

ERRATUM

West Derby School

Inspection Number 251943

Unique reference number 104687

Paragraph 159 - Please delete the fourth sentence.

The paragraph should read as follows

159. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average and similar to 2001. Overall, boys did not achieve as well as expected in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. The number of boys entered for GCSE and gaining grades A*-G has increased substantially since the previous inspection, whilst the proportion of boys awarded the higher grades A*-C has declined slightly. Boys' results in design and technology were not as good as in their other GCSE examinations.

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST DERBY SCHOOL

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104687

Headteacher: Mrs. M. Rannard

Reporting inspector: Mr. A. A. Henderson
2941

Dates of inspection: 27th – 31st January 2003

Inspection number: 251943

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:	Male
School address:	West Derby School Quarry Road West Derby Liverpool
Postcode:	L13 7DB
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Lionel Bivon
Date of previous inspection:	15 th – 19 th May 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2941	A A Henderson	Registered inspector		How high are standards? The school's results and achievements? How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
11457	J Beattie	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and pupils?
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English	
18676	R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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31680	P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design	
11966	J Clay	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23926	D Howorth	Team inspector	GG	Sixth form coordinator
19452	A Pearson	Team inspector	History	
27803	J Clark	Team inspector	ICT	How well is the school led and managed?
23709	A Powell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French	
27665	T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music Drama English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
19295	P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education Business education	
3930	R Pitcher	Team inspector	Religious education	
12825	N Carr	Team inspector	Economics	
15678	J Radford	Team inspector	Media Studies	
4193	C Radley	Team inspector	Special educational needs Citizenship	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

West Derby School is a comprehensive school for boys aged 11–18. It is larger than average, occupies two sites about half a mile apart, and is popular and over-subscribed. There are 1410 boys on roll, including 146 students in the sixth form. Boys are drawn from a wide area of Liverpool, with the majority from six designated feeder primary schools. The annual intake of boys to Year 7 comprises a broad social mix, and the school serves a diverse area which includes some social affluence and considerable social deprivation. Attainment on entry is well below average. The proportion of boys on the register for special educational needs is above average, although there are fewer than usual with formal statements. Most have learning difficulties, including specific problems such as dyslexia, but a considerable number have emotional and behavioural problems. Few boys are from ethnic minority backgrounds, with very few for whom English is not the spoken language in the home. The proportion of boys entitled to a free school meal is well above average. Since the previous inspection when it was judged to have serious weaknesses, the school has benefited from additional funding which recognises its challenging circumstances, in particular through the Social Inclusion and Excellence in Cities initiatives. It is working closely with other schools and agencies in a concerted effort to improve standards; this has not been helped by difficulties experienced in recruiting and retaining teachers, with 10 per cent of teaching posts at present filled by temporary teachers.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

West Derby School is well-ordered, and is providing a satisfactory education for its boys. They make appropriate progress as they move through the school in response to satisfactory teaching. Standards are below average, but, given their low starting points, boys' achievements are satisfactory. Compared with schools in similar circumstances, results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average, and GCSE results are average. The new headteacher is providing a clear agenda and momentum for improvement, and the developing strengths of the school outweigh some key areas for improvement. Overall, leadership and management has improved and, in a short time, is having a positive impact on standards. The school gives satisfactory value for money. It is efficient, and the sixth form is cost-effective.

What the school does well

- Teaching, learning and boys' progress are very good in Years 7-9 in English and modern foreign languages.
- GCSE results for A*-G grades have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Provision for media studies is very good.
- Careers guidance and arrangements for work experience are very good.
- Sixth form provision is a good feature.
- Procedures for pastoral support and checking boys' progress are good.

What could be improved

- Teaching and standards in ICT, and the wider use of ICT in subjects.
- Provision for religious education in Years 10-11, and in the sixth form.
- GCSE results could be improved in a number of subjects, for example, mathematics, science and design and technology.
- Attendance is poor, and is slowing progress and attainment for some boys in Years 10 and 11.
- Accommodation weaknesses, for example, in music, science, drama, physical education and the library, are affecting standards.
- Opportunities for independent learning and research, especially in the sixth form.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection in 2000 judged the school to have serious weaknesses. This is no longer the case. Improvements have been made quickly, and sufficient progress has been made in providing an acceptable standard of education. Although standards are still below the national average, the school now has higher expectations of its pupils. Standards have improved in Years 7-9, GCSE results for A*-G grades are significantly higher, and A-level results have been sustained, despite considerable staffing problems which have disrupted continuity in learning for some boys. Teaching now is better than previous examination results would suggest, although not yet consistent enough. Poor attendance remains a concern, and is holding back standards for some boys. Progress in tackling the key issues raised by the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. Assessment procedures have been developed well. The curriculum has improved, but still does not meet requirements for ICT, design and technology and religious education. Accommodation has been notably improved, although substantial weaknesses remain. Importantly, the school's management has improved and is now more purposeful. Following a traumatic period after the previous inspection, it is now emerging as a unified establishment with a clear agenda for improving standards. Governors are now actively developing their role in managing the school's performance, and their evolving partnership with the recently appointed headteacher underlines their commitment to continue to improve further. The positive influence of the new headteacher, places the school in a good position to consolidate and accelerate improvement as it enters its next stage of

development.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by boys 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	E	E	E	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	n/a	

Key

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

Years 7, 8, 9

Results in National Curriculum tests for boys aged 14 in 2002 were well below average overall, but were well above average when compared with the results of schools in similar circumstances. Results in English were average, although for both mathematics and science they were well below expected levels. Since the previous inspection, improvement in the overall test results has matched the national rate due mainly to the significantly improving results in English. The standards of work seen in Years 7-9 during this inspection are below average overall, but represent satisfactory achievement for the boys concerned because their attainments are low when they join the school in Year 7. Standards are average in English, modern foreign languages and physical education. They are below average in other subjects, except in ICT and music where standards are well below average.

Years 10,11

In 2002, GCSE results improved significantly but did not meet the school's targets. Overall, they were well below the national average. However, when compared with results of schools in similar circumstances, the school's performance was average overall, and well above average for those boys gaining five or more passes across the full range of A*-G grades. The school's GCSE results are improving more quickly than the national rate. Subject performance varies considerably. In 2002, results were above average in business studies, and close to average in ICT. Art, geography, history and English literature were below average, whilst the results in other subjects were well below. More boys are now entered for GCSE, and this improved entry policy is a good feature. Standards in work seen in Years 10 and 11 are below average overall, and boys are achieving satisfactorily. The variation between subjects is clear: standards are average in art, geography, media studies, music and physical education. They are below average elsewhere. In ICT standards are well below average and boys are underachieving. There is also underachievement in mathematics, and lack of provision for religious education at this stage.

Sixth form

The A-level results have been below the national average for some years. Results improved slightly in 2002, when almost nine-tenths of students successfully passed their examinations, including one-fifth gaining the higher A-B grades. The most successful were media studies and geography, whilst results were not as strong in mathematics, ICT, art and biology. Standards in work seen during the inspection are below average overall, but stronger than previous examination results indicate. The strongest subject is media studies, whilst art, modern foreign languages, history, business studies and economics are also performing well. There is room for improvement in mathematics, the science subjects, ICT, and design and technology. Standards in the sixth form represent good achievement by the students, many of whom have relatively modest GCSE results when they enter the sixth form. In spite of weaknesses in the study facilities available in the school, a good proportion of students successfully complete their courses and continue to the higher education courses of their choice.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most boys like school and are keen to learn. A minority are less positive and do not value the opportunities provided by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Behaviour in class and around school is satisfactory, although some boys can be disruptive. Exclusion rate is above average, and short-term suspension rates are higher than usual, reflecting a determination to ensure a safe, orderly school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. For the vast majority, relationships are good and boys generally get on well together, and with their teachers.
Attendance	Poor. Attendance is well below average and unauthorised absence is high.

	A significant minority of boys in Years 9, 10 and 11 arrive late to school.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in Years 7-11, and is securing better standards now than previous test and examination results would suggest. Teaching and learning in English are very good in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11, whilst in both mathematics and science they are satisfactory across the school. Boys with special educational needs are taught effectively enabling them to make satisfactory progress. Elsewhere, the best teaching is in modern foreign languages in Years 7-9 where boys make very good progress, and in media studies in Years 10-11 where achievement is very good also. However, both teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in ICT across the school.

In general, teaching is effective in meeting the boys' learning needs. The strengths of teaching are good subject knowledge and diligent planning. Examples of good or better teaching feature in most subjects and, in these lessons, boys are well motivated and make good progress. The large majority respond very well and are engaged in their work when teaching is good. However, where teaching is less secure, some boys are quick to take advantage of this and both their concentration and behaviour slip and interrupt progress and learning in those lessons.

A number of lessons, just over eight per cent of those seen in Years 7-11, were unsatisfactory, mainly in Years 7-9, in ICT, design and technology, science, mathematics, modern foreign languages, art and music. In many cases, this was because of a general lack of progress caused by the disruptive behaviour of some boys, sometimes as a result of work which was not well matched to the range of ability within classes.

The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are effective. Where they are used well they are helping to improve boys' basic skills and progress, but strategies require consistent application in all subjects to help raise standards.

The school has experienced considerable difficulty in providing suitable temporary teachers to cover vacancies caused by staff absence or resignation. This lack of stability in teaching has affected continuity of learning and progress in a number of subjects, and accounts for some of the unsatisfactory lessons seen. The unsatisfactory teaching and learning in ICT across the school is an outcome of this problem. The school acknowledges this, and is actively seeking to resolve this weakness.

Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good, and is resulting in the good progress made by students. They are achieving well because of this, and because they grow in confidence with the support and guidance provided by teachers. They apply themselves well to their studies and show a determination to succeed. Teaching particularly is very good in media studies.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum is broad and provides good opportunities for boys of different aptitudes and abilities. Vocational provision is a strength in Years 10 and 11, and there is a good range of courses available in the sixth form. Careers guidance is very good. However, provision for ICT and religious education are unsatisfactory. National Curriculum requirements are not met for design and technology, ICT and religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. The school is committed to helping boys to achieve their potential, but there is insufficient coordination between the special educational needs and subject departments.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	At the time of the inspection no boys or students in the sixth form who have English as an additional language were at an early stage of acquiring the language. The school is well informed about procedures which will support the needs of any future pupil or student in this respect.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The school provides well for boys' and students' moral and social development. Provision for cultural development has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The arrangements for ensuring boys' health, safety and welfare are satisfactory. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Those for attendance are satisfactory, but require sharpening. The tracking of boys' academic progress is good.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Management and leadership are satisfactory overall, and have improved since the previous inspection. The new headteacher is working effectively with senior staff in setting an agenda for raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. Governors are conscientious and committed to the well-being of the school. They are now better informed, are working positively with the school's senior management, and have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, statutory requirements are not in place for the curriculum (ICT, design and technology, religious education), or for the provision of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. Regular review of test and examination results is in place. Subject performance is monitored effectively, the monitoring of teaching is satisfactory but requires a more systematic approach. The school compares its performance with that of others, nationally and locally. Strategic planning requires improvement to ensure improved outcomes.
The strategic use of resources	Financial management is good, and principles of best value are applied. Specific grants are properly used. Whilst spending is linked to school priorities, a wider strategic view in planning the budget is needed. Staffing and resources are adequate. Despite improvements, accommodation is unsatisfactory.

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 like school. • Boys make good progress and are helped to become mature and responsible. • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem. • The school expects boys to work hard and do their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority of parents do not think that behaviour in school is good. • Some parents do not think that their child gets the right amount of homework to do. • Some parents do not think that they are well informed about how their child is getting on. • A minority of parents say that the school does not provide an interesting range of extra-curricular activities.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views, although they feel progress to be satisfactory rather than good. They do not agree that behaviour overall is unsatisfactory. They found occasional incidents of poor behaviour, but in the large majority of lessons and during break and lunchtime, behaviour was satisfactory and often good. Inspectors find that the quantity and quality of homework is satisfactory although in Years 9-11 the quantity provided by some subjects is uneven. Inspectors have found that satisfactory opportunities are available for parents to gain information about how their children are getting on. Form tutors and Heads of Year are always willing to meet parents to discuss their children's progress. The opportunities for parents to attend consultation evenings are satisfactory, and similar to those found in most schools. Inspectors have found a satisfactory range of extra-curricular opportunities which are well-supported, especially at the Bankfield site. The range is less extensive, but still satisfactory at the Quarry road site, and the school has plans to increase the provision.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

This predominantly male sixth form is non-selective and some students taking advanced subjects would not have this opportunity in many sixth forms. With 146 students on roll, only three of whom are females, it is of an average size. There are six students from ethnic minority backgrounds, including one asylum seeker, who speak and write English well. Five students have special educational needs but only one has a statement. There is a good range of traditional subjects at AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A2 (Advanced) level and three General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses at intermediate level. About a third of boys in Year 11 continue their education in the sixth form and very few students join from other schools. Standards at the start of Year 12 are well below average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides an effective standard of education for its students and it has some good features. Although standards and results are below average, students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results because good teaching ensures they learn well. Leadership and management are good. As a result the sixth form is successful and cost-effective. Over half of students move into further and higher education and in the last five years three students have gained admission to Oxford and Cambridge colleges.

Strengths

- Results, standards and achievement are highest in media studies.
- Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Advice support and guidance are very good and have a positive impact on personal development.
- Students have good attitudes and very good relationships with staff that contribute to their good progress.
- The provision is an effective pathway along which students of all aptitudes complete their courses and move into higher education or employment.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics, sciences, ICT and design and technology are not high enough.
- The facilities for independent research in private study time are not adequate.
- The time allocation for advanced level study is below that usually found, and is too low.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards are below average. Positive relationships and teachers' subject expertise enable most students to achieve satisfactorily. Teaching methods are narrow, with too little written work or use of ICT. The time for teaching is low.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Standards are below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although limited by insufficient independent learning and use of ICT. The time allocation for lessons is below that usually given to advanced courses.
Business studies	Good. Standards are average. Most students achieve well because of good teaching and their positive attitudes to work. The facilities for independent work are not adequate.
Economics	Good. A2 examination results were well above average in 2001. Present standards are average and students achieve well in response to good

	teaching and learning.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Art and design	Good. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts independent work outside lesson time.
Media studies	Very good. Students achieve very well because of very good teaching and their enthusiasm for the subject. They have excellent opportunities for gaining practical experience.
History	Good. Teaching and learning are good overall. Recent results have been below average but standards are now average and students achieve well. The time allocation for teaching is low.
English language and literature	Good. Standards are close to average. Very good attitudes and good teaching help students to achieve well. Some middle and lower attainers need to improve their essay writing techniques.
French	Satisfactory. Results at AS level improved significantly in 2002. Students have good attitudes and progress is satisfactory. Standards in Year 13 are average. Speaking and listening skills require improvement. More opportunities are needed for independent learning, including the use of ICT. The time for teaching is low.

In 10 other subjects 12 lessons were seen. Teaching was very good in geography, and government and politics. It was good in biology, physical education, physics, GNVQ art and design and GNVQ media studies. It was satisfactory in design and technology, ICT and GNVQ business.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Advice, support and guidance are very good. Assessment and procedures for checking students' academic progress and personal development are very effective.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The leadership of the sixth form is good. The vision is that nothing is too good for these students. The very positive encouragement given to all of them, regardless of aptitude and background, raises their self-esteem and aspirations.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They think that they are well taught. They feel that the wide range of courses and subjects meets their needs. They value good relationships with their teachers. They appreciate the quality of advice, support and guidance. They believe the school responds well to individual needs. 	<p>A minority of students expressed concern about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The facilities for sport and recreation. The use of ICT to support learning in lessons. The limited facilities for private study. Advice for gaining employment. The small range of enrichment activities.

Overall, students are supportive of the sixth form. Inspectors feel that students' positive views are justified. They agree with what students feel could be improved, with the exception of careers advice which is good.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When boys join the school at the beginning of Year 7 their overall standards of attainment are well below those expected for a typical comprehensive school. Results in 2002 in the national tests taken at age 11 show that the proportion of boys reaching expected levels in English, mathematics and science is significantly below the national average. The intake includes a wide range of ability, but there are few who are well above average when they join the school. This is confirmed by standardised tests administered by the school in Year 7 which show that the results of the current school population are well below average overall. These test results show some fluctuation from year to year, with the present Year 7 having a stronger profile and the present Year 10 the weakest. This is also reflected in the reading ages – over twenty per cent of boys in Year 10 joined with reading ages that were 2 or more years below their school age, whilst for the present Year 7 this proportion is sixteen per cent.

2. In 2002, the overall results in the National Curriculum tests taken by boys aged 14 were well below average for all schools. Performance in English was average, but was well below average in mathematics and science. Since the previous inspection, the school's rate of improvement has been similar to the national trend, due mainly to the significantly improving results in English. When performance is compared with that of schools in similar circumstances (that is, schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals), overall results in 2002 were well above average; the results in English were well above average, in science were above average, and in mathematics were average.

3. Results in GCSE examinations have been well below the national average over the past five years, but are improving more quickly than the national trend, with marked improvement in A*-G grades. In 2002, the results improved significantly from the previous year, although the average GCSE points score per boy was well below the national average, as was the proportion gaining five or more passes at the higher A*-C grades. However, the results across the full A*-G range were in line with the national average, and significantly higher than at the previous inspection. Compared with similar schools, (again using free school meals), the average points score and higher A*-C grade results are average, whilst the proportion gaining five or more A*-G grades was well above average. This indicates that whilst the performance of the lower attaining boys is good, those of higher attainment are not doing quite as well. Overall, although results have improved, the school has fallen short of its targets for the higher A*-C grades and average points score, whilst exceeding its expectations for A*-G grades.

4. GCSE results in subjects for 2002 vary considerably for grades A*-C. They were above average in business studies, and were close to average in ICT. Results in art, geography, history and English literature were below average, whilst for all other subjects they were well below. A high proportion are now entered for GCSE, and this positive entry policy is an improvement, and a good feature which ensures opportunity for examination success for many boys. Comparison of their 2002 results indicate that boys did better in media studies, art, English and business studies than in their other examination subjects. Their least successful subjects were mathematics, science and design and technology. Despite achieving close to average results, boys also did less well in ICT compared with their performance in their other subjects.

5. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards are below average. In Years 7-9, standards are average in English, modern foreign languages and physical education. Other subjects are below average, with the exception of ICT and music where boys' work is well below average. In Years 10-11, the standards in work seen are below average overall. At this stage, standards in geography, art, media studies, music and physical education are average. They are below average elsewhere, although work in ICT continues to be well below average.

6. Overall, boys' progress and achievement are satisfactory as they move through the school. Given their well below average starting points, boys are making satisfactory progress in Years 7-9. Progress is particularly good in English and modern foreign languages, and is in response to very good teaching and high expectations. Boys are also achieving well at this stage in geography, art and physical education. However, weaknesses in provision for the subject result in their unsatisfactory progress in ICT. In Years 10 and 11, progress is more variable. Boys are generally achieving well in English, history, geography, art and

music. Weaknesses remain in ICT for all boys at this stage, and they are also underachieving in mathematics. However, whilst the overall picture is satisfactory, there is some inconsistency in achievement between subjects which is directly linked to the quality of teaching, and sometimes, as in ICT, to the availability of specialist teaching. For a number of boys at this stage, their achievement and progress is also slowed by their unsatisfactory attitudes and poor attendance.

7. The school sets overall targets for improving GCSE results, based on predictions for each boy which are based on their prior attainments in Year 6 and Year 9. Most subjects are improving their use of this data in their planning, and are developing strategies for improvement and for tracking boys' progress. The developing work with gifted and talented boys is an important element in this work. Whilst school targets have not been universally met, the generally stronger standards in work seen indicate the growing influence of this work. The variable GCSE performance, and the varying standards seen in subjects illustrate the importance in consolidating this work to present more challenge to boys, and to ensure the progress made so far is reflected in future examination results.

8. Most boys with special educational needs attain appropriate standards. Their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Lesson observations and scrutiny of boys' work indicate that, at both key stages, they now make satisfactory progress, an improvement since the last inspection. In Year 11, many of these boys achieve grades at GCSE level. In other years, boys make good progress in English, art, and geography, and at least satisfactory progress in other subjects, except ICT.

9. Year 6 test results show boys enter the school with well below average standards in literacy, especially writing. They make good progress and standards improve to average by Year 9. Reading standards are weaker than their other skills, but they make very good progress in the management, accuracy and organisation of their writing because of effective teaching and learning strategies in English, and a growing awareness of how to develop extended writing in other subjects. The range and accurate use of vocabulary also improves because of a regular focus on key terms, concepts and meanings in other subjects. The writing of lower attaining boys in Year 8 is showing increasing assuredness. Literacy standards in Year 11 are below average because these boys have not benefited from the positive teaching and learning strategies that have developed in English. Their standards, however, represent satisfactory achievement given their attainment on entry.

10. Numeracy standards are also close to average and are improving in response to the national initiative. Arithmetical skills show significant improvement and are supporting learning effectively in coping with their mathematical demands in subjects. Data handling, graphical construction and measurement skills support learning well in geography, history, and design and technology, whilst in science, boys make accurate calculations and handle formulae well.

11. Boys' skills in the use and application of ICT are well below average. Given their starting points when they join the school, their progress is unsatisfactory. At present, there are no specialist teachers and this, together with the large proportion of temporary and supply teachers, is resulting in underachievement. The use of ICT in subjects to enhance learning is unsatisfactory. Most subjects plan to use ICT, with notable success in media studies, and to a lesser extent in art and design and technology. Elsewhere, although improved since the last inspection, the contribution by subjects is insufficient to meet requirements in developing boys' ICT capabilities across the curriculum.

Sixth form

12. A-level results were below average in 2001 and improved slightly in 2002. The best results in 2002 were in geography and media studies. The lowest were in art and design, biology, design and technology, ICT and mathematics. The most significant improvement was in the failure rate per subject entry that has reduced by just over half. The advanced subsidiary (AS) results were below average in 2001 and declined further in 2002. The GNVQ Intermediate level results improved significantly in 2002 and 80 per cent of students achieved the qualification but few gained merits or distinctions.

13. Attainment at the start of the sixth form is well below average. Given this starting point, standards improve and students achieve more than expected in relation to their GCSE results. Learning is, therefore, effective and students' achievement is good overall. A considerable number of students would not be given the opportunity to take advanced courses in many sixth forms.

14. Students with learning difficulties and those from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve well. For example, students from a number of other countries, who have made good progress learning English, settle quickly to advanced courses and make good progress. The very small numbers of females are made welcome, integrated successfully and make good progress.

15. Course completion rates are high and almost two thirds of students move into higher education. Three students have gained admission to Oxford and Cambridge colleges in the last five years.

16. Current standards were evaluated during lessons and in an analysis of students' work. Although overall standards are below the national average, students are achieving well in response to good teaching and their positive attitudes to their learning. In the nine focus subjects inspected, standards in media studies are above average. They are average in art, French, economics, history, business studies, and close to average in English. At present, standards in mathematics and chemistry are below average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Overall, boys' attitudes to school are satisfactory. The large majority of parents who completed the questionnaire say that their children like school. In most lessons their attitudes were satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. In the lessons where boys showed very good attitudes they gave their undivided attention to their work and were able to work together in groups without direct supervision. In media studies, for example, all boys worked steadily on their projects, aware of the need to work to deadlines. Their very good attitudes enabled them to learn how to plan, design, edit and experiment with different aspects of media production. They evaluated and re-drafted their work so that they made very good progress and took pride in the finished product. In the Bankfield wing boys take an enthusiastic interest in the extra-curricular activities on offer. During the lunch hour 25 boys in the Chess club played their round matches of the British U.K. Chess challenge in an atmosphere of quiet concentration and some of them progress to take further tuition and join clubs out of school.

18. A minority of boys have unsatisfactory attitudes to school. Their attitudes were unsatisfactory in a few lessons where the teachers did not provide work which was well matched to their needs, or did not respond quickly enough to incidents of challenging behaviour. Boys in Years 7 and 8 generally, with a few exceptions, show good attitudes to school. They are interested and involved in everything the school has to offer including the range of extra-curricular activities provided at lunchtime and after school. In Year 9, 10 and 11, boys show good attitudes in lessons where the teaching is good and, generally, are interested in the extra-curricular opportunities which are available, particularly ICT. A good number (135) have decided to continue their studies in the sixth form next year.

19. Some parents have expressed concerns about behaviour in school. Overall behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and about the school and the adjacent areas. Isolated incidents of aggressive or disruptive behaviour at lunchtime result in a swift response from the staff. In a few lessons incidents of disruptive and unruly behaviour prevent boys in the class from making their best progress. In the last whole school year 142 boys were excluded, some more than once totalling 225 exclusions. Four were excluded permanently. So far this year the school has had 68 exclusions; two of these were excluded permanently. The large majority of exclusions this year were from Years 9 and 10. Exclusion is the culmination of the rigorous application of the policy to promote good behaviour. The school takes a robust stance against bullying. Boys say that they know that any incident must be reported and the majority are confident and secure. The school is aware that a number of incidents occur and they take action to deal with any problems raised by boys or parents.

20. Relationships between the large majority of teachers and boys are good and most boys work and socialise well with each other. The school always expects that all staff have good relationships with boys and takes seriously the concerns of a few parents who have said that, on occasions, these standards may not have always been maintained. Boys respect the values and beliefs of others. Very occasional incidents of the use of racist language are dealt with firmly and do not become a recurring problem. Boys develop good relationships with their form tutors and year heads as they progress through school. Senior teachers support classes where teachers are new or temporary so that boys and teachers can maintain good relationships. The majority of boys are able to take charge of their own behaviour and are aware of the

impact of what they do on others.

21. The school has satisfactory procedures to encourage boys to take responsibilities outside the classroom. Those in Years 7 and 8 can represent the school by welcoming visitors to open days and parents' evenings. Year 10 boys can volunteer for a day of experience of school life off the timetable helping with clerical, administrative and reception duties. Prefects are elected by their peers in Years 8 and 11, and all year groups elect representatives to the school council. There are good plans to involve the council more in decisions and increase opportunities for responsibility.

22. Overall attendance is poor. Attendance during the last year was 89 per cent, well below the national median of 91 per cent and unauthorised absence was 2.8 per cent, well above the national median of 1.2 per cent. Last year the school's attendance figures ranked 19th out of 40 Liverpool schools and for unauthorised absence the school ranked 30th out of 40.

23. Last term, overall attendance for the school was 87 per cent and this term, so far, is 84 per cent. Attendance in Year 8 was satisfactory and it was good in Year 7. In Years 9, 10 and 11 it was unsatisfactory. Punctuality is also a cause for concern in these years. Registers at the beginning of each half-day session are called promptly and recorded correctly. The school requires an explanation for absence and the attendance officer makes first day telephone calls home. Boys who are late should sign in at the office, but some do not do this and attend their first or second lesson without being registered. This is a cause for concern because, in the event of a fire, all boys may not be accounted for. The school has plans to introduce an electronic system to register each lesson so that boys are accounted for throughout the day.

24. The attitudes of most boys with special educational needs are good, and they show an eagerness to learn by concentrating fully on their tasks. They also take a full part in class oral work, for example, in reading aloud and in making individual presentations to the whole class about the books they have been reading.

Sixth form

25. Sixth form students work well and persevere with their studies and revision. The large majority of them complete their course. The students' survey shows that they are almost unanimous in saying that they enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join them. Students who have special educational needs and talents, and those who do not speak English as a first language, are all taking a full part in sixth form life and making good progress. The students are proud of their school and their sixth form. They consider that they are treated as responsible young adults. They respond well by taking charge of their own learning knowing that they can rely on the help and support of their teachers when they need it. They say that one of the best features of sixth form life is the very good relationship between teachers and boys. Their teachers are very good role models and work very hard to enable all the students to make the most of their opportunities. Students benefit from this very good climate of achievement and support by developing good teamwork skills, and they work well in groups.

26. Behaviour in the sixth form is good and sometimes exemplary. No student has been excluded from the sixth form. Students know that bullying and racism are never tolerated and they are confident and secure. Students plan and organise their work well and parents are pleased with the attitudes to work their sons or daughters have developed in the sixth form. They work independently and diligently with their personal studies, but their opportunities for independent study and research are too limited by the lack of library accommodation and access to ICT. Sometimes part-time jobs limit students' commitment to their studies and adversely affect their homework and consequently their academic attainments and achievements.

27. Students take charge of some of their activities, raising and discussing their ideas in the sixth form committee, for example, by organising a fund-raising event for charity at Christmas. They take part in sports events and welcome guest speakers who represent industry, the media and the arts. The students showed spiritual and moral awareness by lighting a candle each day of Holocaust Week. They have taken part in cultural trips to Amsterdam, Barcelona and Dublin. Some students help younger boys with their reading, and they set a good example to the main school. Other opportunities for helping in the main school are not yet fully exploited.

28. Students know that their work in the sixth form will contribute to their adult life, and that regular

attendance and punctuality are crucial to their studies. Their level of attendance during the Autumn term was very good but the level so far this term has declined to below 90 per cent. Occasionally the attendance level of a few students gives some cause for concern and the sixth form staff cooperate closely with parents to encourage students to complete their studies.

29. Parents of students who have moved on to higher education are very pleased with the way their children have been able to take on the challenges and requirements of university life. Students who have further developed their technical skills at college, for example, in media studies sometimes return to school to give practical assistance and to talk about their work.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory across the school. In Years 7 to 9, the teaching seen is at least good in just over half of lessons, with one-fifth very good or better, mainly in English and modern foreign languages. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is at least good in almost six out of ten lessons, with a similar proportion of very good or better lessons to that seen in Years 7-9. Overall, the proportion of good or better teaching seen in Years 7-11 is lower than is usually found.

31. Although the overall quality of teaching shows little change since the previous inspection, it is securing better standards than previous examination results would suggest, and there has been improvement in the proportion that is good or better. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is also slightly lower - one lesson in 12 was judged to be unsatisfactory, and occasionally poor, predominantly in Years 7-9 and featuring in seven subjects. Although the school has made good initial progress in developing its system for monitoring teaching in subjects, there has so far been too little evaluation of the impact of the teaching on boys' learning. There is need to focus sharply on what they are to learn, and to secure more consistent standards of good teaching across the school, in raising boys' standards of attainment. The school acknowledges that it must also improve the continuity of learning for boys by swiftly establishing a more stable teaching force, and reducing the number of posts currently filled by temporary and supply teachers. This has clearly held back progress, and is evident in a number of subjects currently, notably ICT and religious education.

32. Teaching is very good in Years 7-9 in English and modern foreign languages, and in Years 10 and 11 in media studies. It is good across the school in geography, art and physical education, whilst in history it is good in Years 10 and 11. Elsewhere, teaching is mainly satisfactory, and has improved in music since the previous inspection. However, the quality of both the teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in ICT across the school, where the current, serious staffing problems are having major impact. During the inspection, unsatisfactory teaching was seen in five lessons across Years 7-10, three in ICT lessons and two in design and technology lessons. Teaching was also unsatisfactory in Years 7-9 in single lessons in science, modern foreign languages, art and mathematics, together with a single lesson in GCSE music. In many of these lessons, particularly those in Years 7-9, a common weakness was the difficulties facing teachers in managing the behaviour of boys with unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. On several occasions, this was compounded by either their inexperience as newly qualified teachers, or by the temporary nature of their position in the school. When this was the case, some boys were quick to take advantage of this and interrupted the opportunities for learning. This was not the case, however, in design and technology where, although lessons were well-managed, there was a lack of appropriate match and challenge in the work presented, and teachers' expectations of the level of work were too low.

33. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are important strengths of the teaching generally, and are very good in modern foreign languages. They are also good in English, geography and art, and also in media studies in Years 10 and 11. The positive presentation of their subjects has a positive impact on boys' progress and attainment, particularly when linked to high expectations of their behaviour and response. As a result, they respond well to the challenge and learn effectively. In contrast, weaknesses in teachers' specialist knowledge and understanding are at the root of boys' unsatisfactory learning in ICT.

34. Most teachers are now setting clear objectives for their lessons, and explain to boys what they are expected to learn. In the better lessons, for example, in English, history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education, boys' progress and understanding are regularly reviewed, and learning is drawn together in effective lesson summaries. Teachers generally use a suitable range of teaching strategies that reflect the work taking place and the boys involved. Collaborative work is a strong feature in PSHE, physical education, history and media studies. There are weaknesses in the specific teaching of ICT

across the school, and insufficient use is made of ICT in other subjects, with the notable exception of media studies.

35. Strategies for improving boys' basic skills of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, and have gained impetus from the impact of the National Strategy in Years 7-9. The systematic development of skills in literacy are evident in the teaching in many subjects, and the use of key words is well-developed. Writing frames are used well, for example, in history and science, although can restrict opportunities for boys' extended writing. The development of numeracy skills also features in the majority of subjects, although examples of good practice are uneven. Geography and science make a strong contribution to boys' numeracy development, particularly in graphical construction and data-handling. Across the school boys' access to, and progress within, the curriculum require the continued application of agreed whole-school approaches for improving their basic skills.

36. Teachers plan their work diligently. In many subjects, the work set is appropriately matched to the full range of needs and capabilities in classes, including those having special educational needs. Where this is the case, for example, in modern foreign languages, English, geography and history, good examples of challenging work were seen which had positive impact on both standards and boys' motivation. However, in some subjects, such as ICT and design and technology, the work is not always sufficiently demanding or matched to their needs, and learning is insufficient.

37. The management of boys in the classroom is satisfactory overall. It is a significant strength in a number of subjects, including modern foreign languages, English, geography, history and physical education. Boys respond well where teaching is good and expectations of their behaviour are consistently high. Relationships are very positive, and many teachers set good examples, relating well to their classes and providing positive support and encouragement. Discipline is non-confrontational and effective, and teachers are well-supported by whole-school systems. Some lessons are not as productive as the teaching merits because teachers have to work hard to maintain full control, and time is lost in checking some boys whose behaviour can disrupt progress. This is a more prominent feature where the incidence of teacher absence and temporary supply cover have combined to interfere with consistency of expectation and continuity in teaching and learning.

38. Assessment procedures are good, and show improvement since the previous inspection with the introduction of a common system across all subjects. The use of assessment information by teachers is satisfactory. This is developing effectively in Years 10 and 11 where teachers are making progress in the use of GCSE grades in marking and target-setting for boys based on their previous attainment levels. As a result, boys understand their progress and learning in some subjects, and how they can improve further. This is a good feature of work in media studies and modern foreign languages, but is unsatisfactory in ICT. Practice in Years 7-9 is more variable. Work is regularly marked, often with helpful comments for improvement, but boys are not always clear about their learning and relative attainment because not all subjects are confident in their use of National Curriculum levels. Geography and modern foreign languages are secure in this, whilst most other subjects need further consolidation and moderation of National Curriculum levels. Assessment procedures in ICT are unsatisfactory because standards are not moderated properly. The use of homework is satisfactory overall, and is having positive impact on boys' learning and progress in modern foreign languages, geography, English, and in examination work in media studies and physical education.

39. The teaching of boys with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, as teachers plan well to meet their needs by making good use of their individual education plans. They seek, through question and answer and frequent repetition, to consolidate boys' learning and understanding. However, they make insufficient use of differentiated work and modified worksheets. The learning support assistants, increased in number since the last inspection, give teachers and boys considerable support, but they do not work closely enough with teachers in lesson planning. At times they also undertake mundane tasks, for example, handing out pencils and rulers. This could just as easily be done by boys, while they focus on the boys themselves. All staff know the boys well, are fully aware of their special educational needs, and have established very good relationships.

Sixth form

40. The quality of teaching in the sixth form and the learning that it promotes are good. Around four-fifths of

the teaching was at least good, with just under one-fifth judged to be very good or better. Although this is a lower proportion than is usually found, the quality of teaching is consistent, with just one lesson proving less than satisfactory.

41. A wide range of sixth form subjects was sampled during the inspection, and nine subjects were inspected in greater depth. In these 'focus' subjects, teaching and learning were very good in media studies, were good in art and design, business studies, history, economics and English. They were satisfactory overall in mathematics, chemistry and French, with examples of good teaching featuring in every 'focus' subject.

42. This good quality of teaching results in similarly good learning and progress. Students apply themselves to their work with growing confidence as they move through the sixth form. Despite the weakness in provision for private study, they work hard, and standards seen during the inspection are often higher than expected, given some students' limited attainments at GCSE.

43. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Their enthusiasm and expertise in their subjects arouse students' curiosity and stimulate their learning. Expectations are high – students are frequently required to tackle challenging tasks and activities with positive impact on their progress and attainment. This was the case, for example, in a very successful Year 13 French lesson which enabled students to develop complex vocabulary when discussing the impact of racism on the political situation in France. A similarly successful approach was seen in a Year 12 English lesson reviewing Eavan Boland's poetry, in which students developed their understanding of the construction of a poem, and how language can be deliberately used to create dramatic change.

44. Teachers plan work well in the sixth form. Work is carefully linked to the course specification. New work is introduced carefully so that students are able to work independently, although the current provision for independent study is unsatisfactory. Requirements for examination success are clearly rehearsed. Teachers generally clarify the purpose of the work taking place, and at the end of most lessons, check with students to confirm their progress. In this way, students develop a clear understanding of what they have to learn and why, as, for example, in a very good Year 12 English lesson on text production and commentaries.

45. The range of teaching and learning styles used is generally appropriate to developing effective understanding. Occasionally, opportunities for collaboration, debate and independence are missed, and there is some over-dependence on the teacher. Where this opportunity is provided, learning is greatly enhanced, as in a Year 13 economics lesson which explored the current government's economic policy, and provoked lively debate and thoughtful analysis from the students.

46. There is no formal structure for developing students' key skills in the three components of communication, application of number and ICT. They form part of the general studies programme, and are also often well-presented within subject specific courses, with particularly good use of ICT in media studies.

47. Most lessons are busy and purposeful. Assessment procedures are good, and information relating to students' prior attainment at GCSE is used well to gauge progress towards predicted targets for success in the A and AS level examinations. Homework is used effectively, and is supported by regular marking which often provides clear guidance for improvement, particularly in English and media studies.

48. Relationships are very good in the sixth form. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and relate well to their students, providing high levels of support and encouragement. This is highly valued by students who feel that these qualities are important strengths in the school's sixth form provision.

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

49. As a result of a major review to resolve weaknesses in the curriculum identified during the previous inspection, both the quality and range of learning opportunities are now satisfactory. The timetable has been extended to twenty-five hours; the breadth and balance of the curriculum is good in the sixth form, is satisfactory elsewhere, and reflects the aims of the school.

50. In Years 7-9, statutory requirements for all subjects are met with the exception of design and technology. In Years 10-11 the time allocated to religious education as part of the PSHE programme, is too

low and statutory requirements for this subject are still not fulfilled for boys at this stage, nor for students in the sixth form, where religious education is not taught. The requirements for teaching ICT to boys in Years 10 and 11 are not met because the school has not identified which subjects will be involved in teaching this subject. The requirements for collective worship are not fulfilled. In these respects the curriculum across the school is unsatisfactory.

51. The curriculum is effective in meeting boys' different needs, including those who have special educational needs and the very small number of boys who have English as an additional language. There is satisfactory provision for those who are gifted and talented. In the main school boys are taught in groups according to their ability in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, and in groups of mixed ability in all other subjects. This is having positive impact on progress in English and modern foreign languages. Overall provision for boys in Years 10 and 11 has been enriched by the inclusion of a range of vocational courses, and a good alternative programme has been put in place for a small number of lower-attainers. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities across the school which include sport, music, ICT and modern foreign languages, and visits to outside venues and visits by poets, authors and musicians.

52. In Years 7-9, boys are taught all subjects of the National Curriculum. Citizenship is now included in the programme for PSHE. The curriculum has improved in physical education, where there is now a wider range of activities, singing is now established in all year groups in music, and Spanish has been introduced as an alternative foreign language. However, provision for drama, as part of the English curriculum, is limited, and the requirement to teach compliant materials or food is not met in design and technology. Because of the difficulties created by the school's split site, some classes in both English and mathematics have more than one teacher, creating difficulties for consistency of approach. The school is aware of the problem which also affects some other subjects, and is making efforts to reduce it because it is holding back standards.

53. Strategies for teaching basic skills in literacy are satisfactory; 'booster' classes have been introduced for boys of lower attainment in English. Speaking and listening skills require continued development. There are satisfactory arrangements for teaching numeracy.

54. Overall, the provision for boys in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. A particular strength is the range of vocational subjects offered. In addition to a core group of five subjects there is a range of GCSE courses which now includes physical education and three vocational GNVQ courses; boys may choose either two GCSE subjects, or one vocational course. The school provides, on the premises, a course in motor vehicle engineering for boys for whom the full curriculum is not appropriate. However, the time allocated to the dual science award, which all boys take, is lower than is found in most schools, and arrangements for teaching ICT are unsatisfactory. Careers guidance, which is part of the PSHE programme, and arrangements for work experience are very good. Links established through the vocational course in media studies are particularly strong and diverse: good contact has been established with various parts of the media industry such as local radio, local television studios, local papers, the Liverpool film industry and a number of regional art centres.

55. Links with the community through business contacts, and with institutions of further and higher education are good, as are links with most of the large number of primary schools whose boys join the school. The head of Year 7 visits all these schools, and information about boys is properly communicated. However, the school is aware that these contacts between subjects need development in order to provide better continuity for boys' learning. The school enjoys close links with the City Learning Centre and regular liaison with the local universities and training colleges ensures good access to further and higher education for students. The welfare officer also liaises well with pupil support centres and organisations supporting those who are pursuing alternative education options.

56. The school has a good policy to make links with industry and commerce which will enhance boys' economic and industrial understanding by using real examples of the activities of firms and organisations. Boys taking media studies as part of their coursework for GCSE have, however, successfully partnered with the Liverpool Film Academy in the production of a video film. Other projects have linked with local arts centres, television studios and a company producing a Liverpool schools magazine, and these opportunities make a good contribution to their learning. Links with individual members of the community result in

welcome contributions to boys' knowledge and personal development, most notably the opportunity to talk with a concentration camp survivor during Holocaust week.

57. Boys with special educational needs enjoy the same curricular opportunities as all others, including GCSE courses. The organisation of classes in bands of ability enables them to be taught mainly in smaller groups, with help from learning support assistants in many of them. Some boys derive great benefit from withdrawal sessions, where they are able to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through one-to-one tuition, and in very small groups. However, given the high percentage with low reading ages, not enough boys are given this opportunity. A number are, though, able to enhance their reading and spelling skills through a very carefully programmed and assessed computer learning aid.

58. The school's provision for boys' personal development is satisfactory. Provision for their moral and social development continues to be good for many, although the outcomes for a minority are affected by their unsatisfactory attitudes to school. There have been improvements to the provision for their cultural development where some weaknesses were identified at the time of the previous inspection. However, the quality of provision for boys' spiritual development is currently unsatisfactory.

59. The weakness in the provision for boys' spiritual development partly stems from a more general weakness, that is that the school does not have a shared policy for boys' personal development. Consequently, although concern for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is implicit in the school's mission statement, it is not planned for systematically through whole school or subject planning. As a result, there is no means of monitoring either the extent or quality of any provision, or indeed the impact which it has on the boys' development. More significantly, in the case of their spiritual development, the requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met and the quality of experience through "thought for the day" in tutor time is inconsistent. Assemblies do offer some opportunities for reflection but the boys themselves, though respectful, do not have sufficient opportunity to be actively involved in these experiences. Assemblies are not planned far enough in advance to ensure consistent approach and coverage of a relevant range of themes. In assemblies observed during the inspection, despite using good audiovisual resources relating to 'Holocaust Memorial Week', opportunities to involve boys more closely in the experience were missed. Because of staffing difficulties, the contribution usually made through religious education is not as evident as it might be. However, good and very good examples of contributions to spiritual development were observed in some subject areas. Opportunities were seized in history and PSHE lessons to concentrate appropriately on learning about events relevant to 'Holocaust Memorial Week'. Some of these, particularly in history, were of high quality and challenged the boys concerned to reflect deeply about personal responsibility, and the way in which society today views minorities. There is also a strong spiritual element to the creative work in art, poetry and drama, particularly where this has been inspired through involvement with the work of visiting artists and poets culminating in public performances. Otherwise, the contribution made through the subjects is sparse.

60. Provision for moral development is good. There is an expectation that all staff take responsibility for encouraging good behaviour in and out of lessons, and form tutors promote respect and concern for all members of the school community. Good behaviour as well as achievement is reinforced through the school's system of credit accumulation which culminates in boys' participation in an Awards evening, and most respond well to this. Moral development is also well catered for in the recently implemented PSHE and citizenship programme, which deals with issues, such as drugs and alcohol awareness, as well as the exploration of personal and public responsibility. Sex education lessons promote responsible behaviour. Most subjects contribute to moral development through their programmes of study. For example, moral dilemmas are explored in the study of texts such as Macbeth or Romeo and Juliet, and through the poetry deriving from a variety of cultures. Geography deals with issues such as man's impact on the environment. History is rich in opportunities to explore moral issues such as slavery, warfare and the human consequences of industrial development. In general, staff act as good role models for boys through their daily interactions in the classroom

61. Provision for social development is also good and its success is evident, for example, in the quality of relationships seen in the school. Boys have a good range of opportunities to work in a variety of social groupings in lessons and work well cooperatively with each other. Social development is catered for well through subjects, with geography and English being particular strengths. For example, in geography, boys explore issues around the treatment of asylum seekers, and in English in Years 10 and 11 there is a strong focus on social issues through the study of the poetry emerging from a variety of cultures. Year 8 boys are

provided with the opportunity of taking part in a residential experience. Boys have a good record of charitable activity and their efforts in providing Christmas hampers for elderly people in the locality are warmly appreciated by the recipients. Many of them have recorded their appreciation, both of the goods and the manner in which they were presented, in letters to the school.

62. Provision for cultural development was found to be satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, but there was a weakness in relation to boys' understanding and experience of the cultural diversity of the local community. This is now a strength. Much is done particularly to provide opportunities to work with local artists, poets and dancers representing a breadth of cultural and ethnic diversity. A major strength of the provision is the contribution coming from media studies. A wide range of opportunities is provided through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities which not only give boys and students the opportunity to experience poetry, art, music and dance representing a rich variety of cultural backgrounds, but also the opportunity to take part in public performances as well. Similar opportunities also exist through English, including effective links with other local schools, which support the quality of its cultural provision. In addition, a very good range of opportunities has been provided for the majority of boys to attend a variety of theatrical performances.

Sixth form

63. The sixth form is open access and by the range of courses it offers provides well for the different needs and abilities of all students. In terms of breadth, balance and relevance, and in the quality and range of opportunities, the curriculum for students in the sixth form is good. A range of sixteen subjects is offered at AS and A-level; in addition, there are GNVQ courses in art, business studies and media. Students are able to select four AS subjects or a combination of AS and GNVQ subjects in Year 12, and the majority then go on to A2 courses in Year 13. All students take general studies. Very few students do not complete courses they take in the sixth form. Classes for re-taking GCSE in English and mathematics are held after hours; students are permitted to take time out of school to compensate for the extra hours these classes require. Key skills and communication are taught as part of general studies. The time allocated to A-level subject courses, four hours each week, is lower than is found in most schools, and is holding back standards, particularly in AS courses. Arrangements for teaching one group following the course in English language and literature as a single three-hour lesson once a week are unsatisfactory. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement to teach religious education in the sixth form.

64. Links between the sixth form and institutes of higher education are very good. Particularly strong are the links with the local universities, but students are well informed about other establishments, and each year some go on to higher education in other parts of the country. Representatives from the local business community are frequent visitors. The school is hoping to re-establish links with the neighbouring girls' school in order to develop its range of courses, and offer wider opportunities for its students. Enrichment opportunities are limited, and students expressed concern about this lack of extra-curricular and recreational experience. They also have little involvement with the main school; the new headteacher acknowledges these shortcomings, and has plans to improve the situation, particularly the links with younger boys to support their development.

65. The school's industry links policy recognises the importance of business links and the school aims to involve firms and local organisations in the delivery of the curriculum. Media studies has developed a number of very successful links with companies providing newspapers, radio, films and cinema. Visits and speakers have given students an exciting and inspiring insight into the media world. Students attend courses at local colleges enabling them to extend their skills in areas such as web site design. Students have helped a local primary school by providing sound and lighting for Christmas productions. The school has good plans to hold a business simulation day with help from local businesses.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

66. The procedures for monitoring and assessing boys' progress are good. They have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Information about boys' attainment is collected and collated by the senior management and is made available to subject teachers, form tutors and heads of year. They use it to praise and encourage boys and to direct attention to weaknesses and underachievement. The system has good potential in that boys' progress and achievement is checked by both academic and pastoral staff, thus providing opportunities for their all round progress and personal development to be considered. These procedures are evolving satisfactorily, but at present, staffing weaknesses are affecting their consistent application. Some subject departments are using them well to assist boys to understand what they need to

do to meet their personal targets. In others, for example religious studies, not enough use is made of the information so boys have no measure of their progress over time. Good use is made of assessment information in planning, such as when teachers modify and adapt lesson plans to reflect progress, or otherwise, in previous lessons.

67. The school has satisfactory procedures to promote the health and well being of its boys. It has recently achieved the healthy schools award which requires evidence of provision in the physical and social environment, food and nutrition, health-related exercise, education in substance abuse, and sex education. Medical and first aid needs are met on both the school sites and any accidents are recorded. Lunchtime is well organised and boys say that they like the variety of food provided and lunchtime extra- curricular activities are popular.

68. The school has a designated trained member of staff to provide for child protection. However, the school procedure would be strengthened by ensuring that there is a designated member of staff for each site. It does, however, require that every member of staff, teaching or non-teaching, has had training to provide them with an understanding of child abuse and its main indicators, and an awareness of the school's policy and the area child protection committee manual. There is a nominated governor for child protection to make sure that these procedures are in place.

69. The inspection in 2000 identified serious issues around health and safety practices which needed immediate attention and centred round the school's lack of monitoring by the LEA and the lack of appropriate risk assessment procedures. Since then the school has undergone an extensive programme of risk assessment and an audit by the LEA. The school has a good policy, the committee meets regularly, the health and safety officer produces termly newsletters. The reporting system is clear and the school has stringent requirements for work experience and school visits. The risk assessment undertaken by a specialist external company identified instances where the expected level of control is not being met, and appropriate action has been taken. The governing body has a health and safety representative who is able to monitor this action.

70. The pastoral care provided by the school continues to be good for most boys, although some have experienced changes in staff which has limited the continuity of care. Form tutors are now responsible for academic as well as pastoral care and this arrangement is working satisfactorily.

71. Procedures to promote good attendance and to counter the unacceptable behaviour of a minority of boys are satisfactory. They are more effective in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 9, 10 and 11. All heads of year and their assistants are informed daily of attendance figures. They have a weekly meeting with the school welfare officer who supports boys in school, visits parents at home, and arranges alternative education for those who have become disaffected with school. Despite their efforts, staff report an increase in disaffection of some boys as they move up the school. The school has taken steps to counter the decline in attendance and the increase in the incidence of exclusions by strengthening and extending their procedures for pastoral care. The attendance officer makes first day telephone calls to the homes of all boys whose attendance gives cause for concern. Punctuality is a problem, particularly with the older boys. The school needs to ensure it has a more accurate picture of who is in school than the present system of registration provides.

72. The welfare officer together with the recently appointed head of pupil support teacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) form a multi-disciplinary team to provide support for boys who have difficulty in taking their part in the school community or who have specific needs. The educational psychologist provides regular expert help and the team will shortly include four learning mentors. Ten classroom assistants provide day-to-day care and support for boys who have particular needs in various departments. It is too soon yet to see the impact of these new arrangements on the behaviour and attendance of boys who are at risk of disaffection, but the initial response to the provision in the pupil support centre is good. The room is a quiet area and the lunchtime activities are provided for any boys who have any specific need. They respond very well to the warm, family atmosphere. The team will increase their links with a range of outside agencies and specialists, and plans are in place to provide similar support and facilities on the Quarry site next year.

73. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. The school is reviewing the 'Behaviour for Learning' scheme, and is providing teachers with advice and support with behaviour management in class where appropriate. Heads of Year keep detailed records of unacceptable behaviour

and will involve parents in discussions and strategies to help boys improve their conduct.

74. The school is always vigilant for signs of bullying and provides detailed information and advice for parents and for boys when they start in Year 7. Bullying is discussed in class and in assemblies. All boys know that any such incidents must be reported and the majority of them feel secure. The pupil support centre provides a safe place for a few vulnerable boys. The welfare officer keeps detailed records of those boys who are away from school because of fear of bullying and the school makes every effort to cooperate with parents in support of their children and to ensure a speedy return.

75. Procedures for identifying boys with special educational needs have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory, being based on assessment information from primary schools, and other tests when boys enter the school in Year 7. Meetings take place between the SENCO and link teachers from each of the subject departments to plan provision, although these meetings are not formally timetabled. Individual education plans have been revised very recently and now appropriately include subject specific targets. Annual reviews are thoroughly conducted to enable teachers, parents and boys to plan the way forward to promote further progress. Learning support assistants show care and concern for the boys and help them in understanding and completing their tasks, although many still struggle to copy from the board, as no notes are prepared to relieve them of this particular task. The recently established pupil support centre has already had some success in helping boys who have difficulty in coping in mainstream classes to reintegrate gradually back into normal lessons.

Sixth form

Assessment

76. Assessment is regular and supportive and the procedures for assessment are good. This aspect has improved during the last two years. It is a uniform system, inclusive of students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. All students receive help when the need is identified. With the exception of a few teachers, in French and history for example, marking is frequent, detailed and informs students how to improve their work. It is very good and sometimes outstanding in English language and literature. Records of marks closely relate to examination standards and enable the progress of individual students to be carefully and accurately checked in subjects.

77. The school does not usually enter students for the external modular examinations in January. Formal internal examinations take place in December and in addition most subjects use assessment at the end of each module. Where these indicate insecure learning topics are revised.

78. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress by tutors are very good. Students are involved in the assessment process from the start of their courses. They use valid data to negotiate realistic but challenging targets with their tutors. Tutors closely monitor students' progress at four review times during the sixth form when targets can be updated. The weekly tutor periods provide time for these very effective procedures. Students and parents receive two detailed written progress reports each year. This very good practice is more than is usually found. Most students are pleased with the assessment of their work, and the information about the progress they are making in their courses.

Advice, support and guidance

79. Educational and personal support for students in the sixth form is very good. Several months before they join the sixth form Year 11 boys have very good opportunities to consider the next step in their education in consultation with their teachers and from tutors. To help them make well-informed choices they are invited, with their parents, to a sixth form information evening to enable them to consider all options. The school takes care to make sure that every student takes a course for which he is suited and the very large majority of students complete their course. Students who completed the questionnaire were unanimous in agreeing that they were given helpful and constructive advice on their choice of course. They feel that they are treated as responsible young adults, that the school listens to their views, and that they enjoy being in the sixth form. These positive views are reflected in their good attitudes to work.

80. Throughout their time in the sixth form students are helped to achieve their best. The head of sixth form and the teachers support students very well. Targets are shared with parents so that students are supported both at home and in school. Parents appreciate the regular opportunities to meet with staff and

the reports about progress that they receive from the school.

81. Students receive good guidance on how to plan their time, develop their research skills, improve the quality of their note-taking, and revise for exams. This advice works well to raise their confidence and feeling of support. Students who have any special needs benefit from appropriate individual help and support. The very large majority of students say that they consider that they can call on their tutors for help if they have difficulties with work. The school provides good careers information and advice that enables students to make informed choices about their future, and about the next stage of their education. They are able to visit local universities, and they receive guidance with their applications for higher education. A few students feel that employment advice from the careers service is less helpful.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

82. Overall partnership with parents is satisfactory. The large majority of parents say that their children like school and make good progress and that teachers have high expectations of their children's commitment to work. They say that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. A significant minority of those responding to the questionnaires who have concerns about behaviour in school, the amount of homework their children are given, the range of activities provided outside lessons, and the information about how their children are getting on.

83. The inspection in 2000 raised concerns about omissions in the school prospectus, the end of year reports to parents and the governors' annual report. These all now satisfy legal requirements. Reports give satisfactory information about attainment and progress. They do not give parents a summary of what their son has been studying in each subject, but this is not a legal requirement. The previous report said that homework diaries were not used well by parents. At present, diaries are used very well by parents of boys in Years 7 and 8. Older boys do not have diaries at present.

84. Information given to new boys and parents is good. The welcome pack includes well-designed information on the school policies on attendance, drugs and anti-bullying strategies. However, as boys' progress through school, parents do not receive a summary of the curriculum they will be studying during each year. Some parents have expressed concern that they have not been able to help their children because of lack of information and this is unsatisfactory, particularly when staffing problems cause a lack of continuity. Some parents say that homework provision is very good in Year 7 but they are concerned that there is not enough provided thereafter. At present, although the amount of homework is sometimes varied, provision is satisfactory overall.

85. The school does not send parents a regular newsletter at present. They have plans to produce a newsletter and to canvas parents' views on the school using a questionnaire. Some parents have said that they are not well informed about how their children are getting on. Inspectors find that the opportunities for parents to talk to teachers are satisfactory; parents' evenings are held every year with extra opportunities for new parents and for parents of Year 9 boys to discuss GCSE options. Form tutors are well informed of boys' academic and personal progress and are always keen to speak to parents about any concerns, either in school or by telephone.

86. Some parents have expressed concerns about behaviour and bullying in school. Inspectors find that a minority of boys have suffered the effects of bullying in spite of the school's good anti-bullying policy and procedures, and the good pastoral care system. The very recently introduced pastoral support scheme will strengthen the school's continuous campaign against bullying. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory, with instances of misbehaviour from a minority of boys.

87. A few parents have expressed concern about the attitude of a minority of teachers in their relationships with boys, their low expectations of boys' achievement and their response to parents' questions or problems. The school expects the highest standards of professionalism and has taken action to make sure that these standards are maintained consistently throughout the school. The senior management always welcome discussion with parents who have concerns about their sons' relationships with teachers and with parents who feel that their worries are not being dealt with satisfactorily.

88. A group of committed parents who actively support the Parents' Association work hard to organise successful social fund-raising events and have made a substantial contribution to the pleasant environment

in the sixth form; they have provided new furniture for both the Quarry and the Bankfield dining rooms.

89. The school seeks to keep parents of boys with special educational needs informed about their progress. They involve them in annual reviews, but do not at present share with them details of individual education plans, although a review of these plans is now programmed to take place twice a year. The SENCO is, however, ready to meet parents to discuss with them any concerns they have about their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

90. The previous inspection found the leadership and management of the school to be unsatisfactory. It has improved since that time and is now satisfactory. Effective leadership, in giving the school the clear direction it needs to raise standards, is being now provided by the headteacher and senior staff. The headteacher has been in post for one term and is working closely with governors, teachers and other key staff in evaluating existing management structures and management practice. Some improvements have been made, particularly with regard to management structures and senior staff responsibilities, and more are planned.

91. The senior management team consists of nine members. It has been successful, through linking each member to a number of subject departments, in improving the monitoring and accountability of subject managers. In the crucial area of developing and improving teaching and learning, progress has only been satisfactory and much more remains to be done.

92. The school is still in breach of its statutory duty in a number of areas including the curriculum (ICT, design and technology and religious education) and the provision for collective worship. This situation has arisen because the governing body has not been forceful enough in ensuring compliance with its legal responsibilities from the school's senior management. In the past insufficient attention has been paid to governor training. Despite their considerable efforts, governors were not successful in holding themselves or the previous headteacher sufficiently to account with regard to the performance of the school. Governors recognise that mistakes have been made but are confident that, with the appointment of the new headteacher, they will be able to work together to ensure future compliance.

93. The school governors are committed to the success of the school. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, a positive working relationship has been established. Governors are now fully informed and involved in the appointment of new staff. Weekly meetings take place between the headteacher and the chair of governors. This enables the governors to monitor how well the school is doing on a regular basis.

94. The current school improvement plan is largely a response to the key issues for improvement identified in the previous report, and has tackled these satisfactorily. It does not reflect the school's new priorities and has not yet been updated following the appointment of the new headteacher. The LEA has been supportive in helping the school tackle the shortcomings from the previous report. The governing body has not yet formulated a strategic plan which will identify its priorities over the next four or five years so that boys, parents, teachers and other staff can feel confident that the school is heading in the right direction.

95. Subject leadership and management is satisfactory overall. It is very good in English, geography and modern foreign languages where strong leadership, rigorous monitoring, and the sharing of good classroom practice are pushing standards up. A positive start has been made in developing sound procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning as well as boys' progress. In most other subjects leadership and management are satisfactory. As yet subject leadership is unsatisfactory in ICT and in religious education. In both these subjects there is a lack of direction because the subject leadership is temporary and lacks experience and expertise in middle management.

96. The school's monitoring of the quality of its work is satisfactory. Lesson observations by subject heads contribute to an annual departmental self-review. In some subjects, such as English, modern foreign languages and geography, lesson observations have made a very good contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, a much more rigorous and systematic approach is required by all heads of subjects and senior managers if monitoring is to result in tangible improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning. There is good use of assessment data to inform departments how well boys should be doing and to assist in monitoring boys' progress.

97. The management and provision for boys with special educational needs was fully reviewed by the LEA

in the light of the findings of the previous inspection. They concluded that special educational needs boys in mainstream subject classes were still making unsatisfactory progress. Improvement has since taken place, but there still remains a need for the provision of special educational needs to be unified and coordinated more effectively across the whole school. The signs for improvement are good, because, whereas previously the profile of special educational needs was low, the senior management of the school and the governors now regard provision for boys with special educational needs as a high priority. Learning support assistants are less effective than they might be because their deployment and training lack coordination. They are attached to subject departments rather than centrally to the special educational needs department, and they take little part in formal lesson planning. As the school has a high proportion of boys with special educational needs, above the national average, the effective deployment of staff is particularly important.

98. The school has taken appropriate steps to identify gifted and talented boys in the broadest sense, and has created a post of coordinator to have responsibility to raise awareness of them and their needs among all staff. It is, however, recognised that boys themselves will need to recognise their potential more clearly, through a raising of their self-esteem, to benefit from the opportunities which the school are offering.

99. Although these boys normally work with their class group, some opportunities are made for them to work with their intellectual peers. In addition, a range of outside visits are organised to universities, some residential, and to high level conferences. Four students from Year 13 have work placements in France. For boys from Years 7 and 8, a club has been formed to offer help with homework, access to the internet, and an opportunity to create and edit a school newspaper. In science and mathematics, boys receive extra tuition from expert visitors. Overall, these boys make satisfactory progress in respect of their special gifts and talents, although no formal evaluation of their progress has yet been undertaken by the school.

100. Much has been achieved by the school in its efforts to address the weaknesses in staffing, accommodation and learning resources identified in the last report. Currently, there are sufficient staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. However, there are no ICT specialists and there are nine temporary teachers. The induction arrangements for staff new to the school are generally satisfactory. There are weaknesses in the quality of support for some supply teachers, especially in ICT. The arrangements made for newly qualified teachers are inconsistent across the subject departments. The school has responded properly by introducing a performance management scheme and the targets have been recently reviewed. The setting of new targets has been justifiably delayed in order to ensure that they will be more challenging and all will be directed towards raising standards across the school. The staff development needs of the school are coordinated by a senior member of staff and, although there are well-identified needs, success in meeting those needs is variable across subject departments. The school has more recently made several new appointments to new key posts, for example, head of humanities, site manager and head of pupil support. In meeting the need for suitability and stability in teaching appointments, for example, all the specialist staff in the modern foreign languages department are well-qualified and on permanent contracts. This is a clear improvement since the last inspection.

101. Accommodation overall remains unsatisfactory. The school has worked unstintingly to improve the quality of its buildings, and an extensive list of targeted features has been impressively reduced in the last two years. The recent appointment of a site manager with clear responsibility for the long-term planning and management of maintenance, renewal and refurbishment is a clear indication of a determination to make improvements. Many of the weaknesses that remain will unfortunately only be removed by long-term and large-scale projects. Those problems occur in the more practical areas of the school, for example, in physical education, music, art and science. In addition, the split-site means that most subjects have their specialist facilities divided into two units, and there is often an unevenness in provision, for example, in science and physical education. The unavoidable movement of staff and boys between sites causes teaching and learning time to be lost. Some subjects do not have a base, and, consequently, there is no focus for the display of work, notices or information.

102. There are plans to improve the school's libraries and a newly appointed librarian will lead this initiative. In most subject areas there has been improvement in both the quality and quantity of learning resources in the last two years. This feature is now satisfactory. In the modern foreign languages department, newly-introduced courses are complemented by good resources. Although the ratio of personal computers to the number of boys is better than in many other schools, there are insufficient linked scanners and printers, for example, to maximise their effectiveness as learning tools. Not all departments have sufficient personal computers dedicated to them, for example, in music where there is just one machine on each site.

103. Systems for financial management are good. The budget is carefully planned and well- administered. Forecast implications are clearly established and principles of best value are being adopted. Specific grants, for example, for pupils with special educational needs, are used for their designated purpose. Financial control is good, and the budget is monitored very carefully by the business manager, the headteacher and the chair of governors' finance committee. Finances are in sound order, but a wider strategic involvement in planning the budget would strengthen the development of the governing body.

104. The school receives well above average funding per pupil because of additional monies provided through national initiatives including Excellence in Cities and social inclusion, together with further funding in recognition of its challenging circumstances. Attainment on entry is well below average, and the school serves an area which includes significant social disadvantage. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as are boys' attitudes and their personal development. Although test and examination results are below average, they represent positive achievement given boys' starting points. Compared with similar schools, standards are well above average in Years 7-9, and average in Years 10-11. Taking all these factors into account, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

105. The leadership and management of this successful sixth form are good. There is a strong commitment to provide a good education and equal opportunities for all students; many of whom would not have the chance to study advanced courses in other sixth forms.

106. There is a clear educational direction that is firmly rooted in further improving teaching, learning, standards and results. However, this improvement is not underpinned with a strategic plan. Students' targets are not collated into subject targets and these are not aggregated into whole school targets against which to monitor progress.

107. The head of the sixth form is an assistant headteacher. A team of one assistant and seven tutors support his open style of management. There is a regular review and evaluation of all procedures and areas for improvement are identified. This is effective, as witnessed in the very good developments of monitoring and supporting students' progress.

108. The quality of the documentation is good with clear information for students and tutors although roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. Despite this, administration is very good and, as a result, pastoral care is very strong. At present there is no responsibility for monitoring learning and teaching across subjects, and this is a weakness.

109. Leadership and management are good in most of the focus subjects and very good in economics and media studies. The examination results are analysed using a commercial package and the school is aware of the relative strengths of subjects. The governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and are now more active in their role as critical friends. However, they have not yet fulfilled their statutory duty to ensure that the locally agreed syllabus for religious education is fully provided in the sixth form.

110. The sixth form is cost effective.

Resources

111. The sixth form activities of the school have a clear focus in the sixth form building, with good facilities to meet the students' social needs. The associated teaching rooms are however, quite small and not well-equipped, for example, and especially in ICT. There is no access to any one common learning and study resource or library with opportunities for independent research and information gathering. As a result, students are not developing these skills which are important for their success in the sixth form, and fundamental to their future progress into higher education.

112. The provision of specialist staff for courses in the sixth form is mainly good. However, staffing in ICT is unsatisfactory because at present teachers lack the specialist knowledge and experience to teach the

subject to A2 level. Most courses are adequately resourced in the sixth form, but the school's book resources, particularly in the library (that is usually inaccessible), are inadequate to support students' independent learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

113. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of educational provision in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve provision for, and attainment in, ICT by:
 - appointing suitably qualified and experienced specialist teachers to lead and teach the subject across the school;
 - meeting National Curriculum requirements in Years 10 and 11;
 - ensuring the widespread development and application of boys' skills in ICT across all subjects;
 - developing effective assessment procedures that audit and record boys' experience and attainment in ICT across the curriculum.
- (2) Improve provision for, and attainment in, religious education by:
 - appointing a suitably qualified and experienced specialist teacher to lead the subject across the school;
 - ensuring sufficient curriculum time is allocated to meet requirements in the sixth form, and for the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11;
 - improving the quality and range of learning resources for the subject.
- (3) Improve standards and GCSE results in subjects, for example, in mathematics, science, and design and technology, to those of the best by:
 - identifying those aspects of teaching and learning that require improvement through formal monitoring and evaluation;
 - ensuring a consistent responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in subjects;
 - continuing the use of assessment information to set challenging targets for subjects, and to check the individual progress of boys within subjects;
 - disseminating widely the good range of very successful teaching and learning strategies found in the most effective subjects, for example, English, modern foreign languages, geography and media studies;
 - increasing the proportion of good and very good teaching across the school;
- (4) Improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - adopting a rigorous and wide-ranging approach for improving attendance and punctuality in Years 9, 10 and 11, in partnership with parents, LEA, and other appropriate agencies;
 - implementing a more accurate system for registration;
 - wider analysis and monitoring of attendance data, and strengthening the role of both Year heads and form tutors in this process.
- (5) Improve accommodation, for example, in science, music, physical education and drama by:
 - actively pursuing opportunities for capital building programmes with the LEA and other appropriate agencies.

Sixth form

- (1) raising standards in mathematics, science, ICT and design and technology.
- (2) ensuring better opportunities for private study and independent learning through improved library, ICT and multi-media resources, for both sixth form students and main school boys.
- (3) Increasing the formal time allocation for AS/A2/AVCE courses.

In addition to the key issues, the following should be tackled:

- fulfilling National Curriculum requirements for design and technology;
- fulfilling statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	144
	Sixth form	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		78

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	4	26	52	50	10	2	0
Percentage	3	18	36	35	7	1	0

Sixth form

Number	1	7	27	8	1	0	0
Percentage	2	16	61	18	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1264	146
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	464	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	266	5

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	8.2
National comparative data	8.1

School data	2.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	255	0	255

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	149	124	115
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	149	124	115
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (51)	49 (54)	45 (60)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (25)	22 (25)	15 (22)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	132	120	112
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	132	120	112
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (52)	47 (46)	44 (45)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (16)	19 (14)	19 (14)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	237	-	237

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	62	217	228
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	62	217	228
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	26 (20)	92 (88)	96 (93)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	29.5 (26.1)
	National	39.8 (39)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	41	-	41
	Average point score per candidate	11.8 (12.7)	-	11.8 (12.7)
National	Average point score per candidate	- (16.9)	-	- (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	41	-	41	-	-	-
	Average point score per candidate	11.8	-	11.8	-	-	-
National	Average point score per candidate	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1353	225	4
-	-	-
9	0	0
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
1	0	0
12	1	0
10	1	0
-	-	-
1	0	0
1	0	0
39	0	0
6	0	0
1	0	0
-	-	-

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	84.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	682.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	22.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002
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	£
Total income	4,547,258
Total expenditure	4,401,845
Expenditure per pupil	3070
Balance brought forward from previous year	387,476
Balance carried forward to next year	57,783

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1400
Number of questionnaires returned	111

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	60	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	51	8	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	50	15	7	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	41	26	8	2
The teaching is good.	22	59	9	4	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	38	28	4	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	43	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	44	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	20	41	26	4	9
The school is well led and managed.	28	49	6	1	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	57	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	32	21	6	23

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Achievement is very good in Years 7-9. Standards and results have improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Improving standards in Years 10-11.
- The quality of teaching and the very effective use of methods from the National Literacy Strategy.
- The contribution to the boys' cultural and social development.
- The leadership of the head of department and the support and commitment of his team.
- The boys' good attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Timetabling arrangements.
- The use of assessment to ensure boys understand their own standards, their potential and how to improve further.

114. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Results in Year 9 national tests have improved significantly: well below average in 2000; below average in 2001; average in 2002. This notable improvement stems from improved teaching, as a result of consistent application of methods from the National Literacy Strategy, the head of department's very good leadership, the strong support of his team and the boys' good attitudes. The pace of progress slows during Years 10-11, although the current Year 11 are achieving well and are consolidating their earlier significant improvements.

115. Year 6 test results show boys enter the school with well below average standards. In the 2002 national tests for Year 9 results were broadly average. They were well above average when compared with boys from a similar background. Boys did significantly better in the English tests than in mathematics and science. Since 1999 the results have improved by over half a level. Achievement is very good.

116. In the 2002 GCSE English examination the proportion attaining grades A*-C was significantly below average as in the previous two years. The results were as expected given the boys' previous results, and broadly average compared with those from similar backgrounds. Since the previous inspection, when only about two-thirds of the boys were entered for the examination, the proportion at grades A*-G has improved considerably and now matches the national average: a direct consequence of the department responding to the need for higher expectations. Results in literature at grades A*-G have also improved considerably, although the A*-C results are still well below the national average. However, the entry rate for literature is now ten per cent higher than the rate for boys nationally: another example of higher expectations leading to better outcomes. Overall, the boys tended to do better in both examinations than in their other subjects.

117. Standards in the current Year 9 are broadly average and match those achieved in the 2002 tests. This is extremely laudable given the much higher than usual proportion of classes with more than one teacher. The teachers work very hard to ensure continuity in the boys' learning but this form of staff deployment is not satisfactory. Year 9 boys are making very good progress as are those in Years 7-8. About one-third write at the levels associated with above average standards with strengths in the organisation, paragraphing, accuracy and clarity of their writing. Their use of precise vocabulary in an empathetic piece on Macbeth' effectively engaged the reader's attention. Many middle-attaining boys also make good progress in their ability to write structurally sound, accurate English, but do not have the range of vocabulary of higher attainers. Some are not reaching the expected Level 5 standards consistently because of errors in spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and expression. There are a few boys whose standards are well below average. Many have special educational needs and entered school with very low spelling and reading ages. They are progressing well, benefiting from the adapted learning tasks provided by special educational needs teachers, support staff and English teachers. These boys worked very hard in their lessons.

118. In Year 11 standards are below average. About four in ten boys are at a level associated with grade C

or higher: a ten per cent increase on recent years. These boys benefit from more explicit teaching which explains what they are learning and why, although this is not as established as in Years 7-9. The highest attainers are accurate and confident writers. Some can reach the very highest grades but a lack a consistent focus on the impact of language when writing about a text. Nevertheless, they quickly made intelligent deductions about the poet's use of settings, themes and symbolism in the poem 'Ogun'. Many middle attainers are close to average. Their coursework shows C grade qualities: well organised writing with a good knowledge of fiction and non-fiction texts effectively related to the title. Some are less assured in examinations as indicated by recent mock papers. Their accuracy, detail and focus on what the question requires were not as secure as their course work. Others are below and well below average. Boys with special educational needs make good progress. They effectively identified, exemplified and explained features of Mary's character when discussing 'Lamb to the Slaughter', quickly recording their ideas for future use: another lesson where the teacher's clear exemplification gave the boys the confidence and means to succeed.

119. Speaking and listening skills are broadly average throughout Years 7-11. There has been an improvement since the last report. Boys remember what they have heard very well. Many answer questions quickly but only a few have the confidence to give extended answers. Year 11 boys enjoyed their group preparations for a 'Tonight with Trevor MacDonald' script based on the events in 'Romeo and Juliet' but there were not enough examples of this sort of work during the week. Some opportunities were missed: for example, some 'starter' tasks required individual writing rather than taking the opportunity for very brisk discussion. Unsatisfactory soundproofing in the main English accommodation on the Quarry site constrains speaking activities.

120. Teaching and learning are good: they are very good in Years 7-9 where the explicit approach to teaching reading and writing skills has taken a firm hold. The main strength in these years is the consistency of good practice. Boys learn well because teachers set clear learning objectives and tasks, and refer back to the objectives, thereby reinforcing learning. Lessons are well planned with lots of activities so the boys work hard. Use of techniques such as 'shared reading' and 'shared writing' not only ensure the focus and concentration of all, but also show them exactly what they have to do. Expectations are high and the management of behaviour is good. Most boys behave very well because they are kept busy. The outcome of these approaches on their skills is very good and was clear in a lower attaining group in Year 8. Most of these boys are already well on the way to achieving average standards in writing from a well below average starting point. They paragraph well, punctuate and spell accurately across a range of writing genres. The deliberate choice of vocabulary of some indicates they have the potential to achieve above average standards. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is good. The consistently well structured course work of one Year 11 group reflects their teacher's very explicit approach to the skills they need: other boys would benefit from this approach being extended in to Years 10-11. The best marking is very good with specific strengths and learning targets recorded. Monitoring boys' levels and grades is good but the boys themselves do not have secure enough working knowledge of their levels, grades and related criteria, so they are not precise about their potential and related skills.

121. The head of department provides very good drive and leadership. Only recently in post at the time of the previous inspection he has successfully led his colleagues – and gained their support – in ensuring that the boys can do better. They have identified carefully those aspects of the Literacy Strategy that benefit the boys the most: *demonstrate; apply; secure*. The curriculum structure focuses on gaps in basic skills through the use of the Literacy Progress Units and the department's core skills course. Others with responsibility in the department provide good leadership, support and example. Beyond the taught curriculum there are excellent cultural opportunities. All boys benefit from a writers-in-residence scheme and working with other poets. Much of this work develops a sharp awareness of the multi-cultural aspects of life in modern Britain: for example, 'The Drums of Anfield' project which looked at the issues in 'Kick Racism out of Football' movement. Year 9 boys talked with great delight and insight about this work.

Literacy skills across the curriculum

122. The school has effective strategies to improve literacy. There is some unevenness in the effectiveness between subjects, but the work of the English department has a very strong impact on the boys' standards, helping them to make good progress over time. The impact of the National Literacy Strategy is a dominant feature in main class English teaching and, through the use of Literacy Progress Units, helps other boys catch up with their peers.

123. The previous report stated that the improvement of literacy provision across the curriculum was an area for development. Good progress has been made in the intervening two years. The literacy coordinator has good specialist knowledge, enhanced by further training. There has been an informative audit of what departments do and need to develop; teachers' awareness of the importance of literacy and how to respond to it has increased considerably. History, geography, design and technology and science have been initially targeted: inspectors observed some examples of good practice in each of these subjects.

124. A poor feature of the provision has been the restricted availability of the library. However, the new headteacher has a clear vision of how to improve the situation. The first important step has been taken in appointing a fully qualified and experienced information and library manager. The school now has a clear and scheduled strategy to provide the necessary learning resource centres to support research skills.

125. Subject inspectors found that a consistently good feature was the explicit way teachers introduced and reinforced subject vocabulary through the use of key words. The only exception was ICT where the literacy provision is unsatisfactory. Otherwise inspectors saw good practice in mathematics, science, history (where a new head of department is already having a major impact), physical education, design and technology and geography. The reinforcement of grammatical terms is a real strength in modern foreign languages. The clear and informative emphasis on key terms effectively enhanced Year 8 boys' understanding of alcohol in two PSHE lessons: a good example of consistency between teachers.

126. The development of reading is inconsistent. Inspectors did not see many examples of higher order skills such as skimming, scanning and the use of annotation and highlighting to find relevant information apart from in English lessons. Boys had opportunities to read aloud in geography and science; in art there was some effective research of Islamic art. The more conscious use and development of reading and research strategies remains a development need overall.

127. The development of writing is stronger, building on the very good foundations laid in English. Modern language teaching has a good impact on the boys' understanding and application of different forms of sentence structure and the effective use of connectives. In science the boys' investigation into the effectiveness of coffee containers in food outlets was effectively supported by a well-constructed writing frame. There were a number of good examples of writing in history, sometimes with boys working in pairs and supporting each other's learning. There were strengths in geography: good field work investigations in Year 11 and a range of writing in other years, such as report writing or letters to political leaders about environmental issues.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- There is some very good teaching.
- Recent improvements in the structure of lessons and new schemes of work are beginning to enhance standards.

Areas for improvement

- Raise boys' attainment by enhancing the quality of satisfactory lessons.
- Raise the performance of average attaining boys in GCSE examinations by more speedily identifying and correcting instances of underachievement.
- Ensure that ICT is more frequently used to enrich and support learning.

128. In the 2002 national tests the results of Year 9 boys were well below the national average, but average

compared with those obtained by pupils in similar schools. On average, boys' attainment level in mathematics was more than one school year behind that seen nationally, and the trend in results was below the national trend. Results dipped in 2002, but analysis indicates that the overall achievement was satisfactory, particularly when account is taken of the low starting point of most of the boys. Results in mathematics have been slightly below those in science and significantly below those in English.

129. Except for minor variations, GCSE results are broadly similar to those at the time of the last inspection. However, the number of boys not entered for GCSE has decreased dramatically and almost every Year 11 pupil now sits the examination. In 2002, the proportion of boys awarded a grade within the A-G grade range was close to the national average. Overall, however, the results were well below the national average. Almost three out of ten boys entered for the examination gained a grade A*-C, compared with five out of ten nationally. Although most boys' results were in line with predictions based on their prior attainment, a significant number of boys underachieved. Investigation shows that this underachievement was centred mainly on those boys from middle attainment groups. Most boys performed less well in mathematics than they did in their other subjects.

130. The standard of work produced by boys currently in Years 7-9 is higher than indicated by test scores, and is below the national average, rather than well below. This difference is for two main reasons. Firstly, substantial changes in staffing have greatly reduced the incidence of discontinuity in teaching that for a long period has adversely affected the learning of a high proportion of boys. Secondly, the national numeracy strategy and introduction of newly developing schemes of work is resulting in more effective teaching. Consequently, attainment is improving. All boys study similar topics at levels that are matched to individual needs. For example, highest attaining Year 9 boys competently construct and interpret sample space diagrams and use them to calculate probabilities in increasingly complex examples. Lowest attaining boys, many with special educational needs, calculate single probabilities and this results in them having a good understanding of the scale of probability. All have benefited from the national numeracy strategy so that learning and progress are less frequently hindered by weaknesses in arithmetic. Standards in numeracy have improved since the last inspection and the overall achievement of boys in Years 7-9 is satisfactory.

131. The overall standard of work of Years 10 and 11 boys is also below the national average, rather than well below. Highest attaining boys are producing standards of work above the national average and this reflects the additional support provided through the Excellence in Cities initiative. For example, their work in trigonometry is extended to include work on the sine and cosine rules. Boys generally are benefiting from greater continuity in teaching and most boys are maintaining steady progress. However, the impact of the national numeracy strategy and new schemes of work on standards is not yet as pronounced as in Years 7-9. Many boys in the middle attaining groups have often not completed work in the past, (and some have completely missed topics), and this has resulted in their making unsatisfactory progress. The impact of these gaps in learning is cumulative and consequently overall achievement is unsatisfactory.

132. In all Year groups there are examples of good quality written work. However, the difficulties that many boys have with retention and recall are sometimes exacerbated by the untidy and unstructured presentation of solutions. In addition, the volume of work produced in order to ensure consolidation is often less than usually observed. Currently the potential for using ICT to enrich and support learning is not being realised and its importance is not being specifically prescribed and promoted in the new schemes of work.

133. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. During the inspection the quality was either good or very good in almost half of the lessons observed. The remainder were satisfactory, except for one poor lesson in which there were weaknesses in boys' management. In the best lessons the teachers' subject command is reflected in the skilful way they frame questions and utilise boys' responses to identify common problems and highlight understanding. Thorough planning reflects the positive and progressive impact of the national numeracy strategy on the structure of lessons. The quality of relationships between teachers and boys generally ensures that lessons are conducted in a purposeful and harmonious atmosphere. For example, in a Year 9 lesson investigating probability, a higher attaining group of boys was consistently engaged by the teacher's use of a range of strategies that included the use of ICT. As a result, boys' sights were raised and their learning was with understanding and enthusiasm. In less successful, but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, there is too little involvement of boys in the teaching and little variety in approaches. Consequently there is a loss of impetus and concentration, particularly in the final stages of the lesson.

134. A good start has been made in generating and using assessment information of boys' prior attainment for setting targets for each pupil. Analysis of data includes the evaluation of actual performance as measured against targets. Although the day-to-day assessment procedures are satisfactory, they are not yet sufficiently rigorous to establish short-term individual pupil targets that can be used to promptly identify and rectify any underachievement. Boys' work is generally marked and assessed. Marking is often accompanied by guidance on what is required to improve. Although marking is satisfactory overall, the quality and frequency varies.

135. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Substantial changes in staffing the department have resulted in greater stability and continuity. This has provided the opportunity for leadership to focus on essential developmental issues. For example, the new acting head of department, supported by two teachers with additional responsibilities in mathematics, has successfully introduced schemes of work that take account of national initiatives. Changes have not been in place long enough to be reflected in examination results, but the planning and preparation of lessons has been significantly enhanced. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because performance in national tests and examinations has been static.

Numeracy skills across the curriculum

136. The school has embraced national numeracy initiatives and developments are in accordance with statutory requirements. All teachers have taken part in a training programme for raising awareness of numeracy issues. There is an appropriate whole school policy for numeracy that takes account of recent developments.

137. The positive impact of the national numeracy strategy on standards of attainment in mathematics lessons is already in evidence. Boys' fluency with arithmetic and number work has significantly improved since the previous inspection. Mathematics lessons in Years 7-9 reflect the structures provided in the national framework and this has improved the overall shape of lessons and increased the quality of planning.

138. Although numeracy skills are not used or promoted in every subject there are many examples of them being well used to enhance learning. In geography, for example, they make a good contribution and boys use their data handling skills effectively in constructing a range of statistical graphs that illuminate information about the variety of housing provision in Liverpool. The impact in science lessons is good and boys' competence with manipulating formulae and drawing graphs of experimental results supports their understanding. In design and technology there are planned opportunities for boys to use measurement skills. A group of Year 11 history pupils, tracking gains and losses of share certificates in the Wall Street crash, demonstrated that they had the capacity to use mental arithmetic to measure changes. Numeracy skills are included in many art lesson plans and, for example, awareness of shape and size is enhanced in perspective drawing of street scenes.

139. Overall, the effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Improving teaching.
- Good relationships with boys.
- Good teamwork in the department.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE and National Curriculum test results.
- Provision of ICT in science lessons.
- Consistency of marking of boys' work.

140. The school's results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well below average. They were above average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys' science and mathematics results were similar, but less good than those in their English. Results over the past four years have declined in relation to the national picture. All boys now take double award science in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average. Results in previous years are not directly comparable as boys sat a variety of GCSE examinations, but overall results have been well below average. Boys do less well in science compared with their other GCSE examinations.

141. Standards seen during the inspection were below average and better than the most recent test and examination figures would suggest. This is due to improving teaching, and the introduction of science courses such as modular GCSE science which are more suited to raising boys' attainment. These standards represent satisfactory achievement for boys in Years 7 to 11.

142. Standards are below average in Year 9. However, achievement is satisfactory as the result of teaching that is largely satisfactory. Standards in biology, chemistry and physics are below what would be expected for boys' age. Higher attainers have a good understanding of the classification of animals and plants and how they adapt to suit their environment. Average attaining boys have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the physics of forces. They can name the unit of force and explain how forces change objects. However, they are unable to calculate the effect of gravity on mass so that their understanding of the principle of moments is limited. Lower attaining boys have some knowledge of the solar system but their understanding of the difference between inner and outer planets is weak. Enquiry science skills improve across the age range due to the emphasis teachers place on this work but are still below average.

143. Standards are also below average in Years 10 and 11. These are better than most recent GCSE results. Boys find the modular GCSE course, with its short-term goals, more interesting and this has resulted in higher standards in this age range, despite a lower than usual time allocation. Higher attaining boys have a good knowledge of optics. They can draw ray diagrams showing how light can be internally reflected in a prism, but have some problems applying this theory to fibre optics. Average attaining boys have a satisfactory understanding of biology. They know that the body uses insulin to regulate blood sugar levels but lack detailed knowledge of the mechanisms involved. Lower attaining boys are all GCSE candidates, but are generally working at lower G and F grades. They have only a limited understanding of chemistry, but have some success in writing word equations to describe chemical reactions.

144. Boys with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards targets set for them. Where support assistants and teachers are available they work well with the class teacher to ensure boys make appropriate progress. For example, in a lower attaining Year 7 class, the presence of a support teacher enabled special educational needs boys make better progress separating salt from rock salt than they would have made on their own. However, their work is often disorganised and they would benefit from guidelines on how to set out their work more methodically.

145. Boys' attitudes to their work in science are satisfactory overall. Although the majority of boys are well behaved and concentrate in class, some boys are not this well behaved. For example, boys in a lower attaining Year 9 class had to be constantly corrected about their lack of concentration. Their unsatisfactory attitude towards learning resulted in them making unsatisfactory progress in their understanding of the solar

system.

146. Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. One unsatisfactory lesson, due to problems managing boys' behaviour, was seen. Although teaching is better than it was at the previous inspection, there is less good and better teaching than that seen nationally and this adversely affects standards. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject specialisms and this expertise is helping older boys make better progress. For example, a physics specialist explained the concept of power and its relationship to potential energy very clearly to a Year 10 group. As a result, they were able to perform calculations involving power successfully and made good progress. In the most successful lessons teachers explicitly convey to boys what they are to learn and check outcomes. Where objectives are not given, the lessons lack focus and pace and, as a result, the boys make slower progress. Lessons are on the whole well planned, often with a good emphasis on numeracy that improves boys' learning particularly in physics and chemistry. For example, boys are taught how to rearrange scientific formulae from first principles. Teachers enjoy good relationships with boys; their management of behaviour is usually good and, as a result, boys concentrate well and this improves their learning. Assessment is good, and the department has established accurate procedures for measuring and recording boys' attainment. Marking is sometimes good with comments that show boys how to improve. However, it often falls short of this standard so that many boys do not get a clear idea of the standard of their work or what to do to improve it. Boys are encouraged to read aloud from science texts. This improves their fluency and comprehension of the work and enables them to make better progress. Although boys gain some insight into the wider effects of science, for example, on the environment, this aspect needs to be more carefully planned as part of the science curriculum. Teachers do not use ICT sufficiently to support and extend boys' learning in science.

147. The department copes well with the split site, although some of the accommodation presents an unattractive environment in which to learn science. The technical staff work hard to ensure that the department functions well on a day-to-day basis.

148. The management and organisation of science is satisfactory. There is a developing emphasis on the monitoring of teaching. However, teaching needs to be evaluated so that a consistent approach to teaching, for instance, in marking boys' books, is arrived at. Standards are improving. Since the previous inspection the department has made satisfactory improvement, although test and examination results need to be better and there is insufficient use of ICT in science.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, and boys achieve well as a result.
- Boys paint confidently, using a variety of styles and techniques.
- The subject makes a good contribution to boys' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, because too many different rooms are used, and a full range of resources is not available in all classrooms.
- Improvements in assessment are recent, and boys do not fully understand how to improve their work.

149. The results of the teachers' National Curriculum assessments in 2002 were below average. The standard of work seen in the school by Year 9 is also below average. Boys' achievement is good in relation to their starting points, which are well below average when they join the school in Year 7. Boys in Years 7 to 9 make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of art and design. Their colour work is careful and considered, and they produce lively compositions which show an increasing confidence in balancing warm and cool colours. They make good gains in their knowledge of the work of other artists. For example, portraits based on the study of Vincent Van Gogh show a sound knowledge of his technique, by following the contours of the face with short stabs of colour. However, their drawing lacks confidence, especially when working from observation, and their line work is rather heavy and laboured.

150. GCSE results in 2002 were below average, although they were broadly in line with results gained by boys nationally. They are below the level seen at the previous inspection. Results fell over the last two years in part because accommodation for the subject was changed, and non-specialist and temporary rooms were allocated across the school. This means that the full range of resources is not always available, and this reduces the range of activities that can be used for any one class. In the work in the school, standards are average by Year 11 and show improvement over the recent GCSE results. This is because the initial problems with the accommodation are now better managed, and fewer rooms are now used. Boys' painting is strong, and they work confidently in a variety of styles and techniques. For example, they produce delicate wash studies from folded and striped material, and large abstract paintings informed by the work of Howard Hodgkin. These are freely painted with bold brushwork and colours. Boys also create sculptures in plaster, which are well made, and effectively explore the shapes made by the human form when running, sitting or standing. However, their experimental work, especially in their sketchbooks, lacks a sense of excitement or discovery.

151. Boys with special educational needs make good progress because they enjoy the practical tasks set, and show good engagement with the materials used. Assessment procedures are clear and show improvement since the previous inspection. However, these improvements are recent, and boys do not yet understand what they need to do to improve.

152. Boys' attitudes are good overall, and the great majority enjoy the subject. This means that they try hard, and achieve well as a result. This is particularly evident in Years 10 and 11 when boys have chosen to take the subject to examination level. However, there are a small number of boys, mostly in Year 9, who show little motivation or interest, and do not achieve as well as they should.

153. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, there is a good level of challenge in the tasks set. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, boys had to observe very closely the complex forms seen in knotted and folded patterned material. As a result, they had to concentrate fully to be able to complete the task. This produced good levels of interest and engagement with the lesson, and learning was good. Teachers also give good individual advice, and are very encouraging. These factors produce good learning in the majority of lessons. In a small number of lessons, however, teachers struggle to gain the attention of boys who do not listen carefully enough. As a result, the boys do not try as hard as they could, and this restricts learning to a level that is no better than satisfactory.

154. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory, and results have fallen over the last two years. However, the quality of teaching and learning has been sustained at a good level, in spite of the difficulties caused by the changes in accommodation. This is because leadership and management are good, and standards are now beginning to rise. The subject also makes a good contribution to boys' cultural development, and they have been involved in a variety of exciting projects. For example, they created a large mural which was displayed as part of the City's Biennial celebrations, and they have made sculpture which was displayed in the Tate Gallery.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The course is well-planned, with good resources and teaching material.
- Boys' involvement in citizenship activities.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangements for assessing boys.

155. This is a new subject in the curriculum. The planning and preparation for its introduction have been very thorough and meticulous. The coordinator has produced a good scheme of work, and detailed teachers' notes and lesson plans a term in advance. Citizenship forms part of the personal social and health education (PSHE) programme, with a module of lessons in it alternating with a module of PSHE. During the week of the inspection, the only opportunity to observe citizenship lessons occurred in Year 9.

156. Standards of work seen in these lessons were above average as was boys' achievement. It was not possible to reach secure judgements on their work throughout the course so far, because of the limited amount of written work available. Similarly, there were few instances of teacher assessment, although arrangements are in hand to grade boys' work termly and already they themselves have undertaken self-evaluation, and are fully aware of standards to which they must aspire. Nevertheless, teachers will need to set boys more formal work in order to be able to make reliable assessments.

157. The teaching of citizenship is undertaken by form tutors, who have had a full day of in-service training to prepare them. Their teaching is being monitored by heads of year, whose lesson observation notes are thorough and reveal a rigorous approach. Similarly, the coordinator scrutinises the work of the boys. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good, being based on good planning and management and a variety of approaches to maintain motivation and interest. All of these lessons focused on the Holocaust and boys displayed an ability to discuss the issues sensitively. This topic integrated very well into the planned scheme of work, as boys had already undertaken work on racism, prejudice and discrimination, producing essays and poems. One of the three lessons observed brought together gifted and talented boys, who derived great benefit from a moving and vivid talk by a survivor of Auschwitz.

158. Overall, the teaching of citizenship in the school is securely in place, and a particular strength is the participation of boys in related activities. A democratically elected and effective school council has been established. Boys engage in a range of activities to develop their awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and of their duties to the wider community, for example, by acting as hosts to visitors to the school, organising a litter campaign, and taking part in charity work for deserving causes locally, nationally and internationally.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The teaching environment has been improved by good use of display.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are not high enough.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not providing boys with a coherent experience of designing and making.
- Work is not always well-matched to the abilities of all boys.
- The National Curriculum requirement to include the use of compliant materials or food has still not been satisfied.

159. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average and similar to 2001. Overall, boys did not achieve as well as expected in relation to their standards at the end of Year 9. The number of boys entered for GCSE and gaining grades A*-G has increased substantially since the previous inspection, whilst the proportion of boys awarded the higher grades A*-C has declined slightly. Results were best in resistant materials and lowest in graphics products. Boys' results in design and technology were not as good as in their other GCSE examinations.

160. Overall, standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average, but boys, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily in relation to their standards when they enter the school. Boys mostly acquire satisfactory making skills in wood, metal and plastics, but have no experience of designing and making using textiles or food as required by the National Curriculum. Whilst boys learn about materials, systems and drawing, they are not taught how to make considered independent decisions about their use in designing. Hence their ability to select knowledge and processes for designing and making is limited, although better in Year 7 than in other years. A lack of freehand drawing skills adversely affects boys' ability to design but they are beginning to make sound use of ICT in designing. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are too high because they do not sufficiently reflect the weakness in design skills.

161. Overall, standards of current work in Years 10 to 11 show some improvement on previous years and, although below average, boys, including those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactorily. This improvement has been brought about more structured teaching and systematic assessment of project

work. Nevertheless, much design work follows a routine with a lack of clear design objectives, insufficient analysis of research, and a limited range of preconceived ideas. Boys make sound use of ICT for presentation, for planning electronic circuits and recently for some manufacture by computer controlled routing. Standards of making are average and sometimes higher. The most able boys do not make as good progress as other boys because lessons are too often taught at the pace of the slowest boys.

162. Most boys are attentive in lessons and respond well to teachers' questions, sometimes moving discussions on by asking stimulating questions themselves. Most take care with the presentation of their work. Nevertheless, absence has significant effect on standards because many boys get behind with their projects and some lessons are delayed by the late arrival of boys.

163. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. However, there were some unsatisfactory lessons in which the work was not matched to the abilities of the boys. In one lesson the standard of the written work used with the boys was too complex for the ability of the group, and in another the most able were held back to the pace of the slowest learners. Nevertheless, basic teaching techniques such as questioning, providing individual help, setting clear objectives, reinforcing learning by summaries and clear marking are consistently applied and, as a result, learning is usually satisfactory. Some good teaching, which encouraged imaginative thinking was observed, most notably a lesson in which boys' design horizons were widened by researching and evaluating work from the Memphis group. Teachers have made good use of display to improve the learning environment.

164. Overall, the management of the subject is satisfactory. Improvements put in place by the subject management have resulted in satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Monitoring of teaching has achieved a greater consistency of approach although in future needs to focus more on what boys learn. The two newly-qualified teachers lack day-to-day contact with experienced teachers because they teach on a different site from the majority of the department, and this is holding back their development. Most specific weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, except for the use of compliant materials or food, have been improved, for example, more use of ICT, better assessment procedures and an improved teaching environment. Other improvements in monitoring boys' progress and the subject's contributions to literacy and numeracy have also been introduced. However, even allowing for the increased entry at GCSE, these have not raised standards substantially. A motor vehicle studies course provides appropriate experiences for some boys, but there is little provision for boys to involve themselves with this or other aspects of the subject outside lessons.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards and results are improving.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Achievement is good.
- The use of assessment to set targets and monitor individual progress.
- Boys have very good attitudes

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT.
- The depth and inter-relationships of some topics in Years 7-9.
- Further use of enquiries, investigations, group work and independent research.

165. Standards of boys' work in Year 9 are below average overall and are reflected accurately in the teachers' assessments. Boys develop a knowledge and understanding of geographical patterns and increase their knowledge and understanding of different places from a local to a world scale. By Year 9 higher attainers describe and explain the global pattern and cause and effect of earthquakes. They produce well-written reports on the human response to these natural hazards and reach above average standards. The majority of boys, including lower attainers, construct accurate climate graphs but many do not read and interpret them in relation to ecosystems. This work is below average standards. Nevertheless, in relation to

their attainment in geography at the start of Year 7, these standards represent good achievement. Boys' understanding of the related patterns of development, population growth and industrial structure could be developed further.

166. Standards of Year 11 boys' work are average overall and achievement is good. Higher attainers reach above average standards in their work. They explain the features of river valleys and use technical language accurately and with confidence. They have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the differences between farming in the Lake District and East Anglia. The standard of work of lower attainers is below average. For example, their explanations of the formation of waterfalls lack detail of the processes of erosion involved and they do not fully understand the impact of the development of tourism in Spain.

167. In 2002 the GCSE results improved significantly. Although they were below the national average the majority of boys achieved grades that were expected of them in relation to their standards at the start of the course. Overall, they gained slightly higher grades in geography than they did in their other subjects.

168. Boys with special educational needs, whose literacy skills are weak, make good progress throughout the school because the work is carefully matched to their needs. For example, they use different worksheets on volcanoes that are effective and enable them to keep up with other boys. Gifted and talented boys make good progress, particularly in independent work as, for example, in their investigation into the changing nature of landscape and function of a village in north Wales.

169. Boys' attitudes and behaviour are very good. These are particularly clear where, in response to revision and teachers' comments on their work, boys add detailed notes and corrections to their answers. Boys work very well in pairs and groups when, for example, playing a game to reinforce their learning of the changing shopping patterns in cities. The erratic attendance of some boys is a cause for concern, especially in Year 10, where it reduces their achievement.

170. Teaching and learning are good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. In a lesson on Dover the teacher's subject expertise combined with skilful questioning enabled all boys to make rapid progress in increasing their knowledge and understanding of a port. They used very good texts and photographs to develop their skills of interpretation. The teacher's high expectations were demonstrated with a constant reference to examination technique. Boys were challenged to extend their understanding of Britain's wider links with Europe when a newspaper article was introduced. This made them consider the benefits to Liverpool of a rail link with Lille and its possible disadvantages for Rotterdam. Very good class management and relationships with boys ensured that a class of lower-attaining boys sustained concentration as they developed their understanding of the exploitation of the Amazon rainforest. The teacher used a group of words very effectively to enable boys to identify links between development and its economic and social effects. In the less successful lessons boys were passive learners and they required more help to structure their extended writing. Insufficient use is made of a variety of learning techniques, such as group work, discussion and independent research.

171. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. The use of technical language is gradually developed. Boys use a range of writing styles including reports, extended writing, letters and newspaper articles effectively. They use a variety of graphs competently. The use of ICT to support boys' learning is not fully developed and does not meet statutory requirements.

172. Leadership and management of the department are very good and have resulted in a very significant improvement since the previous inspection. A key feature is the focus on monitoring and improving teaching and the sharing of good practice through a weekly newsletter. This focus has improved standards. The procedures for assessment are very good, and records enable the progress of boys to be checked rigorously against individual targets. This, too, is improving standards. Examination results are analysed in detail and there is a determination to maximise achievement. Further improvement is carefully planned and includes the areas outlined in this report. The department has both the commitment and capacity to succeed.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Improving standards and results in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and boys achieve well.
- Most boys have positive attitudes to learning and behave well.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the consistency of teaching by monitoring more effectively.
- Assessment information gathered in Years 7 to 9 is not analysed, and the information so gained is not used to improve planning.
- Schemes of work are not linked well enough to the key historical skills and requirements of the National Curriculum for history.
- ICT is not used enough to assist boys' learning in history

173. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are below average and broadly reflect the most recent teacher assessments of Year 9 boys' attainment. GCSE results improved significantly in 2002 in comparison with the well below average results in 2001. In 2002 the results were below average but, in comparison with their starting points at the beginning of the course, most boys achieved well. However, few boys obtain the highest A*-A grades, and some boys do not do as well as they could because of poor attendance or their failure to complete coursework.

174. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are below average, but most boys make satisfactory progress in relation to their well below average starting points on entry to the school. Most boys make good initial progress in Year 7 because they are provided with a good grounding in important basic skills, such as an understanding of chronology and the relative importance of primary and secondary evidence. However, progress thereafter is inconsistent. By the end of Year 9, boys' knowledge and understanding of the major characteristics of the periods which they study, and the reasons for and results of changes, for example, in agricultural methods in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is generally better than their capacity to use and analyse sources of information. Their understanding of the way that different interpretations of historical events arise is underdeveloped because little attention is paid to learning this skill. While most boys can select information appropriately from a relatively restricted range of sources of information, they have few opportunities to develop their ideas or describe the results of their investigations by writing at length. Although some boys use computers, for example, to word-process homework tasks, they are not provided with enough opportunities to use computers to assist their learning in history at school.

175. By Year 11 standards remain below, but closer to, average. In particular, higher attainers have a good capacity to analyse sources of information and use their own knowledge and understanding well in support of their conclusions, for example when comparing different views of the use of the atomic bomb on Japan. Average attainers have a sound knowledge and understanding of events but tend to lack clarity and precision in the way in which they apply these when answering questions. Lower attainers' written work is limited in length, but they make good progress because their teachers know them well and learning activities are made interesting and are well matched to their capabilities.

176. In general, boys who have special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress in lessons because the teachers are well aware of their needs and provide well for them. More difficult tasks were provided as extensions to the main learning activities for the highest attainers. Classroom assistants provide good support to individual boys, but their effectiveness could be further improved with better liaison between the special educational needs and history departments.

177. The overall quality of teaching, and the learning which it promotes in Years 7 to 9, is satisfactory. The history department has experienced a significant change in personnel in recent times, and the improved teaching seen in lessons during the inspection is not yet fully reflected in boys' attainment by the end of Year 9. In the lessons seen, there were major strengths. These included the quality of teachers' planning which catered for the needs of all boys, and the provision of a wide range of interesting and challenging learning activities. Recently introduced learning resources are of high quality and contributed significantly to the very good learning observed in lessons on improvements to castle design, and slavery. Teachers pay good attention to the development of boys' literacy skills, for example by displaying the spelling and meanings of difficult technical or less commonly used general vocabulary. Expectations of classroom behaviour are high and teachers work hard to instil good learning habits. Teachers who are new to the school make these

expectations very clear while at the same time establishing good relationships. Evidence from boys' written work reveals some weaknesses and inconsistencies in the teaching. These relate, in the main, to a lack of variety in the learning activities which have been provided, and lack of opportunity for boys to reach the National Curriculum levels appropriate to their capabilities in all of the key historical skills. Boys' work is marked regularly but not always in a way, which helps them to improve or know how well they are achieving. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good overall and occasionally is outstanding. A Year 11 class experienced a powerful, emotional, as well as high quality, learning experience in a revision lesson covering the Nazi persecution of the Jews. The teacher made very effective use of his own experience of Judaism, which enabled boys to gain a real insight into the impact of the Nazi racial policies on the lives of 'real' people.

178. Most boys respond well to the positive climate for learning which teachers create in the classroom. They concentrate well in lessons and are keen to answer and ask questions about their work. They work well with each other in pair and group work. However, the absence of a significant minority of boys adversely affects their progress in history.

179. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Results and standards have improved. However, although the overall quality of teaching is now better than at the time of the previous inspection, monitoring procedures have not identified the inconsistencies which exist, and ensure that the good and very good practice is shared. Schemes of work still require improvement in order to reflect the needs of different groups of boys and ensure that all the key historical skills receive appropriate attention. Too many classes are split between teachers and this is affecting continuity in boys' learning. Subject leadership and management is currently satisfactory. The head of department has only been in post for a few weeks, but has begun to identify strengths and weaknesses and introduce measures which are already having a positive impact on standards and the quality of education provided.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Boys have very good access to computers outside of lesson times.
- GCSE results are above the national average for A*-G grades

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work are well below average.
- Boys are underachieving.
- There are no specialist teachers in the ICT department, and teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.
- The vast majority of Year 10 and 11 boys are not getting their entitlement to the National Curriculum in ICT.

180. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average for A*-C grades but above for A*-G grades. Twenty-two boys were entered, fewer than in any other subject, but all gained a pass grade. Overall, boys who were entered for ICT did better in their other examination subjects. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that boys' attainment was well below the national average. However, these results were a big improvement on the previous year when they were assessed as being poor.

181. By Year 9 standards are well below average. Skills are being developed mainly through word processing, desk-top publishing and database and spreadsheet tasks. Although boys can use computer software to produce basic designs incorporating text and graphics, they have limited skills in the use of multi-media, digital cameras or scanners. They have a very limited understanding of the use of ICT to solve problems by building models, constructing procedures and then measuring or controlling the results. Given their attainment on entry, boys' achievement is unsatisfactory and they should be doing much better. However, the large number of supply teachers and the lack of experienced teachers of ICT in the school is inhibiting progress.

182. By Year 11, standards are still well below average. Boys taking the GNVQ or GCSE course have a reasonable fluency in basic operations, understand the structures of databases and spreadsheets and are

able to use PowerPoint for presentations. However, design analysis skills are very weak and boys are not yet confident and autonomous users of ICT. They have not developed the independent learning skills expected of boys of this age. Their achievement is poor because they have failed to make sufficient progress from the end of Year 9.

183. The progress of boys with special educational needs is also unsatisfactory. Teachers do not provide work suited to their learning needs, for example, when giving them worksheets that they cannot read. Their erratic attendance also contributes to their insufficient progress as they move through the school. Gifted and talented boys are underachieving. Teachers do not have the subject expertise to provide stimulating and challenging work to fully stretch them and they tend to do the same work as other boys in the class.

184. Boys' attitudes are satisfactory. In only one lesson seen were attitudes and behaviour unsatisfactory, a direct consequence of weak classroom management. Generally, boys like the subject and most show a willingness to listen to their teachers and attempt the tasks they are set. The majority of boys do not take homework seriously; a small minority have produced no homework since September.

185. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Teachers are not qualified in the subject. Although they work hard, plan their lessons carefully and generally have good relations with the boys, they lack the necessary knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum requirements in ICT to direct their teaching in ways that help learn and move on. They do not encourage boys to become independent learners. They teach mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9 as if they were all of the same ability. Consequently boys' learning is at a very superficial level. Learning has also been adversely affected by the large number of supply teachers the school has had to employ to cope with teacher absence and recent unforeseen resignations.

186. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection has been poor. Apart from the introduction of ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 little improvement has been made. There has been no improvement in standards of work, teaching and learning, or leadership and management. A subject improvement plan has still not been produced. There are no assessment records available for boys, other than those the acting head of department has produced since he took responsibility for the subject in January. Work that is now being assessed is not related to National Curriculum requirements. GNVQ boys in Year 11 are getting insufficient guidance; for example, they still do not know the deadline for the submission of their coursework portfolios. Boys' progress in the subject is not being monitored. The monitoring of teaching and learning within the department is not taking place. The vast majority of Year 10 and 11 boys are not getting their National Curriculum entitlement. The teachers of ICT ensure that boys have very good access to computers outside of lesson times and give up a great deal of their time for breakfast clubs and lunchtime and after-school clubs. However, currently staffing is unsatisfactory. Teachers lack subject knowledge and expertise, and the department lacks direction in the absence of a permanent head of department.

Information and communications technology skills across the curriculum

187. Opportunities for boys to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects have improved since the previous inspection, but are not yet satisfactory. They are particularly strong in media studies. Most subjects plan to include elements of computer work in their teaching, but this is not always reflected in practice. There is good use of the internet for research in some subjects, and work is often presented using word-processing or desk-top publishing skills. Some subjects use specialist equipment and software; for example, data logging in science and crocodile clips in electronics. Digital cameras are used in art to create good quality montages which are then projected onto a large scale to create stunning murals. Special educational needs pupils use an integrated learning package to help develop numeracy and literacy skills. In music are statutory requirements not being met, because there is a lack of music-dedicated equipment such as computers with scoring and editing capability. Midi-keyboard work is stored on midi-files which are not compatible with PC's and Cubass software. ICT use in geography also fails to meet requirements, and much more needs to be done in modern foreign languages where boys make use of word-processing skills in presenting work. However, across the school too little subject-specific use is made of computers and new technology.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Boys make very good progress in French and reach average standards in Year 9 because teaching is very good.
- Standards are improving in Years 10 and 11 because teaching and learning are good.
- Boys have very good attitudes and achieve well.
- Leadership is very good.
- Assessment is very good.
- The curriculum is enriched with the provision of Spanish as equal first language in Year 7.

Areas for improvement

- Raise the proportion of boys achieving a GCSE grade at A*-C.
- Improve spelling and develop boys' speaking skills further.
- Increase opportunities for boys to use and develop ICT skills in their lessons.
- Develop links with France and Spain.

French

188. In 2002, almost every pupil in the Year 11 was entered for a full GCSE for the first time, a significant increase compared with previous years. Results at A*-C were well below average, but the proportion achieving a pass at A*-G and matched the national average for all schools. Boys did better in French than in most other subjects.

189. Standards in Year 9 are average and closely match teachers' assessments. Considering they get less time to study French than is usual, boys are achieving very well. Their progress is good in developing their knowledge of vocabulary and basic grammar, including an early introduction to the past tense, which enables them to progress quickly to a higher level. Most can write a short account, linking sentences together and expressing opinions, though there is some careless spelling. Some higher attaining boys make very good progress in writing more extended pieces, using a variety of tenses and maintaining a good level of accuracy. Boys develop comprehension skills well, picking out details from tapes and printed materials. Some are already developing reading skills further by reading short stories for enjoyment and this good practice should be extended to all classes. Because they get regular opportunities to practise speaking, most boys respond readily to a visual prompt or a question with a sentence, though pronunciation is sometimes rather weak, and boys have not yet developed the confidence to extend their responses routinely.

190. Standards in Year 11 are just below average, and higher than the most recent results would suggest.

This represents good achievement. Boys continue to make good progress in writing. In their coursework, they can refer successfully to past and future events, although inaccuracies, especially in spelling, do occur. Higher attaining boys write more fluently and accurately, using a wider range of tenses and language structures. Most of these higher attaining boys also speak confidently and read aloud with good pronunciation. All boys make satisfactory progress in developing comprehension and oral skills and are encouraged to respond in full sentences. However, relatively few can sustain and develop their spoken responses more fully. Lower ability boys and boys with special educational needs make good progress because teaching methods and materials are suitably adapted to their needs and they are on course to achieve a GCSE pass.

191. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and very good in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teaching has many strengths, most notably the consistent whole team approach to planning, with its sharp focus on what boys are to learn and how they are to progress. Teachers speak French fluently and are good role models for the boys. They are calm and patient and manage classes very well because relationships are very good, and they use good strategies to keep boys focused and on task. Just occasionally, teacher inexperience leads to less effective management of boys. Lessons are purposeful and are made interesting because resources are well-chosen and activities are carefully planned to involve boys actively in their learning. A very good example was a Year 10 lesson about booking hotel accommodation. The teacher's excellent control and relationships with the very low ability class were clear from the start. Throughout the lesson, conducted entirely in French, the teacher skilfully used a range of different strategies, resources and activities to catch the boys' attention, build up their knowledge and understanding of the language and encourage greater use of French. Boys were actively involved in their learning at all stages, including working at the front and practising dialogues with a partner. When faced with a challenging tape that really tested their learning, boys achieved considerable success because the teacher had managed to build up their knowledge and confidence so effectively. The extra support and reinforcement of instructions and explanations the teacher gave to boys with special educational needs ensured they were able to quickly get onto and stay on task. Learning in this lesson was very good and boys made very good progress.

192. Attitudes in French are very good. Boys enjoy what they do and come ready to work, maintaining their high level of concentration and effort throughout the lessons. They do their homework and take pride in the presentation of their work. Behaviour is generally very good. Year 11 boys attend weekly GCSE revision classes and younger boys attend after school activities, including an ICT club. However, opportunities for boys to use ICT to enhance their learning in lessons or to establish e-mail links with boys in France are not yet in place.

Spanish

193. Since the previous inspection Spanish has been successfully introduced into the curriculum as equal first language, and is currently taught in Years 7 and 8.

194. Boys get off to a good start in Year 7, progressing quickly through the early levels. They speak with good pronunciation because new words are drilled effectively and they practise regularly. They learn basic grammar from the outset, with strong emphasis on accuracy. By Year 8, high attaining boys can write a paragraph about themselves, using verbs correctly and linking sentences together well when expressing opinions. After four terms, standards in Year 8 are close to average and boys are achieving very well.

195. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, with the same sharp focus on learning and progress as in French. Teachers ensure through their careful planning and sequencing of activities that boys have good opportunities to develop each skill. Lower attaining boys and boys with special educational needs make very good progress in lessons because of the excellent in-class support and quality team teaching provided from within the modern foreign languages department.

196. Boys have very good attitudes. They clearly enjoy their lessons and they behave very well. The small group of highly motivated boys in Year 8 who learn Spanish as an after school activity are making good progress because the teaching is very good and they come ready and eager to learn.

Modern Languages

197. Leadership is very good and has led to significant improvements since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved through rigorous formal monitoring and the sharing of very

good practice. This, together with very good assessment practice and the tangible shared commitment to raise achievement further, has accelerated boys' rate of progress and is driving standards up rapidly, most notably in Years 7-9. However, teachers need to continue to strive for a similar rapid rise in the proportion of boys gaining a GCSE pass at grades A*-C. In order to develop boys' cultural awareness further, the department should consider using the new technology to establish links with schools in France and Spain and explore the possibility of setting up exchange visits.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The achievement of boys in Year 11 is good.
- Boys' attitudes towards music are positive.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 7-9.
- Accommodation and ICT provision for music are unsatisfactory.
- There is not enough support for boys who have behavioural difficulties

198. There was no GCSE course in music in 2002.

199. Teachers' assessments of boys' attainment at the end of Year 9 show that standards are well below average, and this was reflected in standards of work in Year 9 seen during the inspection. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment at this stage have remained static.

200. The achievement of boys by Year 9 is unsatisfactory. Despite generally satisfactory teaching at present, weaknesses in its previous continuity have held back their progress. Most boys understand staff notation but are not able to play simple, single-line melodies fluently and rhythmically; they do not listen critically to their efforts in order to identify and correct mistakes. Although they could sing "Let it Be" accurately, very few boys noticed that they were playing some notes in the wrong octave. Achievement by younger boys is good. Boys in Year 7 are acquiring satisfactory general musical knowledge. Some more able boys could discuss in simple terms how notes of different pitch were produced in trumpet playing, and one or two knew that the trumpet did not normally play in C pitch. In Year 8, boys know about chords and triads and can explain the different effects of major and minor chords. At all stages singing is enthusiastic and usually well controlled.

201. Standards of attainment of boys in Year 11 are average and the achievement of boys at this stage is good, with composing a particular strength. Boys build systematically on previously acquired knowledge and understanding, and have developed good aural discrimination, so that compositions of melodies in traditional styles are appropriately harmonised and well structured. Boys explore a range of different styles of composing, readily drawing on their understanding of musical elements when creating atmospheric pieces. Performing skills are variable, primarily because so few boys have instrumental lessons. More able boys perform competently, but lower attaining boys do not communicate confidently with an audience. Because of their lack of wide general experience in music-making, boys' knowledge of subject language and musical history is unsatisfactory.

202. The progress of most boys with special educational needs is similar to that of other boys in Years 7-9, and is unsatisfactory. Boys who have behavioural difficulties have difficulty in concentrating on practical tasks and this slows their progress. Boys who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress.

203. At all stages, boys' attitudes are good. They arrive prepared to settle to work, and are fully cooperative with one another and with their teachers. They handle equipment responsibly and control levels of noise in a considerate manner. When working independently, most boys make good use of the available time, avoiding the temptation to distract other boys. Boys are hindered from developing independence of approach through experimenting with original ideas because of the lack of separate spaces for small group work.

204. The quality of teaching and learning, which is satisfactory overall, has improved significantly since the previous inspection; examples of good and very good teaching occurred at all stages, particularly in Year 11. Teachers are enthusiastic and highly committed, and by maintaining good relationships create a positive learning atmosphere. The most successful lessons are conducted at a lively pace, with a clear focus on musical objectives. Less successful lessons occurred when teachers had insufficient experience in teaching a particular aspect or where there was no support for boys with behavioural problems. Not enough attention is paid to providing suitable challenges for boys' different needs and abilities.

205. Leadership and management in the music department are satisfactory. Both the head of department and the second musician are very recent appointments who are working together very effectively to re-establish the department after a period of discontinuity and instability. The department does not yet have any monitoring of the quality of teaching in order to identify areas for professional development. Schemes of work have been put in place which take full account of the requirements of the National Curriculum in music and the GCSE examinations, and provide boys with good opportunities to develop understanding of their own culture and of world music. The department has created a system of assessing boys' work which reflects the National Curriculum requirements for music. However, there is no clear overview of progression or of boys' strengths and weaknesses in different aspects of the subject.

206. There is an expanding programme of extra-curricular activities, including vocal and instrumental groups, a keyboard club, an African drumming group and an after-hours support class for boys taking GCSE. Attendance at these activities is small. Only a small proportion of boys learns to play musical instruments, the cost of which is met entirely by the school. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection in the provision of one refurbished room on one site. However, when two classes run simultaneously, teaching has to take place in non-specialist accommodation. During the inspection one such class used the time to search the internet for information about local musicians - activities inevitably focused on computer technology skills at the expense of acquiring relevant musical knowledge. Accommodation on the other site is unsatisfactory; it consists of two non-specialist rooms in a neglected state of decoration; the small room used both for storage and for instrumental teaching is congested and dirty, and is highly unsuitable as a working and learning environment. The lack of sufficient music-dedicated computers adversely affects attainment and progress across all year groups.

207. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory in that the quality of teaching has improved and the challenge for boys is more appropriate. However, the issues of accommodation, and of the provision of ICT, have not been resolved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Overall teaching is good with some very good features.
- Most boys have positive attitudes to the subject.
- There are good relationships amongst boys and between most boys and their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures need developing to enable better tracking of boys' progress.
- Facilities for physical education.

208. Attainment on entry to the school is variable, but overall is below average. By the end of Year 9 standards have risen, and currently have reached average levels. Boys' attainment is good in relation to their starting points. The teacher assessments made in 2002 were over-generous in identifying 80 per cent of Year 9 boys as reaching the expected level 5 compared with the national figure set at 72 per cent. There are areas of weaknesses in Years 8 and 9. For example, in some basketball lessons boys' lack basic ball-handling and carrying skills. Conversely, in soccer, standards are higher and some boys have above average skills for their age and show a good understanding of the game.

209. In Years 10 and 11 standards in core physical education are also average. Some further progress is

being made and, by the time the boys leave the school, the greater majority are able to play at least one major game to a good standard and have developed a sound understanding of the importance of personal physical fitness. For example, in basketball the standard of ball-handling skills is above average, passing is sharp and accurate and there is a good level of understanding of defensive tactics. GCSE physical education has been recently introduced. Currently boys in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well in this course. In Year 10 in both practical and theory lessons standards are close to average. In a badminton lesson, standards were above average overall. Most boys can play the game well and are beginning to develop improved tactical awareness using a range of shots to seek for 'winning' opportunities.

210. Most boys have a positive approach to the subject. They listen well and watch keenly, they are eager to do well and enjoy good working relationships. These characteristics give strong support to their learning and help them make practices and drills effective in raising standards. In a Year 9 football lesson, the energy and enthusiasm seen in small groups shooting and goal-keeping was most notable. Boys with special educational needs make good progress because they enjoy the practical work and have good interest and commitment in their work.

211. Overall, teaching is good and so is learning. Most teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and this enables them to devise, plan and manage practices designed to stimulate interest and promote improvement. Where this is the case, boys respond well and work hard to develop their skills, though there are some lessons where the tasks are over-prescriptive and the targets set unattainable by some boys. Where teaching is best all boys are given responsibility within the lessons. In a Year 9 lesson much of the work was carried out in small groups, with boys as leaders of warming up activities, stretching routines, and in skill practices providing each other with feedback on successful improvements. This they clearly enjoyed, demonstrating both a level of maturity and good humour not matched in other lessons.

212. The curriculum in physical education has been improved since the last inspection with a greater variety of activities that now meet National Curriculum requirements. GCSE and A-level courses have begun, ensuring that boys have the opportunity to take examination courses in the subject. There is, though, still an emphasis on games and the split-site enforces restrictions on the quality of the programme of study. The specialist accommodation available remains unsatisfactory overall, with limited indoor opportunities and little outdoor other than grass or facilities shared with the public. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Organisation and day-to-day administration are good. There is, however, at present neither clear action to raise standards by improving assessment procedures, nor to use the information gathered to evaluate boys' performance and progress, the quality of teaching, and the overall effectiveness of the department.

213. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards however, are currently average and improved as a consequence of better teaching. Accommodation, remains inadequate.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Some teaching where boys are involved directly in their learning.
- Boys in Years 7-8 respond well to good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- No head of department to provide leadership.
- Poor resources.

214. The standards attained in Years 10-11 are too low because, apart from six lessons about 'Death and Afterwards' in Year 10, the subject is not taught. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below expectations. Boys join the school with widely differing standards, with most well below average and, although satisfactory progress is made over the three years, the standards attained are below average.

215. By the end of Year 9 the boys can talk with some confidence about elementary aspects of the six major world faiths in respect of their formal established beliefs. The core of this is Judaism and Christianity,

with inputs about Hinduism and Buddhism. The boys understand how symbols are used by every world faith. For example, the use of symbols for the Trinity in Christianity are well understood. Most of their work shows how religion has developed, but relatively little is taught about religious beliefs in the late 20th Century, hence some boys do not see their relevance. This is especially so in Year 9 where the boys clearly found it difficult to relate to the Jewish holocaust. They, therefore, often gain knowledge but very little empathy for the situations portrayed about Wilberforce, Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Boys in Years 7-8 show good understanding of religious issues when they are taught in a contemporary manner, as, for example, in a lesson about the moral teaching of Jesus' parables. The boys do not, however, have the experience of structured independent learning and learning from first hand experiences. As a result, they are dependent upon the teachers for most of their developing knowledge.

216. The attitudes of boys in Years 7-8 were often good or better as they responded willingly to any teaching which was stimulating, varied, well-paced and challenging. They wanted to write short moral plays in groups, and confidently speculated about religious issues related to Christian beliefs and symbols. The attitudes of boys in Year 9 were less satisfactory. This was partly because of the accommodation which was not stimulating, indeed it was often unsuited to the teaching. The resources and learning experiences often minimised the possibility of boys engaging positively with the lessons.

217. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The planning and presentation of the lessons are carefully considered and competent. Although there was a tendency for too much emphasis to be put on oral explanations, they were clear and precise. When the teaching methods were more varied, the response was immediate. The use of a modern cartoon parable on video, an appropriate song by Cat Stevens, the use of an Old Master painting, and religious cartoon drawings all evoked a warm response and a good level of understanding. There was, however, a tendency for much of the written work to be stereotyped exercises which lacked variation. Also there was a tendency for teachers to be too easily satisfied with boys' levels of presentation. The teachers are aware of the boys with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Whilst the boys with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, those who are gifted and talented are not extended sufficiently. Although there is an awareness of this, appropriate resources are needed to rectify it. The support assistant works diligently helping boys with their literacy problems, but should be more involved in planning their work.

218. The current vacancy for head of department is a severe weakness. Although the teachers are coping, the lack of leadership is holding back progress. There are plans to rectify this. Until this occurs, however, the proposed GCSE course in Years 10-11 and the modernisation of the provision in Years 7-9 cannot be achieved. Urgent problems of accommodation and shortage of resources remain, and there is no evidence of any use of ICT. The library provision needs to be reviewed also. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	12	75	-	25	-	1.8	-
Biology	15	47	-	7	-	0.9	-
Chemistry	12	33	-	0	-	0.8	-
Design and technology	8	88	-	13	-	1.6	-
Economics	9	78	-	0	-	1.4	-
English language/literature	24	79	-	4	-	1.5	-
French	8	63	-	38	-	2.1	-
General studies	52	39	-	6	-	0.8	-
Geography	17	65	-	18	-	1.6	-
Government and politics	13	69	-	8	-	1.4	-
History	15	73	-	7	-	1.5	-
ICT	9	11	-	0	-	0.1	-
Mathematics	9	22	-	11	-	0.6	-
Media studies	17	82	-	41	-	2.6	-
Physics	10	20	-	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
Art	11	64	-	0	-	2.4	-
Biology	6	67	-	17	-	3.3	-
Chemistry	6	100	-	33	-	5.0	-
Design and technology	4	100	-	0	-	3.0	-
Economics	5	100	-	20	-	6.4	-
English language/literature	26	96	-	19	-	4.7	-
General studies	7	86	-	28	-	4.0	-
Geography	15	100	-	27	-	5.9	-
Government and politics	20	90	-	20	-	4.2	-
History	19	90	-	16	-	3.9	-
ICT	4	50	-	0	-	2.0	-
Mathematics	5	40	-	0	-	1.2	-

Media studies	8	100	-	37	-	6.8	-
Physics	7	100	-	28	-	5.4	-

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The main focus was on mathematics and chemistry but biology and physics were also sampled. Standards and results in biology and physics are below average. One lesson was observed in each subject. In biology, good teaching with effective use of audio-visual aids ensured students made good progress in their understanding of the digestive system. Teaching in the physics lesson was also good, and students made good progress in their experimental skills when measuring the absorption of radiation by air and aluminium.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- All teachers have a thorough command of the subject.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Improve standards and results in examinations, particularly AS level.
- Employ a wider range of teaching strategies that include the planned use of ICT to enrich and support learning.
- There is too little written work, and notes and solutions are not well structured or presented.
- Increase the time for teaching.

219. The 2001 A-level results were well below the national average. A-level students achieved well and produced overall results higher than predicted by their prior performance in GCSE. One student's achievement was excellent. AS results were very low because a high proportion of students did not obtain a pass grade. Although retention rates are generally satisfactory, about one-third of this cohort of AS students terminated their study of mathematics at the end of Year 12. A-level results declined further in 2002. Results in AS were similar with a small reduction in the proportion of students not attaining a pass grade. Analysis indicates that most students perform less well in mathematics than in their other A2 and AS subjects.

220. The standards of work seen in Year 12 and 13 are below average and students are achieving appropriately. Although the attainment during each lesson is usually average, the written work produced by most students is less than that usually observed. There is insufficient rehearsal and consolidation of learning and this impedes many students' capacity to retain the knowledge and skills gained in individual lessons. This is partly explained by the pressure of completing a course in a time allocation that is significantly less than that typically seen. Half the students in Year 12 studied GCSE at intermediate, rather than higher, level and their need for more time to consolidate their learning is highlighted by a lack of grounding in algebraic manipulation.

221. The quality of students' written exercises matches course requirements. The clarity of diagrams, particularly in mechanics, is good and promotes understanding. Written work often lacks structure and rigour and, particularly for weaker students, does not help in establishing the necessary routines for presenting solutions. The most able students demonstrate that their learning is with understanding and they are articulate in applying their prior learning to the development of new knowledge and skills. Weaker students make elementary errors even though they understand the work. The quality of students' notes, though sometimes good, varies and few students annotate their notes to suit their individual learning needs.

222. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. Two particular strengths characterise all lessons, the subject command of the teachers and the very good relationships that have been established between teachers and students. In the best lessons the teacher's planning identifies the specific skills, knowledge and understanding to be developed. Thorough knowledge of individual student strengths and weaknesses is utilised to maximise the impact of skilful questions that illuminate understanding and isolate misconceptions. In a good Year 13 lesson, developing differentiation to include implicit functions, the teacher involved every student, using questions that enabled each student to make contributions with confidence. Subject

command was evidenced by the bringing together of necessary prior knowledge and identification of incidental differentiation processes contained in more complex examples. The result was a good balance between the rehearsal of prior knowledge and acquisition of new knowledge and skills. In less successful, but nevertheless satisfactory, lessons there is too much teacher talk and insufficient involvement of the students during explanations. This results in an absence of sparkle and passive learning. There is little variety in teaching approaches and the potential for using ICT to enrich and support learning is not utilised. Facilities for independent learning are limited.

223. Students' work is regularly marked and assessed. In most instances, there is detailed analysis and correction of inaccuracies, with supporting comments and guidance on what action is required to bring about improvements. Students are appreciative of this aspect of their studies. They find teachers approachable and are particularly appreciative of their availability to give extra help when required. Students invariably display positive attitudes.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Very good relationships between students and teachers improves learning.
- Retention rates in A2 and AS courses are good.

Areas for improvement

- Results and standards.
- Development of independent learning skills and use of ICT.
- Wider range of teaching strategies.
- Time allocation for teaching.

224. Examination results in 2001 in A2 chemistry were below average, but showed improvement in 2002. Results in AS chemistry in 2001 were below average, and in 2002 were similar. In both years a significant number of AS students failed to obtain a pass grade indicating some underachievement. However, having started a chemistry course most students go on to complete the year. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average in both Years 12 and 13. These standards are achieved as a result of teaching that is sometimes good but satisfactory overall. They represent satisfactory achievement for the students concerned.

225. Standards of work in Year 12 are below average. Although Year 12 students have made a satisfactory start to the study of the subject, their knowledge and understanding is lower than might be expected at this stage of the course. For example, although they have some understanding of equilibrium systems in chemistry not all students are able to predict what will happen to the position of the equilibrium when factors such as pressure or temperature are altered. However, practical skills are improving. For example, they were able to demonstrate the change in colour that occurs when concentrated acid is added to cobalt chloride solution and relate this to changes in the ionic species present.

226. The standards of students' work in Year 13 are also below average. Again, although experimental skills are generally improving, problems with students' analytical techniques result in some errors in measurement when weighing solids and performing titrations. This results in lower standards in this area of chemistry. Their knowledge and understanding of inorganic, organic and physical chemistry are below average. Their lack of mathematical skills results in difficulties in accessing aspects of the course such as calculating pH and acid dissociation constants.

227. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. This is confirmed by scrutiny of the students' work. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and explain concepts clearly. This makes it easier for students to make progress in the subject. For example, in a Year 13 lesson a clear explanation of Hess's Law enabled students to see how it was possible to measure an enthalpy change for reactions that do not physically occur in nature. The main strength of teaching is the very good relationships that exist between students and teachers. As a result, students increase their confidence in the subject and

learn better. The main weakness of the teaching is that at times it is too teacher-centred, and as a result some students do not participate enough in their learning. A limited range of teaching styles is used and, as a result, students do not develop their independent learning skills enough. For example, in a lesson on equilibrium all the information came from the teacher. Methods such as brainstorming or group presentations were not used and, as a result, some students made slower progress than they might have. Although students have used ICT to measure temperature rise in endothermic reactions, they do not get much hands-on experience of these types of techniques which would improve the teaching of the subject and raise standards.

228. Across the age range students display a mature attitude towards their work. This is seen in the quality of their written work. They have very positive views of chemistry and value the extra help that is available outside the normal timetable. However, they would appreciate more opportunities to use ICT in and out of their lessons to facilitate their learning.

229. Organisation of the curriculum is satisfactory, although the time allocation for the A-level courses is below that found typically. Modules of work are well written and match the examination criteria. Although there is good teamwork in the department there is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning that would serve to share good practice and raise standards.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

In this curriculum area design and technology was sampled. Examination results were well below average in 2001. 2002 results were similar to 2001. Students did not achieve as well as expected in relation to their GCSE results. Two lessons were observed. In one, students were undertaking a basic drawing exercise which should not have been necessary at AS level, and in the other the students arrived without their current work and hence the teacher had to improvise a lesson on market research. Long term absence of one teacher is a factor in these low standards and lack of enthusiasm.

BUSINESS

A-level business studies and economics were the focus subjects. Work in GNVQ Intermediate business was sampled. Teaching and learning in this lesson were satisfactory and there is a clear progress from a starting point of well below average standards. Some students have no previous experience in the subject.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Most students show a positive attitude towards the subject.
- Many students achieve well.
- The department is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the number of opportunities for all students to take a more active part in learning.
- Provide study facilities with the opportunity to carry out research using ICT.
- Enable students to gain greater insight into the world of business through extending practical links with local companies.

230. Attainment at the start of this course is well below average based on GCSE average points scores. In 2001 results in the AS examination were above average. In 2002 results in AVCE business were considerably higher than expected in relation to students' prior attainment and represented very good achievement. Currently, in Year 12 on the AS course, standards are average and the students are achieving well. Work seen in folders is accurate, detailed and well presented. At present, there are no courses in Year 13.

231. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge

and are able to pass on to students telling examples of their own experience in the business world. This is particularly helpful when such examples have a local interest, for example, in the Jaguar car company. This brings life and realism to the subject which accelerates learning and deepens understanding, particularly where it relates to some of the more complex theoretical concepts, for example, 'diseconomies of scale' and 'elasticity of demand'. In some lessons more use could be made of locally known and smaller companies as 'models' to demonstrate key business principles. Most students work hard and show a keen interest in their studies. They value their teachers and have a good understanding of the assessment procedures. Many know what to do in order to improve, they listen well and concentrate well in class. There are some who rely on their teachers too much and, in the lessons where this occurs, greater challenge should be provided by making the learning tasks more active by engaging all students in tackling questions or solving problems raised in case studies.

232. Business studies is popular and most students complete their courses. There has been some discontinuity in the type of courses available. This narrows the opportunity for students to follow those courses of study with a clear vocational element and in which they have achieved well from modest starting points.

233. The department is well managed. The quality of documentation is good and this ensures a good organisational base. The assessment of students' work is regular and thorough and the data collected is well used alongside statistical data to track students' progress and provide accurate targets for them and for the subject. The classrooms currently used are small and restrict teachers and students in the way in which they can teach or learn. There is limited access to ICT and consequently to a learning resource that would encourage independent study through reference to texts or websites. There were only a few examples, less than normally found, of word processing, graphics or downloaded information in the students' folders.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Examination results, which represent good achievement by students in relation to their starting points.

Areas for improvement

- Completion of homework assignments.
- Different learning materials to match the varied needs of students.
- Literacy and numeracy skills.
- Facilities for students' independent learning outside lessons.

234. Examination results in 2001 at the end of Years 12 at AS level and Year 13 at A-level were above average. The results at both levels fell in 2002. These results are based on a very small number of students. The highest results have been achieved by students predicted to achieve lower grades. There has been value added in the results, over time, at the end of Year 12 and Year 13 when compared to the attainment levels for these students at the start of Year 7 and the end of Year 11.

235. Standards in Year 12 are average. They represent good achievement in relation to students' attainment at the start of the course. Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business enterprise in relation to current economic theory and practice. The majority of students, but particularly the harder working students, make effective use of relevant economic terminology, concepts and computing methods to select up-to-date data. Some use is made of computers to analyse data using a database and results are presented in graph or chart form. The higher attaining students appreciate the views of different stake holders in relation to business and economic trends. These students know the advantages and disadvantages of the separation of ownership from control in modern industry, and are fully aware of the significance of inflation and recessionary trends.

236. Standards in Year 13 are average and students continue to achieve well. They have a good awareness of economic theory and practice in their everyday life. The power of advertising is a part of that

awareness and the influence that the Web has on their spending power is one example of that acute perception. They can recognise that different people are involved in economic transactions and they are familiar with the different sectors of the UK and European economy. Students know and can talk about the variety of businesses within each sector, as for example the size of a multinational company such as the Shell Oil Company whose turnover is greater than many small nations' buying or spending power. The above average students quickly see the value of a case study approach to economics as it develops their ability to seek and verify evidence. Most students understand and can see the value of electronic data sources to gather current information. Spelling and use of grammar cause problems. Students are encouraged to organise their time and develop their study skills, but this is difficult with limited facilities and no access to the library. A few students do not complete their own assignments and miss homework deadlines. Self-motivation and discipline are problems even amongst the higher attaining students.

237. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers provide a suitable learning environment, present knowledge clearly and act as a resource to the students. Teachers give ideas for areas for investigation to students but leave them to work as individuals. They give help with the presentation of results and guide students in their use of electronic sources, where appropriate. Good learning comes both as a result of investigating economics in the classroom and in its true environment by visits to local firms and work experience. Equally important are the economic theory inputs from knowledgeable teachers. More varied learning materials are required to match the needs of students. Learning is monitored and teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss strategies and students' progress. Changes are made to methods as and when necessary. Facilities for private study are inadequate.

238. Leadership and management are very good. A variety of strategies is used to monitor the quality of learning in the classroom. These include informal classroom observation, sampling student work and moderation of assignments. These arrangements are effective in promoting higher standards, and teachers exchange materials and ideas on a regular basis.

239. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Students are now more actively encouraged to study outside class time and to utilise a wide range of economic resources including Internet access. A great deal of time is spent helping students prepare for examinations and most who start their courses complete them successfully. Additional learning experiences are obtained via visits to local firms and research work. However, to raise the quality of work further a greater contribution in class is required from students, homework needs to be completed and submitted on time, and literacy skills enhanced.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This was not a focus subject. In the lesson seen standards were well below average. Teachers do not have the knowledge and experience to take this course to A2 level. The sixth form ICT room lacks sufficient space for teachers to use computers linked to a screen for demonstration purposes. Overall, the provision is unsatisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

In this group of subjects the school offers sports studies. It was not a focus subject but one lesson was observed. Standards are average. Overall, teaching was good, and students made good progress in analysing and understanding differences between aerobic and anaerobic exercises.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

This course is not offered.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus was on art and design and media studies AS and A2 level but lessons at intermediate level GNVQ were observed in both subjects. In art and design good teaching enabled students to reach average standards drawing in chalk pastel and learning to make monoprints. The erratic attendance of a few students limits their achievement. Three-quarters of the students gained the qualification in 2002. In the last two years most students taking media studies GNVQ achieved the qualification, including three distinctions and two merits. In the lesson observed good teaching, following an induction day at the premises of a regional newspaper, enabled the students to make an effective start on a project on broadsheets and tabloid newspapers. Exemplar display work is of a high standard.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result.
- Large-scale drawing and painting is exciting and vigorous.
- Assessment is used well to set individual targets.

Areas for improvement

- Students' research skills are not fully developed.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, because there is nowhere for them to work outside lessons.
- The time for teaching is too low.

240. In the A-level examination in 2001, results were below average, and they fell further in 2002. Most students did not do as well as expected. In the AS level examination in 2001 results were well below average. There was some improvement in 2002. Results vary from year to year, and reflect the variation in students' attainment when they start their courses. The majority of students who start their courses finish them, and retention is good.

241. Standards in the work of current Year 12 students are average, and they are achieving well considering their GCSE grades, which were below average. They learn to make lino prints, which show good gains in learning to accurately use the techniques of block printing. They create vigorous oil pastel studies, from observation of local shops and houses, which effectively record the textures of brick walls, glass windows and canvas awnings. They go on to develop these into richly coloured paintings, showing good gains in their skills in composition. Their pencil work, however, is not as exciting, and lacks the vigour seen in their other work.

242. Standards in the work of the current Year 13 students are average. Their achievement is good, and they make particularly good gains in their skills in handling painting materials. As a result, above average students create delicate watercolour figure paintings, using luminous transparent washes to create a serene atmosphere. Students draw confidently in charcoal on a very large scale, producing striking self-portraits, which show a sound grasp of the use of contrasting tones. They also produce harmonious colour compositions, informed by the work of Patrick Caulfield, which are carefully structured, creating harmonious colour effects in varying shades of blue. Their research skills, however, are less well developed, and their sketchbooks are not used vigorously enough to be fully effective in informing and improving their own work.

243. Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well as a result. In the best lessons, methods and materials are exciting and ambitious in scale. In a Year 13 lesson, students were working on very large charcoal studies, or on large paintings in acrylics and watercolour. The students showed very good levels of interest, and used the material vigorously. For example, they blended tones by smudging the charcoal, achieving the illusion of three-dimensional form in their drawings. This produced very good learning. Occasionally, however, the atmosphere in lessons is too comfortable, and lacks a sense of urgency. The pace then begins to slow, and, as a result, learning is no better than satisfactory.

244. Assessment procedures are good, and students have a good knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements. They are involved in setting their own targets, and this helps maintain good

levels of interest. This improves the quality of their work, because they are clear about what they need to do to be successful. Students' attitudes are good, and the great majority enjoy their lessons and try hard. However, a small number of students do not attend regularly enough, and do not achieve well, in spite of the efforts of the school.

245. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good overall, and students are now involved in monitoring their work and setting their targets. In addition, recent work in drawing and painting is exciting and vigorous. The accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory, because there is no designated space for students to work outside their lesson times. This means that time is wasted in packing away more ambitious work, and opportunities to work independently are very restricted. In addition, students receive less teaching time in this subject than that typically found for advanced level study.

Media studies

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

Strengths

- Above average standards resulting from very good teaching and learning.
- Students enjoy their work and most do better in media studies than in their other subjects.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject.
- Very good use of resources within the school and access to high quality resources within the locality.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough opportunities in some lessons for students to develop their speaking skills.

246. The provision for media studies is a strength of the school. Teaching and learning are very good, students are enthusiastic about the subject and they achieve very well. In 2002 students took the A2 examination for the first time. All eight candidates gained grades A-D, with three candidates gaining the higher grades A and B. Several students chose the subject for their university degree course. Achievement was also very good at AS level in 2001 and 2002, with most students doing better in media studies than in their other subjects. Retention rates are good.

247. The standard of work of the current students in Year 13 is above average. This is a direct result of very good teaching, students' very positive attitudes, and the access to a range of high quality resources within the locality. Coursework notes and sketches show that most students have a good grasp of camera techniques, and the technical language used to describe them. Students of all levels of attainment make the most of their resources. They are efficient users of computer software and access the internet successfully for research. They use specialist equipment confidently in the making of music tracks and films. In their written work, students often have difficulty with setting out their ideas clearly and their early drafts contain many basic spelling errors. However, most students are making steady progress in dealing with key concepts systematically and effectively. Their work is monitored and assessed regularly and thoroughly, and teachers give very good guidance on the structuring of essays. As a result, students have a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

248. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The strengths of the teaching are teachers' high expectations together with a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Relationships within the classroom are also very good. Students say that they appreciate the value of learning how to work independently. This mature approach was evident during a computer session in Year 13, during which students concentrated very well on their individual assignments and the teacher was able to spend time with students who needed extra help. In some lessons, however, there are not enough opportunities for students to improve their clarity and fluency in speaking. Discussions tend to take place as a whole class activity rather than through a range of different activities, such as direct questioning or pair and group work. Consequently, a minority of students rely on others to do the answering, and thus do not take an active part in the lesson.

249. The subject is very well led and managed with innovative opportunities for boys to produce media assignments because of the excellent partnerships that have been established with local colleges and the

professional media services. The well-resourced accommodation is a strength of the provision. It is very effectively used by all students of the subject.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history but geography and government and politics were also sampled. Results in geography were average in 2001 and improved in 2002. In the two lessons seen standards were average overall. Good teaching enabled one class to use their analytical skills to accurately interpret data in relation to river systems. In the other, the teachers' expertise led the students to successfully develop annotated sketch maps of an historical rural landscape, relating this to place names on an ordinance survey map. Results in government and politics in 2001 were average, but declined in 2002 although the proportion gaining higher A-B grades increased. One Year 13 lesson was seen. Teaching was very good, with students making good progress in learning about the American constitution. Highly relevant use was made of television news coverage of President Bush's "State of the Nation" address. Standards are average and students are achieving well in relation to their starting points in Year 12

History

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning

Areas for improvement

- Improve results, particularly AS level.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Library and private study provision.
- Time allocated for teaching, and the incidence of split lessons.

250. The 2002 A2 level examination results improved in comparison with 2001 when they were well below average, and three of the nine candidates failed to obtain a pass grade. The 2001 AS-level examination results in Year 12 were below average and only five of the twenty-six candidates obtained the higher A-B grades. Results in 2002 declined in comparison, and two of the eleven candidates failed to obtain a pass grade. Course completion rates are good.

251. Standards of work seen in the inspection are average overall. Students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE or AS level results in response to an improved quality of teaching. Students in Year 12 are making better progress with their study of European history than is the case with their studies of British history. Where the progress is better, students are more actively involved in the learning. For example, in a Year 12 lesson investigating the growth of the German economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the teacher used a good variety of whole class, individual and paired work. This ensured that all had to contribute to the lesson and be prepared to stand their ground in response to sharp questioning on the results of their investigations. As a result, they gained a clear understanding of the social and political consequences of the growth of the economy. Students' written work indicates a good depth of knowledge and their essays, for example, on the emergence of the Labour party after 1906 are detailed and lengthy. Conclusions and evaluative comments however, still lack precision. Year 13 students' written work is generally stronger than their capacity to talk about their opinions and the conclusions, which they draw from their investigations. The range and depth of their knowledge and understanding is sound but they rely heavily on guidance and support from their teachers' notes and explanations and use a relatively restricted range of sources of information to prepare for essays and classwork. Essays on Lloyd George's relationship with the Labour Party were competently descriptive but lacked depth of analysis.

252. Teaching and learning are good overall, though the continuity of experience for older students has been affected by changes in staffing within the history department, which have taken place while they have been

in the sixth form. However, in discussion, students loyally make light of this. Additionally, the current timetable has been constructed in such a way that the relatively small group of history students has had to be split for some lessons. The overall standard of teaching during the inspection was good and in two of the four lessons seen the quality of teaching and learning was very good. In these lessons the learning objectives were very clear and lessons moved at a fast rate, providing interesting and challenging activities which placed responsibility on the students to learn for themselves. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge was used very well in authoritative explanations and sharp questioning. Resources, for example, a well constructed learning pack on Wilhelmine Germany's economy, provided a very good framework for effective learning. Learning was not as effective in lessons where students relied too much on the teacher or where the teacher did not involve the students actively enough in the learning. The quality of marking is variable. Work is marked regularly but students are sometimes not given sufficient written advice on how to improve.

253. Students have generally very positive attitudes towards history though some, particularly those who entered the sixth form with relatively modest GCSE results find independent learning difficult and tend to rely on close direction from the teacher. Students generally appreciate the efforts which teachers make on their behalf. Higher attainers in particular, have clear opinions on their preferred ways of learning and the particular strands of history, which they enjoy more than others. A good proportion of older students intend to continue to study history in higher education. Library and private study provision for students is limited, and the time for teaching is less than usual for advanced level courses.

254. Teachers use prior attainment data well to set targets for students and respond well to perceived needs, for example through extra lessons. Monitoring of teaching and learning, however, has been relatively weak and not identified the inconsistencies which are evident. The newly appointed head of department has quickly identified strengths and weaknesses and is beginning to set an agenda for improvement. Relationships are good and there is a very positive climate for subject improvement.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school offers combined English language and literature, and French as A-level courses. Both were inspected as focus subjects.

English language and literature

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

Strengths

- Achievement is good. Students do better than suggested by earlier results.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Marking and overall assessment procedures are very good.
- The students have very good attitudes and also very positive views about the course.

Areas for improvement

- Timetable arrangements, and the time allocated to teaching.
- The quality of students' writing techniques to help them do justice to their knowledge and understanding.
- Better whole school facilities for independent learning.

255. Standards in the 2001 A-level examination were below average as they were in 2000. They improved from well below average in 1999. There was a significant improvement in the 2002 A2 examination. National comparisons are not available but the results would have been broadly average against national standards in each of the previous three years. In the 2001 AS examination standards were broadly average but there was a significant drop in the 2002 examination. Only one candidate gained grades A-B and nearly twenty per cent did not obtain a pass grade.

256. Even so the overall achievement has been good for the last two years. The department, in keeping with the school's policy, has an open access policy. Some students taking the Advanced course would not have this chance in most sixth forms. Apart from the 2002 AS examination students have consistently done better than their previous results have suggested. The course is popular, recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers to sustain two groups each year.

257. Observation of work shows current standards to be below, but close to average in Year 12 and Year 13. The big challenge for Year 13 students is to extend the security of knowledge and understanding that they display in class discussion and course work into those other assignments which prepare them for examinations. During the inspection many worked on their transformation module. They showed a very strong grasp of the need for clarity about purpose, audience and register both in their written products and in their oral commentaries. These students' earlier course work from Year 12 showed similar strengths. However, only the very highest attainers showed these qualities on a consistent basis in other assignments. These, for example, in their discourse analysis demonstrated and clarified the impact of specific examples of 'turn taking', 'utterance', 'interrogation' and ellipsis when analysing the rules of conversation. Other students' written work is not addressing the technical features and lexis of the subject as explicitly and consistently as the higher attainers. Some who are well below average are too descriptive in their analytical work and make too many technical errors.

258. Although there is still a wide range of attainment in the Year 12 groups there is a substantial proportion on line to achieve average and above average standards. As in Year 13 many were more secure in their course work writing, clearly responding well to the individual tutorial work required for this module. Others, when discussing Eavan Boland's 'In which the Ancient History I learn is not my own' showed above and well above average insights and appreciation of the links between the poet's intention and her use of structure, form, rhythm and literary devices. This above average response was at variance with their writing when, although insight was evident, the techniques of explicit written analysis were less secure.

259. The students' attitudes are very good. They also have very positive views of the course, valuing the feedback and support they receive from the teachers. Students are very motivated. Some, usually lower attainers, are reticent in whole class discussion, but all talk confidently on an individual basis about their work. Concentration levels are very good, notably when evaluating examples of course work and course work commentaries during a Year 13 lesson. Despite the school's unsatisfactory book facilities to support independent learning, students made good use of websites to support text transformation work. Many confirmed that taking the course had fostered their enjoyment of reading and cited challenging texts they read voluntarily.

260. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers have very good specialist knowledge and have ensured through in service training and their own efforts that they have a very secure knowledge of the linguistic dimensions of the course. Another strength is the precise and targeted support provided to those whose standards are below and well below average at the start of the course. Evaluation of value added information shows these students often achieved significantly better than would have been anticipated. The quality of marking is very good and sometimes outstanding, outlining with equal clarity and precision strengths and targets. Overall use of assessment is very good. The teachers fully comply with the school's target setting procedures and support the students' work by clear reference to assessment objectives and criteria. Some teaching is outstanding: the lesson on Boland's poem clearly inspired all students. The teacher's passion for the subject enthused them. They responded well to his individual probing of their thinking and to his positive and encouraging comments on their contributions.

261. Timetabling arrangements for one group in Year 12 are unsatisfactory. Their high level of attendance at a once a week extended twilight session confirms their high motivation. Time given to teaching is one hour per week less than is found in most sixth forms. The small proportion of female students are fully integrated and talk positively about their enjoyment of the course.

French

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

Strengths

- The most recent AS results show a significant improvement.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Students have good opportunities for work experience in France.

Areas for improvement

- Provide support for inexperienced teachers through formal monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Develop independent learning, including greater use of ICT.
- Speaking and writing skills are weak at AS level.
- Marking and assessment.
- Time allocated for teaching.

262. In 2001, three students sat the A-level examination but there were no passes. The school had no entries for A2 in 2002. At AS in 2001, two out of four students passed, both at grade C. AS results in 2002 showed a significant improvement and students achieved very well. Five out of seven students passed, three at grade B.

263. In Year 13, standards of work are average and achievement is satisfactory. The range of ability in the class of four male students is wide. The most able students have made considerable gains over time in their ability to understand and discuss challenging materials on topical themes and have clearly benefited from work experience in France last year. However, other students cope far less well with the speed of delivery of French spoken on tape or by the native speaker. They have some difficulty understanding printed texts and related questions and often struggle to produce meaningful spoken or written responses in French. In essay writing, when arguing their case on topics such as private health care or the fight against terrorism, the most able students show increasing competence in their attempts to use complex language. However, there is still not enough attention to accuracy and basic errors remain.

264. In Year 12, standards of work are below average. Most of the seven students, one of whom is female, began the AS course with more modest GCSE grades than is usually found and achievement is broadly satisfactory. Students have made some progress in comprehension but speaking and writing skills are very weak. They show some understanding of tapes and texts on cultural and social issues and, with gentle encouragement from teachers, most are starting to make some contribution orally, although responses are brief and pronunciation is often poor. Written work reveals an insecure grasp of basic grammar, especially in verb and tense use. Sentences are often clumsy and occasionally anglicised and contain frequent elementary mistakes. During discussion with students, they themselves acknowledged that the superficial coverage of grammar up to GCSE had ill-prepared them for the demands they now faced.

265. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but is variable. While subject knowledge and lesson planning are strengths there is some inconsistent practice, particularly in Year 13, where French is not always used as the normal means of communication. Teachers work hard together, planning and sharing ideas but because they lack experience, there are often shortcomings in methodology, even in lessons where teaching has good features. For example, students are sometimes thrown in at the deep end and flounder because they get too little time to study a text properly or they hear a lengthy recording only once before being expected to discuss what it is about. Consequently, teachers end up doing most of the work and students' confidence is dented. In their defence, teachers are hard pressed to cover the new specifications in the required depth because the allocated teaching time is below national average. Marking is variable in quality. It lacks rigour in the correction of spelling and basic grammar with the result that students, most noticeably in Year 12, repeat the same errors over time. While there is some good practice in writing constructive and developmental comments, teachers are sometimes over generous in the feedback they give and students are not always getting an accurate picture of how well they are doing.

266. Formal monitoring of teaching and learning, along the lines of the very good practice in the main school, needs to be set in motion in order to support teachers more effectively and thus ensure students learn and progress as well as they should.

267. Students enjoy the subject and have good attitudes overall. They persevere despite finding the work very demanding and most complete the course. Year 13 display a greater maturity and, in a bid to develop their language skills and cultural awareness further, all four have seized the opportunity to do work experience in France later this term. By contrast, students in Year 12 have not yet begun to take enough responsibility for their learning. They need to work much more independently, over and above the work they do in class and for homework, for example by making greater use of internet web sites, for research and to read French newspapers, and by listening regularly to tapes, particularly as many said they found this aspect especially hard.