so that they play well together in ensembles that combine melodies and harmony in a lively way. Teachers take care to adapt music to match individual levels of musical skill. This was apparent in a Year 8

lesson where groups of students were rehearsing instrumental parts for what would become a whole class performance of the Beatles song 'Yesterday'. Their progress was enlivened by their use of practice CDs specially made by the department. Each group used one to support their practising. This is just one example of how, since the previous inspection, the use of ICT has been fully incorporated into teaching methods. The quality of learning in this particular lesson, however, was not improved by the lack of practice rooms. Students frequently practise instruments in similar lessons sitting on corridor floors.

175. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 are above average and GCSE results in 2002 were well above average. Eleven of the 13 students entered achieved A* to C grades. The pattern was similar in 2001. As many boys as girls are involved and there is no significant difference in the standards achieved. Over the last two years enthusiasm for GCSE music has increased and currently two large groups of nearly 30 students in each of Years 10 and 11 are involved. Students perform commensurately with their individual instrumental or vocal skills and take a pride in performing well in a broad range of styles. Their compositions are well structured and many make good use of keyboard technology. Examples were heard during the inspection of some very sophisticated song writing, sensitively enhanced in this way, and expressively performed. Students' listening skills are well developed and they can discern a range of musical cultures and techniques.
176. The quality of teaching is consistently good and was very good in a significant number of the lessons observed. Teachers are both enthusiastic and musically experienced and ensure that students learn to communicate musically with confidence. They understand well what appeals to young people and frequently use modern technology to enhance and support learning. As a result, students quickly gain confidence in controlling their use of the technical features of keyboards. Lessons are practical and well organised, and students understand what is expected of them. There are very effective methods of assessing students' work both formally and informally. Much of their practical work is recorded and stored. Progressive targets are frequently set in lessons and very good use is made of personalised progress sheets. Discipline is very good and students behave well in lessons. The self-discipline needed for practising is strongly encouraged. Students are shown how and what to practise. They are rigorously prepared and rehearsed collectively before embarking on their individual work. There are good routines for the use of instruments that are respected by students. They work very well unsupervised and enjoy their creative effort in learning to compose and perform music. They willingly share musical ideas and support each other. Relationships between themselves and with their teachers are very good.
177. The department is well led and efficiently managed. The accommodation is satisfactory with the exception of the lack of practice facilities referred to above. There is only one practice room that is frequently unavailable for general use as it is the only room for visiting instrumental teachers to use. Resources are satisfactory except for a rather limited range of tuned percussion instruments. The department benefits from the use of some very sophisticated ICT equipment, some of it, however, is only on loan to the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and plan their lessons well.
- The students' achievement in terms of their ability, in all year groups, is very good.
- A very good extra curricular programme enhances the students' learning opportunities.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and their students.
- The students have a very positive attitude towards their work.
- Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Indoor accommodation is inadequate for the effective teaching of the full curriculum.
- The management and leadership of physical education for both boys and girls are not unified.
- The lack of greater consistency in the setting and marking of GCSE written work.
- A long-term strategy for the development of the department linked to the school improvement plan is not in place.

178. The 29 per cent GCSE A*-C rate achieved in 2002 was well below the national average of 54 per cent. However these Year 11 students achieved grades in physical education consistent with those achieved in their other subjects. Results in 2000 and 2001 were above the national average. Girls' results were better than those achieved by boys. Results in tests taken at the end of Year 9, based on teacher assessments, indicate students achieving above average standards and better than those of most other subjects in the school.

179. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 11 were in line with the national average. There were, however, several examples of students performing at above and well above average levels, notably in swimming, rugby and gymnastics. Some Year 10 girls demonstrated good dribbling and general ball skills during a basketball assessment lesson, whilst Year 7 boys showed confidence and control with rugby handling skills. Year 9 girls showed good expertise in their swimming technique and considerable stamina.

180. Teaching is very good overall and especially in Years 7 to 9, where there were examples of excellent practice. This excellence was evident in Year 7 rugby and Year 9 swimming lessons. As a result of this high quality teaching, learning was equally impressive. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge, plan their lessons with clear objectives and ensure that the students' achievement, in terms of their ability, is very good overall. They establish a very good rapport with the students and are equally effective with students of different ability levels. This was clear when lower ability Year 9 soccer groups and a Year 7 gymnastics class were seen. There was no difference observed in the effective learning of boys and girls or of students with identified special educational needs. Virtually all lessons were conducted at a good pace and there were several examples in rugby, swimming and basketball of students being involved in their own self-assessment and that of others in the group. The quality of marking and assessment of written work in GCSE classes however is inconsistent. Whilst there were examples of good practice, other notebooks contained insufficient written work and little evidence of marking. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are used in examination classes and the department makes a valuable contribution to the teaching of literacy and citizenship. There is also a conscious and strong moral and social input within the teaching of the curriculum. The teachers are

very good role models and emphasise fair play, co-operation, working together and respecting the contribution of all, whatever their ability.

181. The response of the students was very good overall and excellent in some lessons. The students are enthusiastic, hard working, cheerful and supportive of each other and their teachers. In the swimming pool the Year 9 girls worked exceptionally well and in Year 7 the rugby class demonstrated infectious enthusiasm throughout the lesson. Students of all ability levels stated how much they enjoyed the subject. This positive approach together with very good teaching ensured very good learning.
182. An enthusiastic and committed new head of department has been recently appointed. An identified priority is to unify the leadership and management of the boys and girls physical education programme. Currently there is no long-term strategy for the department nor is planning currently linked to the school improvement plan. This will enable teachers to build upon the success that has been achieved, as there is a shared commitment to be successful. Teachers are deployed effectively, using their different areas of subject expertise. There are good assessment procedures in place, linked to national levels of attainment, which are shared with students and their parents. Presently these procedures are not developed so that the data available is used to inform curriculum planning and set targets for improvement.
183. Indoor accommodation is a weakness and there is no sports hall. The swimming pool is a very good facility. There are good outdoor grass pitches, although there is no warning sign to alert students when crossing the road to access them. The all weather surface is in need of improvement. A very good range of extra curricular opportunities is available and well supported by the students, significantly enhancing the overall provision. There is a wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs and school teams. Students representing the school have achieved national and county recognition in girls' rounders, hockey, athletics and swimming and boys' soccer, rugby, swimming and athletics.
184. Some progress has been made since the previous inspection particularly in the use of ICT and the development of other cross-curricular themes.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The good relationships based on mutual respect between teachers and students ensure an atmosphere in which students work well.
- Teachers, including those who are non-specialists, have good subject knowledge.
- Religious education lessons make a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory.
- Existing teaching plans do not fully reflect the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
- There is no clear guidance on the criteria for the assessment and monitoring of students' attainment and progress, which enable teachers to ensure all are sufficiently challenged.
- Resources to support the teaching and learning in religious education are very limited.

185. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 11 in the short GCSE course have declined over the past three years. The percentage of students gaining A*-C grades has dropped from well above the national average in 2000 to significantly below in 2002. This is largely due to the poor results achieved by a large proportion of the boys who sat the examination. Limited analysis of students' progress means teachers do not have predictions of A*-C percentages for current Year 11 students. Standards of work seen in lessons from both boys and girls reflect the full range of GCSE grades. Students are able to talk about how the views of Christians on a range of issues, for example abortion and contraception, are influenced by their religious beliefs. They understand that the followers of any religion interpret and apply its teachings in varied ways. They express and give reasons for their own opinions. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow either a GCSE course or a religious education unit in the ASDAN programme.
186. Standards of attainment in Year 9 are in line with the broad range of expectations in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. However, there is little evidence of students working at the higher levels in this range. Students in Year 7 describe and distinguish some of the key features of the places of worship of several religions. They explain the meanings of these features for believers. The most able pose challenging questions such as, 'If there is no God, how can the ten plagues be understood?' In Year 9 students talk with varying levels of understanding about how Christians and Sikhs respond to prejudice and discrimination. They also express and give reasons for their own ideas.
187. The achievement of students following the current GCSE course is satisfactory overall, as it was during the last inspection. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when given appropriate help, but more able students do not achieve as much as they could because teachers do not set them sufficiently challenging work.
188. Students have positive attitudes to religious education. Many participate with enthusiasm in lessons and take pride in their work. In the main, they listen attentively to teachers and fellow students.
189. Religious education makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It provides opportunities for them to explore a variety of religious beliefs, moral codes and cultural traditions and consider their impact on people's lives. They examine a range of moral and social issues and are encouraged to develop their own views and respect the differences between people.
190. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In Years 10 and 11 teaching ranges from poor to good and in Years 7 to 9, from satisfactory to good. All teachers have good subject knowledge and structure their lessons well to make good use of time. In some cases, however, they place too much emphasis on covering the content of the course and completing written work so that students' understanding is not developed as fully as it should be.
191. In the best lessons, teachers match resources and activities to the abilities of their students so they can all make progress. They use good questioning skills to draw out what students already know and build upon this knowledge and understanding. In Year 7 lessons students are helped to make links between features of a synagogue and what they already know about the festival of Hanukkah and narratives about Moses. Teachers challenge students to think things through for themselves and work out reasons for their points of view. Year 11 students review what they know about Christian and Muslim teachings on contraception in order to prepare an answer to a

GCSE question and Year 7 students explain the thinking behind their designs for special containers. Teachers link students' learning about religions with aspects of their own experiences as when Year 9 students are asked to reflect on examples of prejudice and discrimination. Good lessons include varied activities and styles of writing that engage the interests of students

192. Where teaching is less successful, work is not well matched to the abilities of all students. In some GCSE groups inadequate provision is made for students of widely differing abilities. Teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work for the most able pupils in younger age groups. In Year 7 in particular, some students are ready to explore philosophical questions about the nature of God rather than learning about features of places of worship. Some teachers are too quick to provide answers to their own questions so that students are not required to think things through for themselves.
193. The limited use of speakers and visits, poor provision of learning resources and the absence of any planned use of information and communication technology (ICT) are serious obstacles to the improvement of teaching and learning in religious education.
194. The quality of leadership and management in the subject is unsatisfactory. A new head of department was appointed in September 2002 following the long-term absence of the former post holder. Since taking on the role, the present head of department has not monitored planning, marking or teaching and has initiated very little development work. This means teachers are still using out of date teaching plans. These do not adequately reflect the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education or literacy and ICT initiatives. The criteria for marking and assessment of students' work remain unclear so the department is unable to monitor effectively the attainment and progress of students. No strategies exist to enable departmental meetings to take place to discuss areas of necessary development. The mix of part time staff and teachers who are also involved in other subject areas makes this difficult. However, the head of department is keen to take the department forward and is in the early stages of working out strategies to enable this to happen. Further progress is hampered, as at the time of the previous inspection, by the lack of a detailed development plan and the time spent by teachers preparing materials in the absence of adequate resources.

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 2002

GCE AS level courses 2002 School Figures. 2001 National Comparisons. 2002 data not available

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	1	100		0		3.0	
Mathematics	10	80		70		3.3	
Chemistry	6	100		33		2.8	
Art	5	100		60		3.6	
Economics/Business education	2	100		0		2.5	
Psychology	6	100		33		2.7	
Information and communication technology	6	33		0		0.5	

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English	2	100		0		6.0	
Mathematics	7	100		57		7.7	
Chemistry	11	90		54.5		6.5	
Art	13	100		8		4.3	
Economics/Business Education	9	100		56		6.9	
Geography	14	100		71		7.7	
Psychology	36	97.3		28		5.8	
Information Technology	7	72		100		2.6	

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health & Social Care	7	100		14		0	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers work hard to help students make progress.
- Teachers' planning and subject knowledge are good.

Areas for improvement

- The greater variety in teaching styles.

195. Standards of attainment in 2002 at AS and A level are good. Most students achieve close to their predicted grades. The percentage of students gaining an A or B grade has shown an upward trend since the previous inspection. The recent results have also shown a drop in the number of students failing to achieve a final grade.
196. The achievement of students in lessons and in module examinations is good. Students are confident using their graphical calculators and a Year 12 class used them efficiently to explore the concept of skewness.
197. The progress of students throughout the two years is closely monitored and is good overall. Students are encouraged to become independent and take responsibility for their learning. A good feature of this monitoring is the extra reports that are used by the department to feedback progress to parents at half termly intervals. During the inspection Year 13 students were observed receiving very detailed feedback and points for improvement on their latest mathematics homework.
198. The attitudes of students are good. They are keen to make progress and listen attentively. In some lessons they ask pertinent questions when unsure, but more often seek one to one help at the mathematics clinics or in their teachers' non-contact time. Students are aware of the need for them to complete most of the written work independently and seek help when necessary. Students speak highly of the attention to detail and concern for their progress shown by their mathematics teachers.
199. The teaching observed in Years 12 and 13 was good. The teachers are very aware of examination requirements and structure their teaching accordingly. Teachers have full and detailed lesson plans and well-worked solutions to the questions set to students. Clear links are made to examination demands and past questions used effectively, for example in a Year 13 lesson on hypothesis testing.
200. The teachers, led by the head of department, have responded to the new modular syllabus introduced nationally. They have become more adept at pacing the course and made changes each year in order to improve the provision for the new Year 12 students. The low allocation of curriculum time restricts the amount of time available to students to work on mathematical problems and explore topics further.

Sciences

The focus off the inspection was chemistry. Physics, biology and environmental science were also sampled. The overall provision for science in the sixth form is good. In 2002 standards in physics improved with over half of the students gaining higher grades A and B and all students who entered for the examination achieving a grade. In 2002, in biology and environmental science all students apart from one achieved a grade. Students' standard of work seen during the inspection confirms the picture given by A-level and AS level results. In biology, physics and environmental science, students achieve well. In A-level biology and physics, high-attaining students are achieving standards above the expected level. Students' attitudes to post-16 science are good; they show a high level of commitment.

The strengths of teaching include teachers' knowledge and understanding and commitment to their subject. This knowledge was used effectively in biology and physics lessons. In the biology lesson, students made good progress in setting up an experiment to show the use of immobilised enzymes and improved their problem solving skills. In the physics lesson, the teacher made good use of assessment of students' work to improve their skills of analysis and evaluation.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Relationships in lessons are good, and there is effective support for learning.
- Marking is good and helps students improve the standards they achieve.

Areas for improvement

- The increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons.
- The opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills.
- The use of information on standards of attainment when students begin Year 12 in order to set targets.

201. Examination results at A-level have been good in comparison with national averages. In 2002, 55 per cent of students achieved the higher grades A and B. Pass rates have been good, averaging 93 per cent over the last four years, with almost half of the students achieving grades A and B. Overall, students perform at least as well as expected, based on their GCSE results. Able students consistently achieve high grades. Boys and girls do equally well. At AS-level in 2001, students achieved results better than predicted, with 56 per cent gaining grades A and B. In 2002, results at AS-level were in line with predictions. Almost all students complete the AS-level or A-level courses. Numbers taking the subject to A-level have declined since 2001, but most of the students achieving good grades at AS-level continue into the second year of the A-level course.

202. The standards of work seen in lessons and in written work are above average. In Year 12 the students make good progress from GCSE. They are achieving well in the AS course and results in the module tests taken so far are above expectations. In discussions, they show good understanding of the chemical concepts required at this level. Their knowledge is good, shown by the high standard of their answers to questions from previous examinations and by the presentations they have given on chemical bonding and structures. In Year 13, written work is well presented and standards in most topics are at least as good as expected for the group of students.

Some students have found difficulties in producing plans for investigations. In one lesson seen, the students worked in pairs comparing and discussing ideas to achieve better plans. They worked very effectively, with careful guidance from the teacher and produced plans that closely matched the syllabus requirements to achieve good marks.

203. The teaching of chemistry is good overall. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use this effectively in lessons, communicating their enthusiasm to the students. Lessons are well planned and carefully structured by the teachers. Teaching closely follows the detailed specification for this modular course and the students are well prepared for the examinations. Students are encouraged to make good notes, which they organise well. Teachers challenge students' understanding with appropriate questioning in class, and set structured questions for homework. A good range of practical activities is used but computers are rarely used in the classroom. Teachers have high expectations of their students, although this means that students do not always accomplish all that the teacher expects in a lesson. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students used good practical skills when investigating patterns in chemical properties of some hazardous substances. However, this took longer than anticipated, mainly because of the care taken by the students and their discussions of the reactions as they were seen. This left little time to review their conclusions during the lesson, but gave students time to reflect before discussion in the next lesson.
204. The good teaching motivates the students and learning is good. In a Year 12 lesson the teacher used the students' prior knowledge and some practical demonstrations of familiar reactions to build up their confidence. The students' abilities were then skilfully developed so that by the end of the lesson they all successfully wrote balanced equations for some complex chemical reactions. Students work co-operatively and constructively with their teachers and with each other. Relationships in lessons are very good so that when students experience difficulties, these are discussed and resolved in a very supportive way. Marking is thorough, with helpful and detailed comments showing how students can improve their work. Students act on this advice, making corrections and adding further notes leading to an improvement in the standards they achieve. They take some responsibility for their own learning. For example, they use the syllabus to check and monitor their own notes, when they produce presentations of chemical topics. However, in the lessons observed there were insufficient opportunities for students to develop these skills and they relied too much on the direct input of their teacher to improve their learning. All students have appropriate textbooks and are supported by well written additional worksheets. Students use their own home computers to produce work and support their studies by using the Internet.
205. Leadership in chemistry is good and there is a clear commitment to improvement. Teachers work well together. The course is well organised, and the scheme of work is being modified to a common framework. There is good support for practical work by technical staff and there is adequate apparatus, but the preparation area has no fume cupboard. Students' progress is assessed each half term and detailed reviews of students' performance are carried out after each module test to identify learning needs and strategies for improvement. Reports to parents are well written and informative. However, little use is made of prior attainment data at the beginning of the course to set targets for individual students. There are some links with local universities and teachers' centres and the teachers have attended some useful training courses. Capitation is used effectively, but is insufficient to fund major developments or the greater use of ICT in the department. Overall, however this is a successful subject.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subject in this area was a focus for the inspection.

BUSINESS

Business education

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

Strengths

- The head of department has very secure subject knowledge and plans lessons very well.
- Students have a positive attitude towards their learning.
- The head of department has a good rapport with the students and supports them very well.
- The good accommodation and resources and use of homework enhance learning.
- The encouraging results in the new economics and business A level examination in 2002.

Areas for improvement

- Greater consistency in standards at A and AS level.
- Students' learning will benefit from an increase in the links with local businesses.
- The re-introduction of vocational business related courses.
- Greater use of students' self-assessment, the setting of targets and monitoring of progress.

206. Advanced level results in economics in 2001 were well below the national average. These results were consistent with those achieved between 1998 and 2000. In 2002 however the results in the new economics and business advanced level course were very encouraging with nine students achieving well above that anticipated from their GCSE results. Five of these candidates obtained A/B grades.

207. Standards of work in the lessons observed are in line with national averages for both Years 12 and 13. Students in Year 12 have a good understanding of concepts, such as price and income, elasticity of demand, and use their knowledge in problem solving situations. Year 13 students dealt well with some challenging work involving data analysis for different countries, rates of inflation, economic growth and labour productivity. The students in both years are competent in using information and communication technology (ICT) and this has a positive effect on their learning. They are articulate and confident in expressing their ideas and understanding on paper and orally. The most able students apply their understanding of business and economic theory to real situations and draw intelligent conclusions. The written work observed is consistent with national standards with an equal number of above and below average students. There were some impressive pieces of work seen during the inspection. For example, in Year 13 good work was seen on 'the benefits and drawbacks of globalisation'. In Year 12 work on 'the effects of the Gulf War on the market for oil and petrol' was of a high quality.

208. Teaching was good overall and the students learn well as a result. The head of department who teaches all of the advanced work has very secure knowledge of the subject and plans lessons very well. The objectives of lessons are clearly shared with the students, and the Year 13 class that was observed were set challenging tasks. There is a good rapport with the students and individual needs are understood and

catered for. The development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are inherent in the planning and teaching of the curriculum. Similarly teaching makes an important contribution to citizenship and the students' moral and social education. Very good support was given to one special needs student in Year 12 which significantly aided his learning. No students with English as an additional language were observed. Overall the level of achievement of students, with respect to their abilities, was satisfactory and in some cases good. Boys and girls are equally successful. Learning would be further enhanced by the development of links with the business world and the re-introduction of the Young Enterprise scheme.

209. Meaningful and challenging homework assignments are set on a regular basis and constructively marked. This has a positive impact on the students' learning.
210. Students are attentive and work hard. Those in Year 13, in particular, expressed genuine interest in the subject and a number of them intend to study business or economics related courses in higher education. Whilst the students were not observed working in pairs or small groups there was evidence of effective independent study.
211. The head of department is well organised, conscientious and keen for his students to do well. Schemes of work are in place. There are effective systems for assessing and monitoring the students' work. In order to raise the standard of provision the recent introduction of self-assessment should be developed alongside target setting and the monitoring of students' progress. Likewise the priorities for development that have been established by the department should be supported through the school improvement plan.
212. There have been a number of improvements since the previous inspection. Accommodation is now good and resources have been increased and include a substantial number of computers in the teaching room. This has a positive impact upon the learning. The department has established its priorities for development, which include the re-introduction of the sixth form business related vocational courses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Students' attitudes and development of learning skills leading to good achievement.
- The excellent subject knowledge of the teachers involved in the course.
- The assessment procedures and the use made of assessment in supporting students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- The use of review sessions to reinforce learning.
- The improvement of resources available to students to support independent study.

213. The majority of students arrive with below average levels of attainment. They make good progress during the course, attaining results that are in line with the national average. The majority of students perform at a level that exceeds predictions when compared with their GCSE performance. Only one group of students has completed

the qualification which was introduced in 2000. The results quoted are compared with the unconfirmed national figures for 2002. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Students identified as having special educational needs are supported well by teachers. They attain at levels similar to other students or appropriate to their abilities.

214. Work seen in lessons as well as in students' folders for Year 12 and 13 students confirms that they make satisfactory progress. Support within the subject for students with special educational needs is good and ensures that they progress well. In conversation with students it is evident that they have a good grounding in the subject, being able to comment on the different aspects of their work, for example, when creating a web site. Students were able to speak confidently of the requirements of the end user and problems they had to overcome.
215. Year 13 students have made good use of the local community to support work on their project. They are fully aware of how well they have achieved and the likely grade they will gain. They are confident in their ability to find solutions that will meet users' needs, producing final solutions that combine the correct degree of complexity with ease of use to match the knowledge of the final user. The commitment of teachers is evident in the way in which they assist any students who have difficulty identifying potential businesses they can use for projects.
216. Students approach the subject in a purposeful way demonstrating good attitudes. They appreciate the very good staff support they receive in order to meet the requirements of the specification. Whether working individually or in groups, students are always co-operative. There is a readiness to help one another, discuss work and make contributions that will benefit others. All students have computer equipment at home, which enables them to complete assignments to meet the deadlines set by teachers.
217. Overall, teaching in the subject is very good. The staff have excellent subject knowledge. Teachers prepare very well making effective use of oral and written assessment. Teachers use the electronic based assessment system very effectively. Assessments are directly linked to the specification criteria. Students can access the information to help them to improve their work. Teachers use the information very effectively to develop further resources as well as analysing students' and teachers' performance. They have high expectations and manage students well. They do not have the benefit of interactive whiteboards, but are able to take over all computers for demonstration purposes. The good attitudes observed in the students are clearly linked to the enthusiasm teachers have for the subject. Sometimes the lesson structure does not provide for suitable summary and checking of learning. Teachers use time well, and through regular, individual discussions they ensure that students' needs are met.
218. The subject is very well led and managed. It is supported by experienced, well-qualified and committed staff who assist one another and the students effectively. The department has a limited number of textbooks and this restricts opportunities for individual investigative work. Students rely mainly on the resources developed by the teaching staff.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and Social Care

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is team approach to the planning and teaching of health and social care.
- The standards of attainment in the advanced and intermediate courses are improving.
- Teaching is good with very good subject knowledge shared effectively with students.
- The relationships between staff and students are very good, enabling students to gain in confidence and do well.
- Students' attitudes towards learning are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Access to a range of resource materials including information and communication technology (ICT) is limited. This restricts students' opportunities to work independently and develop a range of research techniques.

219. The AVCE and GNVQ courses in health and social care were inspected. Students are entered for the single and double award. The numbers of students opting for the advanced course is good with the majority continuing into Year 13 to gain the double award. Currently the number of students doing the GNVQ intermediate course is small but projected numbers for students intending to do the course are significantly higher.

220. Standards achieved in the AVCE course were in line with national averages in 2001 and above expectations in 2002. Students' coursework portfolios show good and very good knowledge and understanding of many aspects of health and social care. Students demonstrate how different national and local organisations inter-relate to support various sectors of the community. They are articulate and present good reasoned answers during discussion. This was demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson where students were able to put forward the 'pros' and 'cons' for complementary and orthodox medicine in a mature and reasoned way.

221. Standards in the GNVQ intermediate course are satisfactory. A small number of students achieve well when compared to their GCSE results. Students' ability to gather first hand information using questionnaires, interviews and visits are good. Collecting additional information using the Internet and books is satisfactory. However, students' ability to analyse the information and use it to make comparative judgements is underdeveloped, as is their use of technical language and extended writing.

222. Accommodation is cramped and access to a range of resources, including ICT, is limited. These issues hinder students' ability to develop a range of research techniques and work independently on their courses. This prevents some students attaining high standards.

223. Teaching seen was very good supported by thorough planning, good lesson organisation and very good subject knowledge shared effectively with students. Specialist teachers work very well as a team to plan and teach various aspects of the courses. Students' work is regularly marked and reviewed with helpful comments given for improvements. Students appreciate this support and are clear about how they are doing and what they need to do to gain higher marks. Teachers have good

relationships with the students. These, along with the positive attitudes students have towards the subject, create a very positive learning environment

224. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has put in place a number of strategies to promote and sustain improvements. There is a strong team approach to the management of the subject with staff supporting each other and the students. There is a clear vision for the future supported by a clear departmental improvement plan that identifies the priorities and recognises the strengths and areas for development.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subject for this area was art and design.

Work in music was sampled and one lesson was observed in Year 12. The provision is good. Particularly high standards of instrumental performance were heard. Examination results are commensurate with the skills and understanding of the small numbers of students involved. The teaching and learning are good.

It was not possible to observe any advanced level physical education lessons during the inspection. However written work was examined and discussions took place with the students and their teacher. There is clear evidence that advanced level work is a real strength of the department and that teaching and learning are very good. Results achieved in 2002 were well above the national average and show significant improvements by the students.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- AS/A Level results are above the national average.
- Teaching is consistently good and helps students reach their full potential.
- The relationships between students and their interaction with their teachers is very good.
- The majority of students maintain interest and involvement through their AS Level course, and the majority convert to A Level.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to improve grades, with special attention to the higher grades, (A/B) which are currently lower than the national average.

225. The standard of achievement in art and design at AS/A level has improved since the last inspection. Standards are now above the national average with students achieving well and making good progress. The AS and A level course provide very good opportunities for all. Numbers are increasing and students with lower GCSE results and students who have not followed a GCSE course in art and design are accepted provided they show aptitude and commitment. There are no significant differences in attainment between genders.

226. In Year 12 students develop their painting and drawing skills from their GCSE course. They translate these to the advanced level work showing a greater depth and understanding as well as using a wide range of media. Students draw from

observation with accuracy, sensitivity and quality of line. Sketchbooks demonstrate a wealth of research and experimentation that is transferred into final projects. Students are developing styles in their application of media and are influenced by a wide range of artists including Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Rousseau. Work in folios in both Years 12 and 13 are of a high quality, showing development of ideas and a good understanding of design principles and composition.

227. The quality of teaching is constantly good. The majority of teaching is one to one within small groups. Teaching is conducted with a sensitivity to the way individuals work. Staff give good advice and support suggesting ways forward and helping students to reach conclusions to form their own ideas and research. Students are encouraged to visit museums and art galleries and to make good use of information and communication technology when looking for information on their chosen artists. Teachers have a challenging and inspiring approach. They know the strengths and the weaknesses of individual students, they monitor progress and achievements regularly. They ensure students know what they need to do to improve.
228. Students respond very positively to the high quality help given. They use their time well and value the sixth form area within the department. They show independence and maturity in their approach. Students remain motivated throughout their course. They work well together, discuss work in groups and benefit from challenging targets and activities, which are relevant to course requirements.
229. The leadership and management of the department are good. Staff are well deployed and ensure that quality time is spent with individuals. The focus on the individual needs of each student contributes greatly to the good provision within the department and to the high levels of achievement.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography but history was sampled. In history the provision is good. Standards are above the national average at advanced level as a result of consistently good teaching. Relationships between staff and students are very positive. As a result, students completing both the advanced level and AS course achieve good results based on their GCSE performance.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Fieldwork makes a very positive contribution to students' learning.
- The assessment of students' work is informative and challenging.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient learning resources, especially textbooks.

230. Results in the 2002 A level examination at the end of Year 13 were above average, particularly at the higher grades. There has been a steady improvement in standards over recent years and results are amongst the highest in the sixth form. Most students taking the AS examinations in Year 12 have been equally successful and complete the

full two years of study. The department welcomes students with a wide range of attainment when they begin in Year 12. Although present numbers are small, the subject's popularity is growing. There is no significant difference over time in the performance of girls compared with boys.

231. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall. Achievement throughout the course is good. When teaching is very good, students make very rapid progress in their learning. For example, in a lesson on the impact of flooding on river regimes, activities were carefully planned to enable students to apply their learning to different situations and to discuss their ideas with each other. Fieldwork undertaken earlier had given students first hand experience of drainage basins and deepened their understanding of the many interacting forces at work. They were able to apply this learning very successfully in the lesson.
232. Teachers support and encourage students as they come to terms with the quality and quantity of work required at Advanced level. Most students respond very well to these demands although a minority of Year 12 students find the necessary level of commitment difficult to sustain. Students make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a means of developing independent learning. For example, they compare different meteorological websites and research political separatism. They do not have access to a wide range of different texts, however, and they use the library infrequently. Constant practice in constructing accurate essays and answering examination questions enables students to improve their written answers. Through the use of marking which indicates the standards achieved and how to reach higher levels of response, they see exactly how to improve their work. Opportunities to evaluate the quality of their own work also help them to improve. They cope well with the practical tasks that are woven into the units of work. A wide range of carefully planned fieldwork activities enables students to apply these skills to real situations.
233. Discussion with students revealed that they were unanimous in enjoying and acknowledging the benefits of fieldwork opportunities. They value the high level of support they receive both in and outside lessons which enhances their learning. They have very good relationships with their teachers and appreciate the range of teaching styles. One student who arrived after the start of the course in Year 12 particularly appreciated this helpful approach. Some students who find the subject more difficult respond better to concise tasks than to instructions to read around topics from large quantities of photocopied material.
234. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and wide experience of the changing demands of the Advanced level examination. Expectations are high. All the lessons observed were well planned to include a considerable degree of participation from students. This occurred through individual Powerpoint presentations and by group discussion and analysis. The planned integration of other key skills, for example those aimed at improving performance and communication, also raises students' overall achievement.
235. The leadership and management of geography in the sixth form are good. The modular nature of the course allows teachers and students to work together in order to track progress. They are able to see where improvements are needed and to predict likely final grades.

PSYCHOLOGY

Overall, the provision for psychology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are high and well above average by the end of Year 13.
- Students make very good progress and achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent.
- Planning and the preparation of resources to support students' learning are very good.
- Students' work is thoroughly assessed so that they know their strengths and what they need to do to improve.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and show a very strong commitment to the subject. The course is very popular.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation and resources, in particular for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are unsatisfactory.
- Due to the rapidly increasing numbers, the number of teachers allocated to teach the subject is insufficient.

236. Overall, students attain above average standards by the end of Year 12 and well above average standards by the end of Year 13. In both years they learn and achieve very well. They are keen, enthusiastic and highly motivated learners and apply themselves readily to their tasks. In the 2001 examinations students in Year 12 obtained above average standards and in Year 13 well above average standards. These standards were maintained in the recent 2002 examinations. Most students are very successful when given opportunities to re-take examinations to improve their grades. For example, some students improve their grade by as many as three grades with some lifting their grade from a D to an A grade.

237. In Year 12, students show a very good awareness of the main authorities that have written on developmental psychology. These include individual differences, disorders and the influence nature and nurture have on our up bringing and the way we function. In a Year 12 lesson students discussed, with high levels of understanding, how the hemispheres of the brain influence our functions and the consequences of brain damage. Their awareness is greatly heightened by the very good range of illustrations and supportive resources the teachers provide.

238. In Year 13, students achieve well in relation to predictions based on their AS results. In lessons, they are highly motivated to do well and work effectively in pairs or larger groups to complete taxing and challenging tasks. They show a very good awareness and application of their readings of published studies in psychology. This supports their well-reasoned oral contributions and written work, which is very well presented and of a high standard. Social and moral concerns are very well expressed demonstrating a good awareness of citizenship.

239. Teaching is very good overall and sometimes excellent. The two teachers both have very high expectations of what the students can achieve. They plan very well, use excellent teaching methods and use good assessment strategies. Well-prepared resources aid the students' learning and are supported with a very good analysis of how students can improve their standards. Relationships are excellent, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and opportunities are provided to develop the students' independent learning skills.

240. Students respond very positively to the high quality help they receive. They use their time very well, showing independence and maturity in their approach. They demonstrate very high levels of enthusiasm and motivation to learn. Some students are already considering careers that involve psychology. When asked they all talk very highly of the teaching and support to further their psychological knowledge. Most students rate the course as one of the most popular and valuable courses in the sixth form. The headteacher and governors have not yet addressed the need to increase the number of teachers and the amount of teaching time to meet the increasing numbers of students.
241. There is no specialist room for the teaching of psychology, which affects students' opportunities to use the inter-active displays. The rooms used do not have access to ICT. Students have to book to use ICT in other areas of the school. This creates many problems as it is sometimes not easily accessible or is fully booked. The department has no software for ICT and resources are unsatisfactory. The leadership and management of the department are very good. At the time of the previous inspection the subject was just starting to be taught and the inspection report did not comment on standards.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was English. No other communications subject was sampled.

English

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

Strengths

- The standards attained at Advanced level are above average.
- Students progress well because of the good teaching.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject are a significant contributory factor in how well they learn.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of confidence of many students to attain at the highest level.

242. English is a popular subject and increasing numbers of students, including male students, are choosing to study it in the sixth form. Results in the 2001 Advanced level examinations were above average for both the male and female students. All students obtained a grade and over half gained an A or B grade. Similar standards had been obtained in the previous year and the trend is an improvement on what was being attained at the time of the previous inspection. Achievement in 2001 in terms of progress over time has been good. The 2002 entry was very small indeed and therefore comparisons with 2001 are not valid. Students' performance at AS level in 2001 and 2002 was in line with expectations. They made good progress in adapting to the demands of sixth form study. Students normally carry on into Year 13, which is a good indicator of students' positive attitudes to the subject.
243. The above average standard of work seen during the course of the inspection reflects students' levels of attainment in the Advanced level examinations. Levels of achievement are therefore good. All students have good analytical skills and in Year 12 they are confident in putting forward their own views on what they read and supporting them with textual references. This was exemplified in a lesson on Philip

Larkin's poetry where students displayed a mature understanding of the writer's treatment of time and its impact on people's lives. Their knowledge of the context in which the poetry was set was impressive because their independent study skills enabled them to research the background to the writing. By Year 13 students have further refined those skills and are using critical works in addition to research material to help shape their judgements. They make good use of the language of literary criticism and understand the context in which writers work. The standard of students' extended writing is above average because it is well structured, analytical and informed by detailed textual knowledge. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good because the teachers get across their own enthusiasm for the subject and convey their respect for the young men and women before them. Students work with effort and concentration and they make effective use of their own time for private study and extended reading.

244. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They also know their students well, having taught many of them when they were in main school. They therefore plan to meet individual needs and target the support they give in lessons to help the least competent and challenge the able. This approach is having an impact on raising students' confidence and encouraging them to believe in their ability to achieve well. Teachers have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the examination board and so discipline their students to write concisely. Lesson planning is very good and consequently there is pace and rigour in the teaching. Teachers offer guidance outside of lessons and this inclusive approach contributes significantly to the rising standards. Students speak highly of the support they receive and appreciate the provision made to extend their enjoyment and understanding of the subject outside of taught time.
245. The leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are good. There are appropriate systems in place to monitor students' performance and teachers' work closely together to ensure that best practice is shared. They meet regularly on a formal basis to discuss ways of improving their teaching and students' learning and are looking to develop less experienced colleagues as sixth form teachers. Standards have improved since the previous inspection, as have the numbers of students who carry on from Year 12 to Year 13. The head of department has a clear vision of how the subject will develop. Currently planning is in place to take account of the high level of interest shown by Year 11 students in studying English post-16. There is the capacity to improve on the already good provision.