

# INSPECTION REPORT

**HINCHLEY WOOD SCHOOL AND SIXTH-FORM  
CENTRE**

Esher

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125316

Headteacher: Mr S Poole

Reporting inspector: Mr G Clements  
5317

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 251946

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils and students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils and students:	Mixed
School address:	Claygate Lane Hinchley Wood Esher Surrey
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Connell
Date of previous inspection:	4 <sup>th</sup> - 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
5317	Graham Clements	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
10329	Brian Sampson	Lay inspector		Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Citizenship	
27226	Richard Cribb	Team inspector	History Special educational needs	
19913	Roger Garrett	Team inspector	English 11-16 Drama post-16 English as an additional language.	
32211	Brendan Geoghegan	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
22609	Paul Grey	Team inspector	Geography	How well are pupils and students taught?
8552	Wallis Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology	
32240	Gwen Kelsey	Team inspector	Science	How well does the school care for its pupils and students?
30699	Arthur Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16	
20527	Brian King	Team inspector	Mathematics post-16	
18912	Catherine Large	Team inspector	Religious education	
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	English post-16	

31549	Helen Moulton	Team inspector	Music Educational inclusion, including race equality	
<b>Team members</b>			<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design	
30888	Lieve Walsh-Nelissen	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' and students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>15</b>
The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements	
Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS AND STUDENTS?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>64</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Hinchley Wood School and Sixth-Form Centre is a co-educational comprehensive school of about average size. The roll is similar to that at the time of the previous inspection and is currently 1063 pupils aged 11 to 18 of whom 73 are in the sixth form. In Years 7 to 11, there are significantly more boys than girls. Pupils who join the school in Year 7 come from many different primary schools from both within Surrey and the neighbouring London Borough of Kingston. Up to ten per cent of pupils can be selected for their musical ability. Most pupils and students come from white heritage backgrounds. A small minority, less than nine per cent, come from a range of other, mostly Asian, ethnic backgrounds. There are 15 pupils who speak English as an additional language of whom seven are at an early stage of learning English. These numbers are very low compared to national averages. There are 182 (16 per cent) pupils with special educational needs, which is below the national average, and 12 (1.1 per cent) with a statement of special educational needs, which is also below average. Most of the pupils receiving special educational needs support have emotional or behavioural difficulties or other unspecified learning difficulties. There are 45 (4.5 per cent) pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. When pupils start at the school, their attainment is above average.

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

Hinchley Wood is a good and improving school where staff and governors have a strong, collective commitment to make further progress. All the serious weaknesses identified by the previous inspection in December 2000 have been addressed and, despite staffing difficulties, most have been resolved completely. High standards in Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE examinations have been improved upon in most subjects through teaching of high quality. Strong leadership and efficient management are ensuring that all staff are working purposefully and harmoniously together. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Very high standards are achieved in most subjects, particularly English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE.
- Leadership is very good; governors and staff share a very strong commitment to improve the school still further.
- The high percentage of good and very good teaching leads to good progress of pupils and students of all ages.
- Very good relationships are established between pupils and students and teachers which create a good climate for learning.
- Very good extra-curricular provision, especially in sport, drama and music, encourages high standards and good participation.

#### **What could be improved**

- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure that statutory requirements for its use are met in all curriculum areas and that standards of pupils' work are raised to the levels achieved in other subjects.
- GCSE results in science to match the well above average results achieved by pupils at the age of 14.
- Use of assessment information to support lesson planning and to provide a basis for monitoring school improvement.
- Accommodation, especially in science, music, drama and the learning support unit.
- Stability of staffing to ensure that school improvement can be managed efficiently.

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

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

The school has improved considerably since the previous inspection in December 2000 by actively addressing all the key issues and serious weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. The

management roles of several staff have changed and the school is under new leadership from a headteacher who started in post in January 2003, after two months working in tandem with the previous acting headteacher, and a deputy headteacher who was appointed in the previous year. Behaviour of pupils has been improved by a more consistent approach to discipline by teachers established through clearer policies and acceptance of responsibility by all staff. Provision for pupils' personal development has been improved. It is now school policy to provide a daily act of collective worship, although implementation of this policy is inconsistent.

Completion of a major building project has provided excellent dining facilities and accommodation for physical education, the sixth form and geography teaching as well as improved facilities for ICT. Involvement of governors in determining the strategic direction of the school and monitoring development is much improved as they are far better informed than before, especially regarding the budget and school expenditure. The school has accrued a large budget deficit as a result of its building programme and expansion of the sixth form. It has agreed long-term plans with the local education authority to resolve this. The proportion of the budget spent on administrative staff has been reduced and the amount spent on teaching staff increased to reduce excessive workloads on teachers. Standards in mathematics have improved but staffing difficulties have limited the improvement of teaching quality in science. The sixth form has been promoted strongly, numbers increased substantially this year and there are strong indications that, from next September, it will be of an economically viable size. Religious education in the sixth form now meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

*The comparison with 'similar schools' above is based on schools with a similar prior attainment in KS3 tests*

Overall, standards of attainment of 14-year-old pupils, as measured by results in National Curriculum tests and teacher assessment, are well above the average: GCSE results are also well above the national average but post-16 results are just below national figures. GCSE results in science are below expectations based on pupils' performance in Key Stage 3 tests. Standards in ICT are well below average for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and attain standards at least in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. There is no significant difference in standards between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. In Years 10 and 11, the trend in results at GCSE is upwards and greater than the national trend. The school was very close to the challenging target it set for GCSE performance in 2002.

The trend in the school's results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 is upwards and faster than the national trend for English, mathematics and science. In each of these subjects, the school exceeded its target and a large proportion of pupils in each subject attained levels above the national expectation. The work seen in lessons confirms that, in all subjects, with the exception of ICT at both key stages and science in Years 10 and 11, the achievement of pupils is good. Standards are particularly high in English, geography, history, mathematics and religious education. The ICT capability of pupils at age 14 is currently well below average as pupils do not develop a comprehensive range of computer skills by the end of Year 9. Attainment in science is relatively low by the end of Year 11 as



pupils have not developed their investigative skills or their ability to analyse and evaluate data sufficiently. Standards of literacy and numeracy throughout the school are above average.

## PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall and very good in the sixth form. Pupils and students are enthusiastic about their school and have very positive attitudes to work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils and students behave well in lessons and behaviour around the school is much improved.
Personal development and relationships	Very good and a strength of the school. Pupils and students have a lot of opportunities to show their initiative and to take personal responsibility.
Attendance	Good. Most pupils and students arrive punctually to school and get to their classes on time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching has been maintained since the previous inspection when it was high. The proportions of good and very good teaching observed broadly match those achieved during the last inspection. There are examples of very good and excellent teaching in most subjects across Years 7 to 13. Pupils and students learn particularly quickly where very high standards of behaviour and thoughtful contributions to classroom discussions are demanded by teachers. Very constructive relationships between pupils and students and teachers and the sheer passion and drive of many staff are most apparent and influential in helping pupils and students to make progress. Overall, the teaching in both English and mathematics is good. However, good planning, stimulating activities and challenging tasks are characteristics of some of the very good teaching in English and mathematics. Overall, teaching in science is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 where the quality is much more variable. It is very good where pupils are enthused and amazed by the outcomes of experiments but unsatisfactory where classroom management is ineffective at preventing a few pupils disrupting the learning of the rest of the class. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good resulting in good progress relative to pupils' previous attainment. Overall, the needs of pupils of differing abilities are met well. Teachers know how to use their expertise and resources to make learning accessible and challenging.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. It is good in the sixth form. The recent inclusion of vocational courses allows a greater opportunity to match the curriculum to the needs of all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The provision of ICT does not meet with statutory requirements. Extra-curricular provision is very good.
Provision for pupils and students with special educational needs	Good. Strong line management and good leadership by the special educational needs co-ordinator are rapidly improving provision. Teamwork between teachers and support staff is developing well. Learning support assistants and external providers help pupils take a full part in lessons,

	where they generally make good progress.
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Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils and students with English as an additional language	Good. Support is provided as appropriate for pupils with specific language needs to enable them to have full access to the curriculum and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' and students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school has created an effective climate for social and moral development. It has maintained good cultural provision within subjects and through its wide range of extra-curricular activities. Spiritual development is satisfactory but needs to be addressed more consistently.
How well the school cares for its pupils and students	Good. Very good relationships between staff and pupils and students ensure that pupils and students are well cared for. Child protection procedures are very good and all health and safety procedures are closely monitored.

The school works effectively with parents by addressing their concerns promptly and courteously, by providing extensive information about what is taught and giving them clear and detailed reports about the progress made by their children. The school appreciates the enthusiastic and generous support given by parents to school productions and extra-curricular activities.

For all pupils, the curriculum is well matched to their abilities and aspirations but it does not meet statutory requirements for ICT as the range of ICT experiences provided for pupils is too narrow and does not allow them to develop these skills in all curriculum areas. Extra-curricular provision, particularly in performing arts and physical education, is very good and involvement by pupils and students is high.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Leadership is very good. Staff and governors share the headteacher's determination and commitment to further improvement. Management at all levels has improved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil most of their responsibilities well. They have established good procedures for financial management and control. They have not, however, ensured that provision of ICT meets statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Governors and the school management team have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but some areas are yet to develop sharp success criteria by which to measure improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. School improvements are now carefully costed. The school applies the principles of best value well.

Staffing is generally sufficient, though long-term difficulties in staffing the ICT and science departments need resolving. The provision and effectiveness of learning resources are satisfactory overall. Although there is central provision of computer resources in the ICT suites, subject specialist provision of ICT resources is inadequate in science, geography and in modern foreign languages. Accommodation is much improved but some science laboratories are in a poor condition and accommodation for drama, music and learning support 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"> <li>• That the school has improved 'beyond recognition' since the previous inspection.</li> <li>• The many 'excellent and dedicated teachers who are very keen and approachable'.</li> <li>• Excellent pastoral care and focus on improving discipline.</li> <li>• That their children like school and are expected to work hard and achieve of their best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The regularity with which they receive information about the progress made by their children.</li> <li>• Consistency in the setting and marking of homework so that their children receive more advice on how to improve.</li> <li>• The classroom control of the few teachers who allow lessons to be disrupted by poor behaviour.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with these positive points. The school has certainly improved considerably since the previous inspection and overcome all of its serious weaknesses. Inspectors found some inconsistency in the setting and marking of homework and also witnessed a few lessons where classroom management was unsatisfactory. The other negative viewpoints of parents do not take into account the considerable changes that have taken place, particularly in management practice and reorganisation of parents' evenings, since last Easter. The school provides easy access to the headteacher and staff for urgent, parental problems and this is well utilised and appreciated by parents. The quality of information that the school provides for its parents is good and much better than that provided at the time of the previous inspection.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The roll of the sixth form at Hinchley Wood has increased substantially this year after falling from 32 at the time of the previous inspection to just 20 last year. There are currently 73 students, 60 in Year 12 and 13 in Year 13, who are studying a broad range of A-level and AS-level courses. There is a minimum entry requirement of five GCSEs at Grade C or above. The sixth form recruited only from the main school. The ethnic mix of the sixth form broadly reflects that of the main school. In 2001, 18 Year 13 students (87 per cent) left the school to continue with higher or further education

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

Most students are currently achieving well in relation to their previous GCSE examination results. The small classes, particularly in Year 13, give students the opportunity to receive much individual support to help their learning. The high quality of teaching in the sixth form has been maintained. The post-16 curriculum provides good continuity from the Years 10 and 11 curriculum with a wide choice of GCE courses which was increased this year to enable greater diversity of choice and encourage more Year 11 pupils to stay at the school. Although not currently cost-effective because of the low numbers of students in Year 13, there are clear indications from consultations with current Year 11 pupils and parents that the school will succeed in its target to recruit at least 70 Year 12 students next September. This will make the sixth form cost effective and provide a firm foundation for the further expansion that is planned.

**Strengths**

- The quality of teaching is good in all subjects.
- The purpose-built sixth-form centre provides excellent facilities and a very good environment for learning.
- Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good and support learning and personal development.
- Expansion of the sixth form has been managed well and has the strong support of governors and the school leadership team.

**What could be improved**

- The cost-effectiveness of the sixth form as the number of Year 13 students is very small.

*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 depth 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 in depth, although lessons were observed in most subjects.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Provision for post-16 mathematics is <b>good</b> . Teaching has purpose and pace, and students achieve well. Standards of attainment are above average and numbers taking the subject have increased considerably. Leadership and management are good.
Drama (Theatre studies)	Provision in Year 12 is <b>good</b> . Standards of attainment are above average. Students achieve well because of their positive attitudes and the good teaching and support they receive. Good leadership provides a clear

	sense of direction for the department's work.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Geography	Provision for post-16 geography is <b>good</b> . Standards attained are average and show good achievement in relation to students' previous attainment. Very positive rapport between teachers and students and informative marking of their work helps students to make good progress. Leadership and management are very good.
History	Provision for post-16 history is <b>good</b> . Standards attained are slightly above average. Teaching is good. Students are very well supported, achieve well and are making good progress in line with their abilities. Leadership and management of the department are good.
English	Provision for post-16 English is <b>good</b> , with an increasing take-up and improving standards in Year 12. Leadership, management and the quality of teaching and learning are all good, resulting in an increasingly effective department. Students achieve well. The standards attained are average in Year 13 and above average in Year 12.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. There is a strong sense of community and very good relationships between staff and students. Students are encouraged to take responsibility and participate in the life of the school. They receive good guidance in the choice of their sixth-form courses, and the careers advice they receive is effective.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Leadership reflects the common vision for the future and the commitment to expansion and improvement. Governors provide strong support.

#### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others.</li> <li>• Their views are listened to and they are treated as responsible young adults.</li> <li>• They are taught well, challenged and encouraged to study independently.</li> <li>• They receive clear information about the available courses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information they receive about their individual progress.</li> <li>• The advice they receive about how to improve their work and raise their standards.</li> <li>• The careers advice they receive.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by the sixth-form students. It disagrees with their view about careers advice which is judged as extensive and of good quality. The information that students receive about their individual progress and the advice they receive through the marking of their work are variable but, according to the students interviewed during the inspection, they had improved a lot since they completed the questionnaire. In some subjects, marking is extensive and very constructive but is less supportive in other subjects.



## **COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Since the previous inspection, standards overall have been maintained at a high level with small but significant improvements in several subjects. For example, in comparison with similar schools, the average total GCSE point scores of Year 11 pupils improved from above average in 2000 to well above average in 2002. Standards in the core subjects of English and mathematics are particularly high for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Attainment on entry for pupils aged 11 to 16 is similar to that in 2000 and is above average for all maintained schools. The prior attainment at GCSE of students currently in the sixth form is below average. Overall, standards of attainment of 14-year-old pupils as measured by National Curriculum tests and teacher assessment are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science; GCSE results are well above national averages and post-16 results in GCE examinations are just below national figures, although the numbers of students entered for A-level examinations have been too small for valid national comparisons. Pupils with English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs, make good progress overall at all key stages and attain standards at least in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. The progress of pupils from minority ethnic groups is not significantly different from that of other pupils. Based on figures since 1998, the trends in the school's average point score in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in average total GCSE score are upwards and above the national trends. High recent turnover in staffing, particularly of heads of department, has not had a detrimental effect on standards.
2. In English, results in the 2001 and 2002 National Curriculum standard tests were well above average with a very high percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 (the nationally expected level) and above. Although girls attained better results than boys, the gender difference in the performance of boys and girls was less than that found nationally. These results reflect good progress in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school and are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection.
3. In mathematics, results in the 2001 and 2002 National Curriculum standard tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average when compared with other maintained schools and substantially better than they were at the time of the previous inspection. In 2002, very high percentages of pupils reached Level 5 (the nationally expected level), and the proportions of pupils attaining Level 6 and Level 7, at two-thirds and one-third of the year group respectively, were well above the national averages. The results of girls and boys have been similar. These results reflect very good progress in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school. Where pupils with special educational needs receive additional support for English and mathematics, their progress is also very good.
4. In 2001 and 2002, results in National Curriculum standard tests in science at the end of Year 9 were well above average for all maintained schools and above those for schools with similar prior attainment. The proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 5 was a small improvement compared with the results at the time of the previous inspection. The proportion attaining higher levels was significantly higher in 2002 than in previous years.
5. The work seen in lessons confirms that current standards in Year 9, with the exception of ICT, are above average but there are differences between subjects. Standards are particularly high in English, geography, history, mathematics and religious education.

For example, in history, pupils have a thorough understanding of chronology; in geography, pupils can compare and contrast different places and environments; in religious education, they display empathy and good evaluation skills in response to moral issues. The ICT capability of pupils at age 14 is currently well below average as pupils do not develop a comprehensive range of computer skills by the end of Year 9. Standards reached in art and design, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and design and technology are also significantly above average.

6. Overall, standards at GCSE are well above national averages for all maintained schools. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades has risen steadily since the previous inspection. A relatively high number of pupils gain the highest GCSE grades. Overall, as measured by their results in national tests and examinations at the ages of 14 and 16, pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11.
7. Although the numbers of boys and girls taking each GCSE examination subject were often quite different, except in mathematics where boys achieved better results than girls, few differences in their results were apparent and these were no larger than those found nationally. For example, in 2002, 68 per cent of boys and 79 per cent of girls gained A\*-C grades in English compared to national averages of 50 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. In mathematics, the A\*-C percentages for boys and girls were 78 per cent and 71 per cent respectively compared to national averages of 51 per cent and 50 per cent for boys and girls respectively.
8. Since the previous inspection, average GCSE point scores have fluctuated with a noticeable upward trend which is greater than the national upward trend. Boys' scores increased considerably in 2001 and decreased slightly in 2002. The average point scores of girls have been more consistent and always above the national figure. Results met the school's target in 2002. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average when compared to all maintained schools and when compared to schools with similar average point scores at the end of Year 9.
9. GCSE results in 2002 were above average in every subject except science, German and business studies, where the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was just below the national average for all maintained schools and, in ICT, where results were well below average. Exceptional results were achieved in English literature, where almost 90 per cent of the 163 pupils entered gained A\*-C grades, and in music, where all ten entrants gained A\*-C grades. In English, mathematics, art and design, drama, history, physical education and religious education, approximately three-quarters of those entered gained A\*-C grades. Results in drama, French, mathematics and physical education improved from 2001 but results in art and design declined after its exceptional results in 2001 when more than 90 per cent of those entered gained A\*-C grades. Results in double science were well below national averages in both 2001 and 2002. Although due in part to a substantial number of higher attainers taking three separate sciences, the overall number of pupils gaining at least one A\*-C grade in science was just below average and well below expectations based on their prior attainment in National Curriculum tests at age 14. The unsatisfactory results in ICT reflected the difficulty the school experienced in recruiting specialist teachers.
10. The work seen in lessons suggests that current standards in Year 11 are generally above average and are well above average in English and mathematics. Attainment in science is, however, lower as pupils have not developed their investigative skills or their ability to analyse and evaluate data sufficiently. Standards of work are particularly high in geography, where coursework completed after a field visit to the Sussex coast exemplified very good enquiry skills; in art and design, where pupils' coursework shows

originality and is influenced by research into various cultures; and in music and physical education, where some talented pupils achieve very highly.

11. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good and similar to that of other pupils. There are no significant differences in the progress made by pupils with different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 7, 8 and 9 generally make good progress and achieve above expectation in English, mathematics, physical education, history and geography lessons. Achievement and progression in art and design, music, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education are generally satisfactory for these pupils. Progress in science lessons in Years 7 to 9 is more variable and depends upon the planning and support in the lessons. Where planning is weak, progress and achievement are unsatisfactory. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, progress in some mathematics lessons has been excellent and is always good. Achievement in English, both GCSE and non-GCSE physical education, history, art and design and geography is good. In GCSE science lessons, where support is ineffective, achievement is below expectations.
12. Standards of literacy throughout the school are above average. Pupils have the reading skills necessary to access all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are confident and fluent when speaking and listen well and attentively to each other, although these skills are not promoted consistently in all subjects. They are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum and their levels of technical accuracy are generally good, but accuracy is not demanded in all subjects. There are effective strategies in place to develop pupils' literacy skills but they are not yet being implemented consistently across the school. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress towards their individual literacy targets. One-to-one work for reading recovery enables poor readers to make good progress in their classroom work. Small-group sessions are a strong new development to support pupils' learning in literacy. Although this work is in its infancy, the learning opportunities that it is opening up to pupils with special educational needs are very clearly identified in the planning for learning support.
13. Although there is no planned contribution to numeracy across the curriculum, standards of numeracy are very good throughout the school. Pupils are able to meet the mathematical demands of all other subjects. For example, in science, they use their ability to rearrange formulae to calculate experimental results, they use measurement skills in design and technology to produce accurate drawings and they use spreadsheets effectively in a variety of subjects.

### **Sixth form**

14. Results in A-level examinations have improved marginally since the previous inspection, although the numbers of students taking post-16 courses has decreased. The average point score of Year 13 students in 2001, at 16.4, was an increase on the previous year and met the school's target, but was just below the national average and reflected the prior attainment of the 20 students at the start of their courses. In 2002, only seven students were entered for A-level examinations. They were successful in achieving A-E grades in all subjects taken.
15. In 2001, the only groups large enough for statistical comparison were in art, where the results were well above national averages with nine of the eleven candidates gaining the highest grades (A-B) and, in English, where the results of six entrants were above the national average. All students entered for science A-level examinations gained A-E

grades. In relation to their previous attainment at GCSE, results in most subjects were regarded as at least satisfactory according to the school's statistical analysis.

16. The numbers of students entered for AS-level examinations in 2002 were very small. Good results were achieved in mathematics where all seven entrants gained A-D grades. Results were also good in computing, government and politics and in physics. Currently, most students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous performance at GCSE, and some are achieving more highly as a result of their good attitudes and the commitment of teachers to their success. Retention rates are very high. All Year 12 students from 2002 continued with A-level courses into Year 13. Students have good literacy and numeracy skills but their ability to use ICT is below average.

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

17. The attitudes of pupils to their learning, throughout the school, are good and have improved upon the previous inspection when they were described as sound or better. Most pupils like coming to school and they appreciate their teachers and the support that they receive. Pupils generally show a great deal of concentration and interest in whatever they are doing. Their enthusiasm is good. All of these elements were evident, for example, in a Year 11 personal and social educational lesson in which pupils were discussing why people have to pay tax on earnings. Their views were varied, but all equally valid, and it demonstrated that they had done their homework on this subject and also had realistic views of the world outside of school.
18. The behaviour of the pupils is good in lessons. Where management and discipline in lessons is good and where the lesson content is stimulating, behaviour is often very good and, on occasions, excellent. Although the narrow corridors in the main school building do not facilitate easy movement between classes, behaviour is satisfactory at the changeover between lessons. The pupils know what standards are expected of them and they usually respond well. The school maintains its own internal exclusions system and this works well to maintain good standards of behaviour. Good attitudes to school are reflected in the very low number of exclusions. There has been only one permanent exclusion in the reporting year preceding this inspection.
19. The majority of the pupils clearly realise that not everyone comes from a similar background. They respect the fact that different cultures have different feelings and beliefs. They have a good understanding that their actions towards others can reciprocate and cause confrontation. The absence of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, sexism and racism, is good.
20. The personal development and relationships of pupils within the school are very good and a strength of the school. The pupils have many opportunities, offered by the school, to show their initiative and to take personal responsibility. The pupils have a mutual respect for each other and for their teachers. They are eager to help others. For example, last Christmas and on their own, Year 7 pupils chose a charity to support and raised money by playing and singing carols in the local shopping centre. A large number of Year 11 pupils have volunteered and are being trained as mentors for younger pupils. The lively school council involves all year groups democratically. The pupils get on very well with their teachers and these feelings are mutually reciprocated. During a Year 11 lesson seen, the teacher and pupils gave a very moving one minute's silence for a member of staff seriously injured in a car crash.

21. Attendance at the school, for the most recent reporting year, is good. This has improved since the previous inspection and is now above the national average for this type of school. Unauthorised absences are also below the national average. Most pupils arrive punctually to school and get to their classes on time. The school has no unexplained long-term absences. Overall, the attitudes, values and personal development of the pupils at the school have a very positive impact upon their learning.

### **Sixth form**

22. The attitudes of the sixth-form students towards their learning are very good and a strength of the school. Without exception, they enjoy coming to the school and respect the fact that they are treated by the staff as adults and encouraged to develop as independent learners. They really enjoy the confidence and camaraderie of a small sixth form where everyone knows each other, including the teachers. They like and respect their teachers and have the confidence to approach them with either academic or personal problems. These factors have a strong, positive impact on their progress. The students take on the responsibility of prefects and many have arranged their own extra-curricular events and shows. For example, two girls have set up a gospel choir whilst another group is arranging a school version of 'Stars in Their Eyes'. During their time in the sixth form, the students make great strides in their maturity. During a Year 13 history lesson seen, on the foreign policy of Queen Elizabeth I, the students showed how well they can sustain an ethical and intellectual argument at an adult level by debating whether the queen was correct in her views and actions.
23. Attendance in the sixth form, as last reported, is at a similar level to that of the main school and is therefore good. It compares very well with national averages for similar sixth forms in this type of school. Attendance since last September is reported to be about 95 per cent. There have been no exclusions in the sixth form. Students come to school on time and lessons commence promptly.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

24. Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good. This is the same judgement as at the last inspection. Of the lessons seen, in 94 per cent teaching was satisfactory or better. This includes five per cent with excellent teaching, 24 per cent in which it was very good, 41 per cent in which it was good and 24 per cent in which it was satisfactory. Teaching was unsatisfactory or poor in six per cent of lessons. The figures for good and very good teaching broadly match those achieved during the last inspection. The sharing of good practice between teachers is having a strong, positive impact on the quality of teaching. There are examples of very good and excellent teaching across Years 7 to 13. Pupils learn well because of this good teaching. The quality of learning is good across the whole school, particularly where very high standards of behaviour and contributions to classroom discussions are demanded. The quality of learning in many areas could be improved further in Years 7 to 9 if the criteria used for marking and the National Curriculum level descriptors used for judging attainment were shared more regularly with pupils.
25. Most lessons have many good features. Amongst them, the very constructive relationships between pupils and teachers and the sheer passion and drive of many staff are most apparent and influential. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and they have high expectations of pupils. Teachers manage their pupils well and ensure they plan for a high level of active pupil participation. In the best lessons, pupils are challenged by well-planned activities, probing questioning and the fierce pace set by the

teacher. It is evident in many subject areas that teachers have benefited from the training they have received and feedback from observations of their lessons.

26. In many lessons, the strength of teaching and learning combine with good effect. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on Macbeth', the teacher inspired lower attainers so effectively that they worked productively throughout the lesson. All the class contributed because of effective questioning and recognised the substantial gains they had made by the end of the lesson. Similarly, in a Year 7 geography lesson devoted to understanding and analysing population pyramids, the teacher's voice conveyed excitement, interest and high expectations that drove teaching and learning along at a tremendous speed. In a very good Year 9 music lesson, where pupils were taught about jazz, there was a good balance between teacher-led and independent learning coupled with opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' performances. Pupils listened carefully and relished the opportunities to take control of their own learning. All this was achieved with zest and good humour.
27. Several factors resulted in unsatisfactory or poor teaching and learning in a small number of lessons. In several subject areas where the pupils are organised in mixed ability classes, the use of inappropriate teaching strategies was the main reason because the higher attainers were not sufficiently challenged and did not make sufficient progress. In other unsatisfactory lessons, the teachers talked for too long, making the pupils passive recipients, rather than active participants in their own learning. The sluggish pace during these lessons meant that pupils did not learn as much as they should have done. Occasionally, the teacher did not possess sufficiently strong classroom management skills to engage and sustain the interest of pupils. There are inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework. Homework is usually set according to a timetable but parents and pupils report that the time needed to complete it can vary widely. Marking is good in some subjects where pupils receive regular, constructive comments on their work, and particularly effective in Years 7 to 9 when these comments refer to National Curriculum assessment criteria. For example, in art and design, teachers have established consistent interpretation of assessment criteria through careful moderation of samples of pupils' work. Marking is unsatisfactory when pupils are given insufficient guidance about what they need to do to improve and when, as for example in ICT, assessment criteria are not used accurately.
28. Teachers pay careful attention to encouraging equality and are successful in addressing the needs of all pupils. In numerous lessons, teachers demonstrated their awareness of the need to encourage specific groups of pupils. In one mathematics lesson, for example, good involvement of girls was achieved through them being drawn into questioning and debating activities in a class dominated numerically by boys. Positive questioning and imposed seating plans were some of the techniques used well by teachers to ensure all groups of pupils were engaged in their learning. In a religious education lesson, teacher questioning was spread evenly to ensure all pupils contributed fully to the discussion. Pupils with particular behavioural difficulties were seen to be well supported, for example in a music lesson where the teacher gave special attention and support to a pupil who was struggling to maintain a reasonable level of concentration; this support enabled the pupil to remain in the class, to make a valuable contribution to whole-class debate and to achieve success in his learning.
29. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good resulting in good progress relative to pupils' previous attainment. Teachers use their expertise and resources to make learning accessible and challenging and ensure that pupils attain the necessary basic levels of literacy and numeracy. Teachers take account of the targets set out in pupils' individual education plans. Students are usually

well motivated, work co-operatively and achieve success. Excellent teaching in a Year 7 French lesson, where 16 pupils had special educational needs, exemplified this. By keeping up a very good pace and setting time limits on engaging activities, the teacher encouraged and motivated these pupils in a very positive way. Learning support assistants give good support and this usually has a positive impact on pupils' learning in mainstream classes. Learning support is most effective when the assistant has been involved in the initial planning for the lesson and so is well prepared.

### **Sixth form**

30. Forty-four lessons were seen in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons and good or better in 75 per cent. In one lesson, teaching was unsatisfactory because inadequate planning led to loss of too much time. The quality of teaching is broadly similar in Years 12 and 13.
31. Amongst the strongest features of sixth-form teaching is the variety of teaching and learning styles which address the different needs of students well. In most subject areas, teachers are adept at engaging students through searching questions that require students to think for themselves and give praise when due for thoughtful, intelligent answers. Students are given more responsibility for their own learning. They collaborate well with each other and take seriously the opportunities for peer and self-assessment of the work they produce. A particularly good example of this was seen in a Year 12 drama lesson focused on 'The Three Sisters'. In a Year 12 geography lesson on settlement, students' understanding and thinking were probed relentlessly by the teacher; the students were thus encouraged to extend, justify and evaluate their original answers.
32. The pre-inspection questionnaire, completed by nearly all students, gives a very strong endorsement of the teaching at the school. Nearly all students considered they are well taught and expected to do their best. They believe they are well supported by their teachers and this includes having their work thoroughly assessed and being kept up to date about their progress. Inspectors agree with these judgements. There are a few weak features of teaching in the sixth form. In certain lessons, some students are passive, and learning opportunities are lost because of this. This low level of active participation and engagement was particularly noticeable amongst boys. However, in the vast majority of lessons, students work productively and respond well to skilful teaching. Numeracy and literacy skills are taught well as an integral part of subjects and through extra provision. Enrichment programmes support the learning of leadership skills. In most subjects, students achieve well and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding.

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

33. The 11 to 16 curriculum supports the needs of all pupils in all areas but it does not meet statutory requirements in ICT. Pupils identified as having special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have access to the entire curriculum. The curricular needs of pupils with statements of special educational needs are met and all have good access to learning support in literacy and numeracy. The recent inclusion of vocational courses in the 11 to 16 curriculum allows greater opportunity to match courses to the aptitudes and aspirations of all pupils from the age of 14. Good strategies for teaching basic literacy and numeracy are in place.



34. The school teaches a 25-hour week in a two-week timetable structure in all years. The length of week taught is in line with most secondary schools nationally. Each subject area has an adequate time allocation, although use of ICT is minimal in many subject areas such as art and design, mathematics and modern foreign languages. The curriculum is broad and balanced with two modern foreign languages offered to all pupils in Years 8 and 9. Pupils in Year 8 are set in English, mathematics and science but other subjects are taught in mixed ability groups. This arrangement has been successfully extended to Year 9 since January 2003.
35. In Year 10, the school has introduced a more personalised option scheme which provides a good match to the individual aptitudes and aspirations of pupils. There are three pathways offering a suitable range of academic, vocational and work experience opportunities. In Year 10, each pupil selects the pathway which best reflects their aptitudes, level of achievement and personal aspirations. There is no vocational course in Year 11. All pupils study, English, mathematics, single science, design and technology and ICT at basic skills level, and physical education. Pupils following the work experience pathway attend places of work for one day a week. A small group of Year 10 pupils who do not study a full GCSE modern foreign language course are entered for certification in Spanish which provides them with some motivation to learn. All pupils who studied two languages in Years 8 and 9 have the option to continue studying them if they have obtained at least Level 4 at the age of 14, however, most pupils choose not to opt for a second language. There is a revised and improved timetable in place since January 2003 which has reduced considerably the numbers of classes split between two teachers for the same subject and allows for more sixth-form lessons to take place during the normal teaching time.
36. Extra-curricular provision for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good. In physical education, there is a wide variety of activities with high participation rates for both boys and girls of all ages, and sporting links with the community are very strong. The school won a championship in the national rowing regatta. The school holds the Sportsmark Award. The religious studies department has beneficial links with a local Church of England church and more recently with a local Jewish rabbi. Art and design provides a good range of visits to the National Portrait Gallery and the Tate Modern, and pupils in Year 8 made contributions to the local arts festival. The school is currently applying for the silver Artsmark Award. There is a thriving performing arts club, which organises an annual production and, in music, there are termly concerts which make very valuable contributions to the quality of school life. A programme of visits, field trips and theatre visits supports specific curriculum areas. In Year 8, there is a day trip to France with other visits planned to Spain and France.
37. The provision for careers education is good and is delivered through the timetabled personal, social and health education programme, within which, each year group has its own theme. In Year 10, pupils take part in well-organised two-week work experience placements and, in Year 11, pupils are given individual advice on post-16 options which they appreciate. The recently re-stocked resource centre provides good information with a special focus and access for Year 9 pupils choosing their options.

### **Sixth-form curriculum**

38. Curriculum provision in the sixth form is good and provides opportunities in a wide choice of subjects at AS- and A-level according to students' individual aptitudes and interests. Students are directed to subjects matching their career aspirations. They are helped by individual interviews and parents' information evenings, and due consideration is given to their expected GCSE examination results. At present, some groups in Year

13 are very small, although recruitment in Year 12 was much more successful in 2002 and there are strong indications from interviews with Year 11 pupils and their parents that a large proportion of Year 11 pupils intend to stay at the school in the sixth form. The curriculum meets the needs of all students having obtained at least five GCSEs at grade C. In Year 12, students choose four subjects at AS-level and, in Year 13, students continue with three of those subjects at A-level. At present, there are no vocational courses offered in the 16 to 18 curriculum. In response to a key issue from the previous inspection, the provision for religious education meets requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Wider curricular opportunities are offered through enrichment courses such as key skills. Other enrichment programmes include the development of leadership skills and the experience of running a business enterprise with final accounts submitted at Easter. Teachers provide additional after-school support to ensure that students are as well prepared as possible for their examinations. This reflects the strong commitment of teachers to the students' welfare.

39. Extra-curricular provision for sixth-form students is good and supports their personal development well. They participate enthusiastically in various activities and are involved in supporting and encouraging younger pupils. Students also have the opportunity to join the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. In addition, students can take part in the 'millennium volunteers', a group who focus on helping individuals who are less fortunate than themselves. They also take part in an annual 'rag day', when sixth-form students raise funds for a chosen charity.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

40. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection.
41. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. There is clear commitment in the school to promoting values of mutual respect and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate the beliefs and values of others. There is also much emphasis on the building of pupils' self-esteem through the merits and awards system. In some subjects, such as art and design, music, religious education, drama and geography, there is an awareness of the spiritual dimension of the curriculum. For example, in geography, pupils respond with amazement at the rain forest by expressing themselves in poetry. Currently, there is insufficient planning to promote pupils' spiritual awareness across all subjects.
42. There is a new draft policy on collective worship which proposes a range of excellent ideas and approaches to enable the school to meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. In the best of the year assemblies, teachers promote the school's 'theme for the week' with a range of thought-provoking anecdotes and readings. In some, but not all, pupils are given the opportunity for reflection on their own lives and experiences. Whilst the school theme is considered in tutor groups, there is inconsistency in the manner and sensitivity with which this time for reflection is approached. At present, therefore, the school does not fully meet statutory requirements.
43. The overall provision for moral development is good. Teachers have clear expectations regarding behaviour and these are consistently endorsed by a clear framework of rewards and sanctions. There are policies which promote good behaviour by encouraging pupils to understand the consequences of their actions. The school's anti-bullying policy is a good example of this approach. Pupils show their concern for the

school environment by keeping the grounds and corridors generally free of litter and graffiti.

44. Pupils are given good opportunities to consider moral issues within subjects such as religious education, personal, social and health education, geography and ICT. For example, a Year 7 class produced a range of leaflets in ICT questioning the morality of a multi-national company selling powdered milk to families in Africa, thus discouraging breast feeding. In religious education, pupils develop a good understanding of moral and religious responses to the concept of 'just war' and can relate this to current political situations.
45. The provision for social education is good. The school offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to become involved in the life of the school. There is a strong commitment to the form, year and school councils. Teachers consult pupils about areas of success and areas for improvement, thus giving them a sense of ownership. Within lessons, there are many opportunities for pupils to work in groups and in teams. Physical education is a particularly good example of where pupils display co-operation and responsibility. There is a very good mentoring system in school whereby senior pupils support Year 7 and Year 8 pupils. To raise awareness of others less fortunate than themselves, there is a strong commitment to raising money for charities. Year 7, for example, recently raised over £2000 for cancer research.
46. Provision for cultural development is good. There are many extra-curricular activities that provide opportunities for pupils to develop a wider range of skills. For example, there is a highly-regarded drama production which involves many pupils, as well as a wide range of musical programmes and sporting opportunities. The religious education programme promotes good understanding of world faiths. Within art and design, pupils experience a rich diversity of artistic styles such as African, Aboriginal, Oriental and Indian. In music, there is also a variety of experiences including music from Japan, Java, and France. Trips and visits enhance curriculum provision. This area has continued to develop well since the last inspection.

### **Sixth form**

47. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form is good.
48. There is a strong sense of community. Students take on a range of responsibilities including mentoring, charity fundraising and some sports clubs. Regular collective worship strongly fosters spiritual, social and moral development. Students are very supportive of each other as evidenced in their spontaneous applause for the personal achievements of their peers and their teachers. The business enterprise group within the sixth form are impressive in their commitment and skill in raising funds for Dr Barnardo's. The requirements for religious education in the sixth form are met by the provision of three days focusing on ethical and religious issues.

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

49. Very good relationships between staff and pupils make this a school where pupils feel well cared for. Procedures for the management of health and safety are well in place and regularly monitored by the appropriate personnel. All weaknesses in practice and procedures identified by the previous inspection have been rectified. Risk assessments are made where necessary and kept for reference. The school has suitable procedures for evacuation in the event of fire. These are practised regularly, and necessary

equipment is serviced. Portable electrical equipment is checked on a regular basis in accordance with requirements.

50. The procedures for child protection are very good. All relevant staff have received training from the local education authority, and requisite training for a wider range of staff and pupils at the appropriate level is provided by the school at regular intervals and as part of the induction programme for new staff. Confidentiality for any pupils in difficulty is assured.
51. The school cares well for its pupils with special educational needs. The literacy and spelling ability of pupils is assessed when they join the school to determine the level of support necessary. Pupils with behavioural problems are very well supported with the help of an outside agency. Learning support assistants provide useful feedback on each pupil supported, to the special educational needs co-ordinator, of what has been achieved and what difficulties have been encountered. This good practice is used to update individual education plans as appropriate.
52. Pupils receive good levels of support and guidance, particularly by their form tutors in personal, social and health education lessons where they are invited to give their views and develop their ideas about a range of topics in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. They are given detailed guidance concerning subject options in Years 10 and 11 through these lessons and through a comprehensive booklet detailing all available courses. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have received informative curriculum booklets describing all the subjects they study in the year. Year 10 pupils receive useful guidance about coursework and deadlines for completion which helps them to organise their time more efficiently.
53. Arrangements to promote and monitor attendance are very good. Form tutors register pupils efficiently taking care to encourage punctuality. There are good systems in place for the storage and retrieval of data relating to attendance, and absences are effectively dealt with. Reasons for absence are insisted on and regular absentees are carefully monitored. The school benefits from good relationships with the education welfare officer who assists with the monitoring and remediation of attendance problems.
54. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. A mentor system carried out by Year 11 pupils to support younger pupils provides reassurance, friendship and appropriate intervention should problems occur. There has been a significant reduction in the number of reported incidents of bullying since new policies have been in place and pupils have been encouraged and supported to deal effectively with incidents through a guidance programme offered in assemblies. There is a good range of rewards and sanctions relating to behaviour with regular opportunities for the celebration of successes throughout all year groups.
55. The school's policy on assessment has been revised recently. The quality of assessment of pupil attainment and progress varies between subject areas. In some subject areas, assessments are made regularly and pupils are given realistic subject-specific targets for improvement. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. The quality of marking is also variable. It is good in some subjects where pupils receive immediate feedback, both verbal and written, on their homework and coursework but unsatisfactory when they are given insufficient guidance about what they need to do to improve.
56. Policies and procedures for the monitoring of pupils' academic development have undergone recent evaluation and development and now provide an effective framework.

Improvements in ICT provision are prioritised in the school improvement plan to assist this development and the school is now well placed to put these into effect. A good range of data is available electronically to staff and is supported by commercially produced assessment packages. The lack of complete prior attainment data from out-of-borough junior schools is a disadvantage as teachers do not have adequate information to inform planning for all pupils, particularly those in Year 7. Also, there is no accurate baseline for monitoring progress or to enable accurate reporting of the progress of these pupils, for whom the school has no Key Stage 2 data, to their parents. Assessment data is used effectively to motivate pupils by setting target grades for those in Years 8 and 10 to aim to achieve in national tests and examinations in Years 9 and 11.

### **Sixth form**

57. Overall, the way that the school cares for students in the sixth form and ensures their health and safety is good and there are some very good features.
58. Prior to making decisions at the end of Year 11, students receive comprehensive information about courses available in the sixth form and elsewhere. Careers advice is extensive and of good quality. The very positive relationships between staff and students result in students being confident to ask for help when needed. Students appreciate the time their teachers devote to helping them and the guidance they receive through marking that helps them to understand what is needed to improve their work. The use of assessment information to set targets for students is effective in Year 12 but some Year 13 students are unsure of the relevance of their targets and how they were determined. There are effective arrangements to ensure that students have the information needed to make decisions about what they will do after the sixth form.

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

59. Overall, the effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is good. These positive links contribute significantly towards the success of their children's learning.
60. Many parents expressed the view, either at the parents' meeting held before the inspection or through their response to the questionnaire, that the school had improved 'beyond recognition'. They now feel welcomed by the school and that the school handles their concerns with the courtesy and efficiency they expect. More specifically, parents state that their children like coming to the school, the school expects their children to work hard and achieve of their best and become mature and responsible. They also feel their children are making good progress and they, as parents, are not uncomfortable about approaching the school with a question or a problem and the school provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons. However, a significant number of parents said that they are not kept well informed of how their children are getting on, that the school does not work closely with parents, that their children do not receive the right amount of homework or that behaviour is not good. The inspection team agrees with the positive points and found some inconsistency in the setting and marking of homework.
61. The other negative viewpoints of parents do not take into account the considerable changes that have taken place, particularly in management practice and reorganisation of parents' evenings, since last Easter. The revised annual cycle of parents' evenings and reports has just been completed so many parents, when completing the questionnaire, had not received any progress information about their children for two terms or longer. This problem has been resolved by the new schedule. Parents would

also like to see improved stability in staffing as the education of some pupils, particularly those studying GCSE ICT, has been disrupted by frequent changes of teacher. The school provides easy access to the headteacher and staff for urgent, parental problems and this is utilised and appreciated by parents.

62. The quality of information that the school provides for its parents is good and much better than that provided at the time of the previous inspection. All parents receive regular and informative newsletters. The school's prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are up to date and conform to all current, statutory requirements. Pupils' academic reports for all year groups have been revised recently and now report clearly on all subjects, saying what pupils can do and giving realistic targets. Parents of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 10 receive detailed curriculum information on topics covered in each subject, the learning support provided for pupils with special educational needs as well as advice on how they can help their children to learn. The potential of pupils' planners as a useful means of two-way communication between the parent and the school is not exploited as fully or consistently as possible. Parents of statemented pupils are involved fully in their children's yearly reviews and are kept closely informed of progress and individual provision by the learning support team.
63. The parents make a good contribution to their children's learning both in school and at home. Some parents come into school and help with school drama and musical productions. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is substantial and one of the school's strengths. The attendance at school concerts and events is very high and parents are impressed with the quality of school productions. The energetic parents', teachers' and friends' association has raised considerable funding through social and sponsored events to support resourcing in numerous areas of the school.

### **Sixth form**

64. The quality of information that the school provides for the parents of sixth-form students is good and much better than that provided at the time of the previous inspection. The school's post-16 prospectus provides comprehensive information on the AS- and A-level courses provided, as well as sound advice on choosing which subjects to study. Full information of the range of wider opportunities to help students develop skills, such as leadership and the ability to manage people and projects, is also given. The aims of the curriculum, the challenge to achieve high academic standards and the expectations of students to play a full role and take responsibility in the school community are made explicit. Almost all students reported that their views are listened to and most felt they were treated as responsible adults.
65. Through interviews and in their questionnaire responses, students expressed pride in their school and said they would recommend it to others. Most feel that they are taught well, have good relationships with their teachers and are challenged to do their best. Although a majority of students said that they were not kept well informed about their progress, this was not the view of the inspection team. Although there may have been some problems last year, current academic reports for sixth-form students report clearly on all subjects and identify what students need to focus on in order to improve.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. Leadership of the school is very good. The headteacher, governors and senior staff are united in their determination and commitment to improve still further the quality of education that the school provides. Their vision which is shared by all staff is clearly expressed through the aims of the school. With the new appointments made and restructuring of roles and responsibilities, the cohesiveness of school management at all levels has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Governors and the senior management team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school gained through departmental reviews that have been completed in every area of the school and through good communication with staff and the mutual trust and support that has been generated throughout the school.
67. Through an extensive training programme, governors have greatly improved their own effectiveness and efficiency. They are aware of the information they need to fulfil their responsibilities and are clear about their roles in strategic planning, acting as critical friends and ensuring accountability. At the time of the previous inspection, it was a weakness that governors were not made aware of important financial information. This resulted in inappropriate proportions of the budget being allocated to certain areas, insufficient application of the principles of best value and consequent overspending on staffing and the capital buildings project. Financial monitoring prior to this year was very poor and the inaccurate information given to governors allowed a considerable budget deficit to accrue. Income from the sports hall was overestimated, and budgeted expenditure on computer cabling for the ICT network was exceeded. Financial monitoring and control is now more regular, with accurate monthly outturn figures reported to the finance committee in a more consistent format that enables them to understand the figures more clearly. In agreement with the local education authority, a long-term financial plan to eradicate the budget deficit and repay the capital loan has been proposed.
68. The school now has good procedures for financial control and the monitoring of expenditure. These procedures enable costing of school development and will allow more reliable assessment of cost effectiveness such as the impact of the increased staffing budget, reduction of administration costs and investment in ICT. Governors fulfil most of their responsibilities well. They have efficiently addressed all health and safety issues and have set challenging but manageable targets for test and examination performance by pupils. They have not, however, ensured that provision of ICT meets statutory requirements. They have agreed a policy for collective worship which meets statutory requirements, but current implementation of this policy is not rigorous enough.
69. Overall, school management is good. Several heads of department are new to their responsibility but they have engendered good team spirit within their departments and have identified and prioritised areas for development consistent with whole-school plans. It is evident in many subject areas that teachers have benefited from the training they have received and feedback from observations of their lessons by their heads of department and more senior members of staff. Departmental reviews, although completed to an agreed format, have not yet led to clear formalised strategies for improvement. The recent focus on improving communication with parents, target setting for pupils and the quality of annual reports was appropriate and has resulted in a more informative report format, greater motivation of pupils and improved relationships with parents. Better use of assessment information has been identified within the draft school development plan as a key priority. Although there is some good practice within departments, assessment data is not used to determine success criteria in development plans by which to measure improvement. Progress is measured against

agreed success criteria, but those currently in the draft school improvement plan are not quantified sufficiently to enable sharp evaluation that will identify whether or not strategies for improvement have been as effective as they could be, and consequently lead to modification and identification of new priorities. The criteria are not sharp enough to enable governors to monitor the school's progress effectively enough.

70. The school has a clear policy to promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The policy is well thought through, giving aims, values and an entitlement statement. Although the school is in the early stages of developing its principles and procedures surrounding becoming an inclusive school, there is a real commitment with inclusion being part of the school's strategic plan. Teachers were observed to be inclusive in practice, and this ensures standards of attainment of specific groups of pupils are compatible with their peers. For example, in a science lesson, two girls with the same home language worked together effectively to support each other's learning.
71. The leadership of the learning support department is good and its work is well supported by senior management. Requirements for the new Code of Practice are met. The profile of special educational needs has been raised and good team spirit exists within the department. New management structures have been quickly and clearly established, and the role of all staff in teaching pupils with special educational needs has been emphasised through school-based training. A very succinct, well thought out development plan has been drawn up, and areas for improvement have been prioritised. The provision of data and ideas for support, through individual education plans, has been quickly tackled. The induction and training needs of learning support assistants have been assessed and are being met.

## **Staffing**

72. The school has embedded performance management into its programme of school improvement. Good quality training has been provided for heads of department, using both external consultants and staff expertise within the school. Departments regularly undertake lesson observations and it is evident that the sharing of good practice has led to more effective and consistent approaches to teaching.
73. School managers are very supportive in helping staff receive appropriate professional development opportunities. All staff new to the school are given an induction booklet that is a very thorough, yet practical, introduction to school expectations. It contains very useful sections on school policies and procedures. It also provides clear statements of entitlement to, and procedures for, accessing professional development opportunities for graduate trainees, ITT (Initial Teacher Training) students and all new staff. Staff new to the school appreciate its clarity and usefulness as it helps them apply school rules consistently with other staff.
74. Staffing is generally sufficient, though long-term difficulties in staffing the ICT and science departments need resolving. The overload of responsibilities of some teachers evident at the time of the last inspection has been mostly resolved. Although successful in providing a broad curriculum offer in the sixth-form and creating the probability that provision will be cost effective from next September, extravagant staffing of post-16 courses last year has contributed to the school's budget deficit.



## **Learning resources**

75. The provision and effectiveness of learning resources is satisfactory overall. Provision is good in art and design, design and technology and physical education but, in religious education, there is a shortage of artefacts, up-to-date videos and materials on world faiths and, in science, some of the equipment is in a poor state of repair. Although there is central provision of computer resources in the ICT suites, subject- specialist provision of ICT resources is insufficient in science, geography and in modern foreign languages. Whilst all language rooms have overhead projectors and tape recorders, there is no access to software resources or the Internet. In design and technology, computer-aided manufacture is restricted to compliant materials due to the shortage of equipment.

## **Accommodation**

76. An extensive capital building programme has been completed since the previous inspection. There is a new, large dining hall, and excellent new accommodation has been provided for physical education, ICT, geography and the sixth-form centre. The new building provides very good study facilities for the sixth form. Two science laboratories have been refurbished but other laboratories are in a poor condition and are not conducive to learning. Changes to the school entrance and reception area have made parents and visitors feel far more welcome when they arrive at the school.
77. Accommodation for drama, where facilities are unsatisfactory, music, where one room is too cramped for groupwork and the learning support area, which is uninviting, needs to be improved. The dispersed arrangement of teaching areas for some subjects, particularly when rooms are on two different floors, makes efficient use and access to resources difficult. Through the allocation of a prayer room for use by Muslim pupils, the school shows sensitivity in welcoming all pupils and is careful to address their individual needs.

## **Sixth form**

78. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Leadership reflects the common vision for the future and the strong commitment to expansion and improvement that is shared by governors and the school leadership team. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and monitors closely the changes and improvements that are being made. Enlargement of the sixth form has been managed well and financial control has improved considerably. In order to be implemented, new courses are expected to attract sufficient numbers of students to make them cost-effective. Although many Year 13 classes are small, Year 12 classes are generally much larger and are economically viable. The larger numbers of students in these classes improve learning because they provide opportunities for wider discussion. All post-16 courses are taught by staff with the necessary subject expertise and commitment.
79. Relationships between students and with their teachers are very good and support learning and personal development. Procedures to monitor students' academic progress have been implemented and make effective use of available assessment information. The teaching and learning review of the sixth form evaluated current provision thoroughly and identified the major priorities for further improvement.
80. The purpose-built sixth-form centre provides excellent facilities and a very good environment for learning. It is a substantial improvement on the facilities provided for

sixth-form students at the time of the last inspection. Learning resources are satisfactory. Good management of the sixth form has ensured a strong sense of community, satisfaction among students of the courses they follow and the real possibility that far larger numbers of Year 11 pupils will stay on at the school to make provision financially efficient next year.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

### **(1) Standards - Ensure the school meets its challenging targets in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 by:**

- (a) raising standards of science at GCSE to those achieved by other core subjects through establishing consistency in the quality of teaching and building upon recent successful strategies;
- (b) raising standards of ICT throughout the school;
- (c) improving accuracy of moderation of standards in Years 7 to 9.

*Paragraph references: 5, 9, 10, 74, 75, 100-103, 119, 124, 133-137, 159.*

### **(2) Curriculum - Meet statutory requirements for ICT by:**

- (a) developing further the range of learning experiences in Years 7 to 9 to ensure that progress is made in all strands of ICT capability;
- (b) developing and co-ordinating experiences for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 not following a GCSE ICT course to ensure that they receive their statutory ICT entitlement;
- (c) further development and co-ordination of experiences using ICT in departments to ensure that all pupils make good use of ICT to support their learning.

*Paragraph references: 33, 34, 68, 75, 97, 102, 110, 121, 132-137, 143, 149, 160.*

### **(3) Teaching and learning - Raise the quality of teaching and learning to a consistently very high standard by:**

- (a) identifying and sharing the most effective teaching and learning strategies used by teachers in the school;
- (b) making more precise assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure that classroom activities are closely matched to pupils' needs.

*Paragraph references: 24, 25, 27, 28, 85, 102, 103, 104, 125, 130, 134, 142, 148, 154, 159.*

### **(5) Assessment - Improve efficiency and effectiveness in use of assessment information by:**

- (a) using prior attainment data as an accurate baseline for monitoring progress;
- (b) using assessment data to decide on success criteria and targets in the school and departmental improvement plans;
- (c) using assessment data to enable governors to monitor the school's progress more effectively;
- (d) using assessment data to support accurate reporting of pupils' progress to their parents;

*Paragraph references: 55, 56, 58, 62, 69, 78, 79, 119.*

(5) **Accommodation**

- (a) improve the accommodation and facilities in science, music, drama, and the learning support unit;
- (b) improve the clustering of rooms into subject areas to enable more efficient use of resources.

*Paragraph references: 76, 77, 92, 102, 149.*

(6) **Sixth form - Maintain progress towards making post-16 provision financially viable by:**

- (a) increasing numbers of students in Year 13.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	151
	Sixth form	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		38

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	7	36	62	36	9	1	0
Percentage	5	24	41	24	6	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	14	17	10	1	0	0
Percentage	5	32	39	23	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. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils and students

<b>Students on the school's roll</b>	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils and students on the school's roll	992	73
Number of full-time pupils and students known to be eligible for free school meals	45	n/a

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils and students with statements of special educational needs	12	0
Number of pupils and students on the school's special educational needs register	182	0

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils and students
Number of pupils and students with English as an additional language	15

<b>Pupil and student mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils and students

Pupils and students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	53
Pupils and students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3 2001/2
National comparative data	8.1 2000/1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	121	90	211

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	93	99	100
	Girls	80	74	75
	Total	173	173	175
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (88)	82 (81)	83 (82)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	68 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (62)	62 (54)	56 (47)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	102	100	90
	Girls	82	76	64
	Total	184	176	154
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (88)	84 (67)	73 (86)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	58 (50)	66 (34)	54 (48)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (32)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001/2	103	94

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	68	95	100
	Girls	64	91	91
	Total	132	186	191
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (60)	96 (94)	98 (97)
	National	51.2 (48.4)	86.8 (90.9)	94.6 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47 (47)
	National	n/a (39.0)

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	2	5	7 (18)
	Average point score per candidate	220	248	240 (16.4)
National	Average point score per candidate	(16.9)	(18.0)	(17.5)

The system for calculation of average point scores was changed in 2002 and so direct comparison between years is not possible

National data for 2002 is not yet available

		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	2	5	7	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	220	248	240	-	-	-
National	Average point score per candidate	(16.9)	(17.7)	(17.4)	(9.8)	(11.4)	(10.6)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils and students***

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

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

<b>No of pupils and students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
853	108	1
7	0	0
62	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
22	0	0
12	0	0
18	0	0
4	0	0
11	0	0
19	0	0
5	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
9	0	0
12	10	0
29	0	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.1
Number of pupils/students per qualified teacher	19.6

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	357

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.9
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### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	2,843,680
Total expenditure	2,890,100
Expenditure per pupil/student	2,902
Balance brought forward from previous year	51,111
Balance carried forward to next year	4,691



Key Stage 4	22.3
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years (FTE)	49.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	50
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1063
Number of questionnaires returned	297

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	27	62	8	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	24	63	7	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	13	53	20	6	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	50	25	7	3
The teaching is good.	12	66	10	2	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	10	45	32	10	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	35	52	9	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	59	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	10	55	26	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	11	60	6	2	21
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	19	63	8	2	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	55	10	3	7

### Other issues raised by parents

- The school has changed 'beyond recognition' since the previous inspection.
- Behaviour, particularly outside lessons, has improved considerably but there was some disruptive behaviour in a few lessons.
- Lack of information related to long periods of time between parents' evenings with no interim progress reports between annual reports.
- Homework setting and marking was inconsistent, with some very good practice identified in Year 7 geography.
- Planners are not used consistently as a means of home/school communication.

## 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

- Consistently high examination results and well above average standards of attainment.
- Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result.
- Some very good or excellent teaching takes place.
- Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, and there is good capacity to improve further.
- The head of department provides good leadership and effective management.
- The department has a clear sense of direction and works purposefully for the benefit of its pupils.

#### Areas for improvement

- Ensure consistency in teaching quality by regular and rigorous monitoring and by sharing good practice through mutual observation.
- Refine the quality of higher attaining pupils' written work by encouraging a more concise and analytical style.

81. In 2002, GCSE English results were higher than they were in 2001, and were significantly above the national average, with 72 per cent of pupils gaining A\*-C grades. In English literature, results were also better than in 2001 and substantially above the national average, with 88 per cent of those entered gaining A\*-C grades. Girls did better than boys in both subjects but the difference between them was much less than nationally. Compared with their average point score at the end of Year 9, pupils' results indicate that they achieved well.
82. In 2002, pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was well above average compared with pupils' performance nationally and above average in comparison with pupils in similar schools. Their performance in English was similar to that in mathematics and science. Girls did better than boys, but the difference between them was less than that found nationally. Pupils' average point score has fluctuated slightly year by year but the trend over five years is a rising one. Given pupils' above average attainment on entry to the school, the picture is one of good achievement overall.
83. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment are well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and achievement is good in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Standards are as high as they are because the department has implemented the framework for teaching English in Year 7 and into Year 8. The new scheme of work for Year 7 links well with pupils' previous learning and provides an interesting and challenging curriculum. In addition, strategies are in place for boosting boys' achievement in Years 7 to 9 and to improve examination success generally in Years 10 and 11. Minority ethnic pupils and gifted and talented pupils, as well as those with special educational needs, are supported well so that they make as good progress as other pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language receive good classroom support and specialist help once a week and make good progress as a result. Pupils are set suitable targets. The effects are apparent in the variety of successful writing which pupils complete. Much of the writing in Years 7 to 9 is fluent and accurate and

shows evidence of personal involvement, especially in creative work. The coursework of older pupils shows thorough knowledge of set texts across a wide range of reading. Pupils' written work, especially for those aiming at the highest grades, would benefit from a focus on key points and a tighter structure as some pupils, in their desire to be complete, use over-lengthy quotation and description. A pupil with English as an additional language, though attaining well and writing knowledgeably and expressively, had difficulties with the clear and concise writing required by formal critical essays. Pupils' standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are well above average overall. Particularly pleasing are the good examples seen during the inspection of pupils with special educational needs attaining at well above expected levels.

84. The quality of teaching in English is good overall, and pupils learn well as a result. Teachers manage pupils well through a combination of good humour, knowledge of the needs of individual pupils and praise for their efforts. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Well-planned lessons and carefully-structured activities contribute much to pupils' progress. Teachers provide well-presented, stimulating extracts, worksheets and other materials which help pupils to understand their learning and make an appropriate written response. Teachers usually make effective use of a variety of methods to encourage and reinforce learning, including short tasks, question and answer sessions and paired and group work.
85. In an excellent lesson on Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' with lower attaining pupils in Year 9, the teacher's energy and lively manner enthused the pupils so that they worked hard throughout the lesson and everyone contributed either by reading aloud from their own writing or by volunteering a response. The lesson flowed naturally and cumulatively from one stage to the next as a result of excellent planning. The teacher's expert questioning and reinforcement enabled pupils to add to their written work in short but concentrated bursts of activity. As a result, they made great gains in self-confidence and were delighted by their own progress. In a very good lesson on Martyn Lowery's poem 'Our Love Now', Year 11 pupils learned very well as their teacher explained the structure of the poem and explored its language with them. A quiet and concentrated period of work on their own enabled pupils to take responsibility for their learning and developed their analytical skills well. The teacher added to pupils' learning by very effectively drawing out the 'sub-text' of the poem in response to a pupil's remark that 'the poem is really about something else'.
86. On occasions, teaching is less effective because of mistakes in the ordering or timing of activities, or over-anxiety about including too much or too little. As a result the pace of learning slows and learning is not always consolidated at the end of lessons. Sometimes, too, teachers rely too much on voluntary contributions from a few pupils so that some pupils in classes in Years 9, 10 and 11 do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning and remain passive listeners. Nevertheless, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed and teaching, though not quite of the quality observed at the previous inspection, is at least good overall and very good or excellent in a quarter of all lessons.
87. The department has gone through a fairly turbulent period during the last two years because of re-structuring and some staffing difficulties. It has done well to maintain the high standards of pupils' attainment and achievement. Good leadership and management by the head of department provide clear direction and a firm grip on procedures so that teachers work effectively as a team on behalf of their pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and the department has the capacity to improve further.

## Literacy across the curriculum

88. Standards of literacy are above average and reflect the overall good provision made by the school to support pupils' needs.
89. The contribution made by subjects other than English to the development of pupils' literacy skills is good, though subjects are not equally consistent in their provision. Good practice is evident in music, history, modern foreign languages, personal and social education and physical education. In the latter subject, for example, teachers make frequent reference to key vocabulary and ensure that pupils use it. In modern foreign languages, pupils have frequent opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills and gain confidence as a result. In other subjects, it is often the development of writing skills which lacks emphasis. This is the case, for example, in religious education, ICT, science and design and technology, where there is not sufficient variety of writing or opportunity for extended writing and insufficient attention is paid to the accuracy of pupils' written work. Though some subjects develop speaking and listening skills well, and encourage pupils to evaluate their own work, pupils in mathematics and design and technology, for example, lack opportunities to take part in discussion or argument so that learning can be shared. There are effective strategies in place to develop pupils' literacy skills but they are not yet being applied consistently across the school.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Above average GCSE results.
- Pupils' ability to evaluate their own performance and that of others.
- The overall quality of teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and facilities for drama are poor.
- Lack of specialist knowledge of some teachers.

90. Attainment in drama is above average at the end of Year 11 and at the end of Year 9. In 2002, results were above the national average for all maintained schools, with almost three-quarters of those entered for GCSE gaining A\*-C grades. This was a substantial improvement on the 2001 results. Pupils' performance in drama compared favourably with their performance in other subjects. In relation to their attainment on entry to the school, and often limited experience of drama, these standards represent very good achievement. A Year 11 class using the poem 'At 3am' as a stimulus, showed above average understanding of the feelings it expressed. They were able to work collaboratively in any combination of grouping and to discuss and share ideas with respect for the views of others. Their performance skills were above average and they confidently evaluated their own and each other's performance.
91. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching was very good in Year 11 when the teacher's very good review of previous learning about the poem led directly into an activity combining role-play and 'thought tracking' that involved all the pupils. As a result of this, and subsequent searching questioning by the teacher and evaluation by the pupils themselves, they learned very well how to reflect thoughts in actions, and also acquired and conveyed a sense of the unhappiness that comes from the lack of communication expressed in the poem. Teaching was unsatisfactory in a Year 7 lesson

when management of the pupils was insecure, instructions were not clearly given or carried out and, as a result, little constructive learning took place.

92. The new head of department provides good leadership but management is made difficult by having to rely on non-specialist teaching and by the poor state of accommodation and facilities for drama. Improvement has been satisfactory since the previous inspection. The subject deserves better given the contribution it makes to pupils' development, examination results, extra-curricular activities and the importance of such things as the current, well-supported production of 'Oliver' in the life of the school.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- High attainment in GCSE examinations and in national tests at age 14.
- Shared commitment of teachers to continue to raise standards and accept change.
- Lesson planning is overall very thorough.
- Leadership and management in identifying and leading on priorities.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure assessment provision includes the pupils' awareness of the means to meet targets set.
- Encourage pupils to share their understanding of mathematics in open discussion.
- Insufficient use of ICT by pupils to support their learning.

93. Attainment on entry to the school is above average. The percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C GCSE grades in 2002, at 74 per cent, was well above national average for all maintained schools and a considerable increase since the previous inspection. The percentage of pupils gaining the highest (A\*-B) grades was well above the national average with boys attaining better results than the girls. Compared with similar schools at age 14, the results achieved at GCSE were excellent; this represents a marked improvement. Results of National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2002 were well above the national average and in line with schools having a similar intake. Results have been consistently well above national averages for the last four years and the school's performance is rising faster than the national trend. In 2002, in comparison with similar schools, the overall attainment in mathematics was similar to English.

94. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in written work shows that attainment is well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and confirms the pattern of the most recent results in national tests. The overall achievement of pupils in every year group is very good. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to explain the process of trigonometry confidently, to identify and rearrange the appropriate formulae and, by correct use of a calculator, arrive at an accurate conclusion. They understand the overlapping links between trigonometry, Pythagoras' theorem and similar triangles. Their written work includes detailed evidence of all the solution process, which reflects their clear understanding, and the habit of note taking supports their future revision. The standard of work seen at the end of Year 11 suggests similar high standards. The work of middle attaining pupils shows very good coverage of high-level work with confident use of complex algebraic expressions and a secure grasp of statistical definitions. Some pupils faltered over negative numbers but, overall, the work was well completed together with some interesting constructions using loci.

95. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. A significant proportion of the lessons seen were very good and one was excellent. In lessons observed, teaching was a little better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The very best teaching was characterised by effective rapport between pupils and their teacher, clarity of lesson objectives and well-established work routines with appropriately varied tasks completed at a brisk pace. These qualities reflect the well-planned lessons, which result in increased levels of understanding and very good and sometimes excellent progress. In one particular middle ability Year 11 lesson, pupils were being encouraged to share their views on compound interest. Many recognised its meaning but were unsure about an efficient method of calculation. The teacher had high expectations and, after some considerable discussion, pupils identified the underlying principles of an improved method of calculation. Pupils enjoyed the challenge, which enabled them to share and test their thinking and communication skills. However, the technique of open discussion and shared learning was generally infrequently employed as a teaching strategy in other lessons. The two instances of unsatisfactory teaching were mainly due to inappropriate teaching strategies employed in a mixed ability situation. A significant minority of higher ability pupils were not sufficiently engaged during the lesson, which weakened their progress.
96. Learning by pupils with special educational needs is good overall in Years 10 and 11. The number of pupils taking GCSE is higher than the national average. In Years 7 to 9, learning support assistance was good in the lessons observed and many individual pupils benefited from targeted provision. The very best lesson observed during the inspection was a very low ability Year 8 class. Here, excellent teaching material was employed, the lesson was well timed and activities were varied with useful review periods to assess the effectiveness of teaching. This ensured that interest was maintained and positive attitudes fostered which resulted in excellent progress being made.
97. Implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy is good. Additional teaching resources were in evidence and lessons frequently began with mental starters. The very recent appointment of a numeracy co-ordinator should enable the initiative to develop further. Inclusion of ICT applications within the schemes of work remains insufficient. Whilst many pupils are competent in their own familiarity with new technology, its use in supporting the mathematics curriculum requires increased development.
98. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department is newly appointed and there is very clear evidence that an analysis of immediate needs has been undertaken. Prompt action has been taken to implement a new teaching scheme; the amended scheme represents an improvement. The department has a clearly defined responsibility structure, which provides both support for the department and an opportunity for professional development. The core staff share a commitment to improve standards. Year 11 support for their GCSE preparation is very good with a detailed revision programme linked to a very comprehensive mathematics website. The department's assessment provision for analysing, recording and monitoring National Curriculum grades is now very good; the use of regular testing forms a strong feature of department policy. However, the policy does not emphasise sufficiently what the pupils need to do to support and accelerate their own learning. The discrepancy in attainment between boys and girls has been analysed, and appropriate teaching strategies have been put in place and weaknesses in timetabling have been largely addressed. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.



## Numeracy across the curriculum

99. Pupils have the necessary mathematical skills to meet the demands of other subjects, though there is no detailed planned contribution by other subject areas to numeracy across the curriculum. Pupils develop their number skills as an integral part of learning science. In Year 7, pupils are able to rearrange formulae to calculate density and mass and can confidently divide without the use of calculators. Graphs are used to represent scientific results and, in Year 9, mental arithmetic is put to good use in calculations involving time and distance. In history, time lines are used to good effect, in particular the understanding the chronological order of the causes of the English Civil War. Pupils are able to use statistical analysis from charts and tables successfully. In design and technology, dimensions in working drawings are confidently used and data analysis is employed when products are evaluated. In food technology, calorific values are scrutinised and understood when looking at food labelling. Pupils are able to use spreadsheets effectively by using variables in simple formulae including multiplication, addition, subtraction and summation in ICT lessons but its potential link to provide a standardised procedure across school is not a feature of department policy.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Effective leadership and management.
- Learning objectives are well planned and shared with pupils.
- Teachers share effectively their good practice in teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient progress has been made in science since the previous inspection.
- Results gained by Year 11 pupils in GCSE examinations.
- Consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Consistency in marking, to give pupils more advice about how to improve their work.
- Lack of opportunities to use ICT.
- Integration of investigative science into lessons.
- Accommodation and facilities.

100. Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were very good compared with schools nationally and good compared with schools with similar prior attainment. The proportions of pupils achieving higher levels in these tests were also well above average. This represents an improvement on the previous year and continues the rising trend since the previous inspection. GCSE results for 2002 in all science examinations at the end of Year 11 were just below national averages and significantly below results in other subjects in the school. The percentage of pupils achieving high grades was below the national average. These results were below those of the previous year and there has been no improvement in GCSE science results since the last inspection. Considering the good results achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9, progress in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.
101. Standards observed in Years 7, 8 and 9 were below average. This was due to an over-reliance on the acquisition of facts and reduced opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and develop their scientific skills. The development of higher order skills of predicting, analysing, inferring and evaluating is not fully integrated into the learning. Consequently, pupils are not adequately prepared for examination courses in Years 10

and 11, where scientific investigation and the analysis and evaluation of data feature more prominently. This was particularly evident from the scrutiny of pupils' work. In Years 10 and 11, standards observed were average. There are more opportunities in lessons for pupils to work independently and collaboratively to apply their knowledge and develop ideas and thinking skills. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 use the periodic table of elements confidently and are developing the skills of constructing chemical equations using words and symbols. They are able to plan their own simple investigations applying their knowledge of scientific theories. These skills need to be developed further. In a Year 11 lesson, lower attaining pupils effectively applied their knowledge about acids and combustion to develop new ideas to explain the formation and effects of acid rain.

102. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The unsatisfactory teaching is partly due to ineffective classroom management which allows inappropriate behaviour to disrupt learning, and partly due to inexperienced teaching. Where teaching is good, pupils are enthused by their lessons and their enjoyment is tangible. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils expressed delight and amazement at the heat generated by commercial hand warmers. As a result, they had a memorable experience that enabled them to understand and set in context the principles of exothermic reactions and their applications. Teachers plan their lessons well with learning objectives shared with pupils at the beginning of the sessions and reviewed at the end to check that expected learning has occurred. There is now a need to continue to develop the planning of lessons by increasing the pace and range of learning opportunities offered to pupils, particularly those that develop the skills of scientific inquiry. The quality of marking is inconsistent and is unsupported by targets for improvement, consequently, pupils are given little feedback about their individual progress except from the numerical marking of tests. Despite this, pupils take care with the presentation of their written work and standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. A recently introduced science club offers exciting extra-curricular opportunities and is proving popular with pupils. Opportunities for using ICT are unsatisfactory. Pupils are now well resourced with text books, but the range of practical equipment is limited and much of what is available needs to be upgraded. Cramped accommodation and poor facilities in some laboratories make practical lessons difficult to manage safely and effectively.
103. Recent acute staffing problems have been partly resolved but there are still some difficulties. Although improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, the recent appointment of a new head of department has significantly improved leadership and management in science. A development plan with clearly identified and prioritised areas for improvement is now in place and beginning to take effect. Professional development for inexperienced teachers to improve classroom management skills, and the monitoring and sharing of good practice between teachers are beginning to address weaknesses in teaching and learning. More detailed and accurate analysis of prior attainment data to set targets is currently being established to enable the tracking of individual progress of pupils to be more effective. An audit completed as part of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for science has identified key issues, and external consultancy has been sought to assist with monitoring the quality of teaching and improving schemes of work. There is a real sense of a commitment and a better team approach to the work of the department through the sharing of ideas and the development of new policies and procedures for improvement.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The study of famous artists and a wide variety of cultures is used effectively to inspire and extend education in art and design.
- Teacher expectations are high with a strong emphasis on the development of drawing skills.
- Lesson planning is good and the range of two- and three-dimensional experiences is broad.
- Homework is set and marked regularly and assessment procedures are well established and effective.

### Area for improvement

- Increase use and application of ICT to meet requirements of the statutory programme of study.

104. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in the GCSE examination continues to exceed national averages. In 2002, 73 per cent of pupils gained GCSE A\*-C grades which, although above the national average, did not match the exceptionally high results of the previous year. The proportion of pupils entered gaining the highest grades, A\* and A, also continues to be above the national average. There is no significant difference between the performances of boys and girls in GCSE examination results.

105. Pupils make good progress throughout Years 10 and 11 and their attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average. Their drawing and painting skills in using a variety of media, as well as their use of three-dimensional materials, such as clay and plaster of Paris, are well developed. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and to develop individuality of response within a well-established framework of good teacher support and subject knowledge. Artistic and cultural influences make a strong impact on much of their work. The development of portraiture in Year 10 and much of the highly original, well-researched and skilfully produced prints and construction created in Year 11 as part of the final coursework unit are good examples of these influences.

106. Pupils also make good progress throughout Years 7 to 9 and, by the end of Year 9, pupils attain standards that exceed national expectations. This is confirmed by teacher assessments at the end of the key stage. Pupils' investigating and making skills are integrated well with their knowledge and understanding of the subject. They have a good knowledge of technical vocabulary and a good range of drawing, painting and three-dimensional skills. This is the result of progression through good planning and good teaching which build successfully on skills they have already learnt. Much of their work, such as the patterned texture work using clay in Year 7, inspired by the work of Gustav Klimt, and the observational still life drawings and paintings in Year 8, is based on good, careful research and creative experimentation.

107. Pupils' behaviour and their attitude to work are good in all years. Many pupils are enthusiastic about their work, they enjoy art and design and take pride in what they achieve. They settle quickly to work, listen well and persevere with their work. Many acknowledge the personal progress they have made over time due to the good teaching and course management in the department. As a result, increased success through growing self-confidence and the effective development of independent learning skills has a significant impact on learning outcomes in Year 10 and more markedly in Year 11.

108. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good and often has some very good features. Teaching is good or very good in over three-quarters of lessons and satisfactory in all other lessons. The study of famous artists and a wide variety of cultures is used well by teachers to inspire and extend pupils' education in art and design. Teachers' command of the subject is strong and effectively used in a wide variety of materials and through variation of teaching strategies within a lesson. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson on pattern and texture, the teacher enthused pupils well through initial display and discussion of a painting by Klimt, and encouraged them through probing questioning to express their own opinions using accurate artistic vocabulary. Throughout the practical modelling activity that followed, the aims of the lesson were continually reinforced and resulted in good development in skills and understanding of technical details. Learning outcomes were most successfully achieved in those classes where expectations were high in terms of quality, output and pace of work. Teachers generally managed time well, although the 50-minute single lessons place great pressure on completion of practical work.
109. Teachers set homework tasks that support pupils' development. Teachers mark this homework regularly and inform pupils clearly of their attainment and give them future targets that help them to improve. Methods of assessment are thorough. Through careful moderation of pupils' work, teachers are consistent in their understanding of the assessment criteria which they apply well across all year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are clearly identified by the department and their needs known and addressed. They are well integrated and make good progress in drawing and painting. In line with the department policy for able pupils, it would be appropriate to have these higher attaining pupils identified equally clearly in order to facilitate monitoring and assessment procedures with this group.
110. The department is very well led and managed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and high levels of attainment have been maintained in recent years. Schemes of work for all year groups are well planned and well resourced with materials. However, whilst pupils are encouraged to use ICT as a method of enquiry and research, its use as a medium of creativity as part of the taught courses is extremely limited and does not meet statutory requirements. Teaching and learning outcomes are monitored by the annual departmental review which identifies the key areas for development. The department provides a good range of extra-curricular activities to support and extend classwork. A very stimulating and attractive work environment and a strong team spirit have been established.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- The personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to citizenship.
- An audit of the curriculum has highlighted subject areas where citizenship is being taught and areas for development.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsible action at school and in the community.

#### Areas for improvement

- More detailed planning to combine all areas of delivery and to establish a specific programme for each year group.
- Raise teachers' awareness further so that every opportunity is taken to help pupils become informed citizens.
- Monitor and evaluate the consistency and quality of the planned curriculum.

111. In lessons and personal, social and health education sessions where components of citizenship could be identified, pupils attain average standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 and they make satisfactory progress. The school provides a good range of opportunities in which all pupils are encouraged to participate and take on responsibilities. For example, there is an active school council, a prefect system and many pupils raise money for charities. Those pupils who take part regularly in these activities attain above average standards. Year 7 pupils understand the health risks associated with the use of drugs. Year 8 pupils feel that it is important to help some endangered animal species to survive. Year 9 pupils are given the opportunity to analyse how decisions are made. Year 10 pupils are aware of the growing rate of youth crime and the moral and social issues that arise when basic road safety rules are broken. Pupils in Year 11 understand the need for financial planning in relation to taxation and spending. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are developing good knowledge and understanding about all these areas of citizenship but their skills of enquiry and communication are not yet sufficiently developed.
112. In personal, social and health education lessons and in lessons where citizenship is part of the subject content, teaching is good and this helps pupils to learn well. Teachers share objectives with the pupils at the start of lessons and summarise them effectively at the end. This ensures learning is focused. However, in several lessons observed during the inspection, opportunities were frequently missed to inform pupils about the citizenship aspect of their learning. Interactive discussions that generate interest and motivation about current affairs and political situations are used well to promote learning. For example, the attitudes of pupils and the interest they showed in a history lesson concerned with the rights and wrongs of entering into conflict were excellent. Outside speakers, with experience in the local community, are frequently used to further pupils' understanding of citizenship. Pupils have positive attitudes and their enthusiastic approach helps their learning. In one history lesson, the attitudes of the pupils were excellent.
113. Pupils participate in a range of citizenship activities through personal, social and health education, subject lessons, weekly quizzes, fund-raising activities, the school council, visits from professionals and visits to a variety of venues. In one lesson, a Jewish Rabbi talked to Year 7 pupils about his faith and traditions. The contribution of the school council to pupils' knowledge of citizenship is very good because all form groups have elections and pupils feel the council has a positive influence on school life. The citizenship programmes of study and the associated extra-curricular activities effectively promote pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
114. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. A good start has been made with the thorough audit that shows where in the curriculum aspects of citizenship are being addressed, although not enough detailed planning has followed this audit. Discrete units in the personal, social and health education programme are very well planned but there is insufficient planning for citizenship in other subjects that claim to deliver elements of the programme. All strands of delivery have not yet been drawn

together to provide a balanced programme identifying what is to be taught, when and where to each year group.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- An enthusiastic team of specialist teachers encourages the safe and effective use of machines and tools.
- Provision of a wide range of technological activities from forging metal to designing clothing and electronic circuits.
- Exciting environment and display used well to motivate pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve achievement with more precise and consistent guidance for pupils through written comments on their work.
- Develop pupils' basic skills by increasing the range of types of writing and the use of computers.

115. Standards of attainment in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were just above average. Attainment in textiles and resistant materials were clearly above average. Food studies standards were in line with national averages for all maintained schools. Attainment in graphics was well below average. The trend in results over the past three years has been satisfactory, although the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was higher in 2001 than in 2002. Compared with other subjects in the school, the subject overall did less well than most others. Girls did better than boys. A small minority of pupils, both boys and girls, did less well than expected. In the tests set by teachers in 2002, the standards attained by pupils aged 14 were well above the nationally expected levels.
116. In the work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment of Year 9 pupils were above national expectations. Pupils confidently follow instructions and therefore produce a good range of quality products for a clearly understood purpose, for example aluminium key rings are smooth and robust, greetings cards are attractive and electronic components are neatly soldered so as to work well. However, too many pupils, when faced with a problem, ask the teacher and do not consult their own plans sufficiently. Too little of the work seen was enhanced by the use of computers. The difference in standards reported last year and seen at present may be linked to the fact that a new system for marking has only recently been introduced. Standards in the work seen in Year 11 were above average. Products are almost of commercial quality and in good variety from Star Wars board games and choux pastry dishes to a decorative wooden cover for a domestic room heater. Modification to improve quality is continuous and the pupils are diligent and thoughtful when researching a situation or evaluating a product against its design specification. However, this thoughtful process is not always well reflected in annotations on diagrams and plans although, in textiles, this is usually very good. Too many pupils fail to estimate the times needed for the completion of each stage in the designing and making sequence well enough and therefore need much help to meet coursework deadlines. In their research, the sources of information are good but possible bias or vested interest of product manufacturers are not always explained well enough.
117. Achievement as pupils move through Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes to design and technology are very good and they behave well and responsibly in class. For example, Year 11 boys were proud of the

board games they had developed, one with good use of computer software. Higher attaining girls had much confidence in their capacity to succeed and also high aspirations in textiles-related careers. Year 7 pupils expressed their enjoyment in their work. For example, one Year 7 pupil wrote when evaluating a project that 'I liked helping and being helped by my friends'; another enjoyed 'being allowed to use a machine unaccompanied by an adult'. Most were excited by the safe demonstration and subsequent use of the forge and one pupil with a general learning difficulty was proud to show how engineer's blue is used. Pupils, as a consequence of the teachers' commitment, regularly make good use of the workshops out of lesson time.

118. Teaching and learning are good in all years. In Years 7 to 9, most lessons were good and the remainder were satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, one third were very good, one third good and one third satisfactory. Very good lessons involved not only the effective use of display materials from the textile industry and exemplar garments in the fashion of 'Blue Peter', but also challenging questioning techniques, very good technical support and either the very good use of assessment criteria by the pupils themselves or follow-up questions to boost the confidence of boys in graphics. In both cases, the pupils were enabled to continue learning more independently to meet examination requirements and also to engage in thoughtful discussion about the information and quality of activity packs available from the Internet. In about one third of lessons, the progress of a minority of pupils, though usually good, was not as good as it should have been because objectives were either not assessed or were not easily assessed or could not be completed in the time. Some of the comments made by the teachers on work samples failed to bring about the intended improvement or else pupils had been started on new activities before the previous work had been corrected.
119. Leadership and management of the department are good. The improvement since the last inspection has been good in almost all aspects such as using computers, team planning, and the integration of designing and making. However, pupils' work, especially in Years 7 to 9, is still not formally moderated so as to further improve the sharing of best practice and to produce greater consistency in marking. The priorities for development are good but the success criteria for evaluating their effects are not sharp enough.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The good teaching in Years 7 to 11.
- High standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.
- Very effective leadership and teamwork within the department enable innovation to flourish and improvement to take place.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 so pupils know what to do to improve.
- The use of ICT in geography lessons to enhance teaching and learning.
- The level of challenge for higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9.

120. At the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations, pupils attain standards that are well above the national averages. In 2002, 68 per cent of those entered for GCSE attained A\*-C grades with almost a quarter gaining the highest (A\*-A) grades. Furthermore, relative to their other GCSE subjects, geographers attain significantly better standards,

particularly in the top grades where boys excel. Overall, girls outperform boys but the gap is narrower than that seen nationally. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress across both key stages. Higher attainers make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9; whilst their knowledge and understanding of places and themes are very secure their geographical skills are not as well developed. By contrast, at GCSE, higher attainers make very good progress. Since the last inspection, the high standards recognised then have been maintained.

121. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment was above national expectations by the end of Year 9. In Year 7, pupils are proficient in mapping skills; they can use grid references to locate places and interpret symbols accurately. Their understanding of places and their human and physical features is well developed through studies of Japan, Brazil and Kenya as well as through a range of scales. By the end of Year 9, most pupils can confidently compare and contrast places and environments, describing and explaining the processes that change them. Local traffic investigations and the visit to Nower Wood to study ecosystems and woodland ecology provide good opportunities for pupils to improve their geographical skills. The curriculum planning for Years 7 to 9 has significantly improved since the last inspection, however, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities in lessons to use ICT to enhance their skills and understanding.
122. In GCSE lessons, pupils' work indicates attainment is above national averages. The field visit to Newhaven and Seaford enables pupils to build upon their geographical skills by carrying out a coastal comparison, and the standard of coursework derived from this enquiry is very high. During the course, pupils study a wide range of places and themes that are carefully planned to build upon prior knowledge. In one Year 10 lesson, pupils were analysing the factors that influenced the location of the iron and steel industry in South Wales; in a Year 11 lesson, the more challenging focus was understanding the problems caused by rapid urbanisation in rich countries. Whatever the topic, the pupils are introduced to the appropriate geographical concepts and expected to know and apply them. Both girls and boys showed good knowledge and understanding in their writing, diagrams and pictures.
123. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It was at least satisfactory in all the lessons seen and was very good or excellent in a quarter of lessons. The teaching that has the most impact on learning includes probing, challenging questioning that probes beneath pupils' initial answers and encourages extended responses. Sheer inspiration and enthusiasm for the subject are infectious in some lessons because of the teacher's voice and the engaging activities that energised pupils and challenged their thinking. For example, in one lesson, mini-whiteboards were used to inject pace into the learning and encourage interaction amongst pupils so they were assessing each other's work. This helped the pupils to make progress as they gained a better understanding of the standards they were striving to achieve. In a few lessons, teachers modelled activities or structured responses for pupils so clearly that all were able to deploy their freshly acquired knowledge effectively. In another lesson, a teacher modelled how to annotate a photograph which helped pupils to learn and apply the appropriate geographical terms and to judge their own work critically. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils' behaviour. In good lessons, pupils worked well, applied themselves to their tasks and collaborated very effectively with their peers.
124. Overall, pupils enjoy learning geography, recognise the value of the subject and develop very good relationships with the teachers. In some lessons, the questions asked by the teacher were not sufficiently demanding or required only very brief responses. This allowed some pupils to remain passive for too long resulting in a slower pace of learning. In Years 7 to 9, teachers' marking in pupils' books is not as helpful as it could



be in pointing the way for pupils wishing to improve their work. In Years 10 and 11, the marking is more effective. Overall, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress during lessons at both key stages.

125. The geography curriculum and teaching make a good contribution to pupils' moral development through the study of important issues such as the Brazilian rainforest and fair trade. The department provides opportunities for pupils to study aspects of different cultures through using music and other stimulating resources. Although fewer in number, some topics are used for spiritual reflection. The poems written by Year 8 pupils reflecting on the fate of the rainforests, unveiled some profound thoughts about exploitation.
126. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The recently appointed subject leader is committed to raising standards by focusing on teaching and learning. The use of ICT should play a key role in this process. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because high standards have been maintained, curriculum planning has improved and the tracking of pupil progress is more rigorous than it was.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has created a good learning environment.
- GCSE results are very high in comparison to national averages for both boys and girls.
- At the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is well above national expectation.
- The department is well led and a very good team spirit exists between history teachers.
- Very good pupil/teacher relationships have been established.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils need more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Work needs to be better differentiated to meet all pupils' needs, particularly in GCSE lessons.
- Better marking to inform pupils on how to do better.
- ICT use needs to be further developed and pupils need regular access to computer facilities.

127. In 2002, GCSE results were well above national averages for both boys and girls, with almost three-quarters of those entered gaining A\*-C grades. Pupils with special educational needs in the 2002 GCSE attained at a level slightly above expectation, compared to their entry level to the key stage. These results are very much better than those attained at the time of the last inspection. By the age of 14, the attainment of pupils, as determined by teacher assessments, was well above the national expectation in 2002 with 83 per cent attaining at least Level 5 compared to the national figure of 66 per cent.

128. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is above average. Pupils have a thorough understanding of chronology, which they show when using timelines on the events leading up to the First World War. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 are very competent readers who use their high literary skills well to interrogate sources, such as textbook passages, posters and poems relating to life in the World War One trenches. Year 7

pupils show a good grasp of how causes can be either long term, short term or triggers. Most can explain very clearly how such causes bring about major events in history, such as the Peasants' Revolt. Well-presented written work by many Year 8 pupils on the English Civil War shows that they have good understanding of why people might both support and oppose the king. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and their achievement is good.

129. Evidence from pupils' work and lesson observation shows that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are continuing to work at above average levels. Higher attaining pupils have good writing and oral skills, as shown in Year 10 when exploring life in Hitler's Germany. Essays presented by Year 11 pupils on the Korean War indicate that they are in line to attain the highest grades, A\* or A, in the GCSE examination. However, given the high level of attainment on entry to their GCSE course, in each year a few of the higher achievers are not working at full potential, because lessons are too didactic and they have too little opportunity to practise applying their knowledge and understanding. Most pupils have a very good knowledge of issues that have played a part in modern world history and can articulate their ideas with skill, using evidence from outside the area of their studies to support their views. Although one or two of the GCSE pupils with special educational needs find source work challenging and their written work is poorly organised, they do make good progress orally and contribute fully in lessons. The ability of most pupils to analyse and explain historical events is very good. For example, in a lesson on the Vietnam War, a group of pupils, some with special educational needs, tackled a challenging series of tasks and reached very clear conclusions about the causes of conflict. There is a progressive development in work from Year 9 to Year 11 as pupils build clearly on the skills they acquired in Years 7 to 9. Improvement in standards since the last inspection has been good.
130. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Of the lessons observed, all were at least satisfactory and several were very good. Lessons are generally very well planned and pupils are made aware of their learning objectives at the start of each session. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers create a good learning environment which helps pupils do well. In Year 10, a mixed ability group of pupils were challenged to disseminate information from a video on Hitler's Germany. Textbooks selected from the school library allow research in depth and, as a consequence, higher attaining pupils take much more responsibility for their own learning. In a significant number of lessons, didactic teaching limits the challenge, particularly to very able pupils. Although pupils with special educational needs are generally well taught and make good progress, the emphasis in a small number of lessons on written sources and tasks limits their learning opportunities. Too many of the exercise books, belonging to pupils from Years 7 to 11, are not adequately marked. Pupils have not been praised often enough or been given clear guidance as to what they can do to raise their standards. Texts and tasks are sometimes too easy for the most able, but too difficult for the less able. Teachers need to address the inconsistencies in the marking and assessment of pupils' progress.
131. Collaborative work is encouraged in most lessons. In a very well-planned lesson, pupils worked very well in teams discussing the problems of modern Iraq and Ireland and comparing them to England prior to the Civil War. Consequently, they were able to share ideas at a higher level than expected. The emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills is a strong aspect of the department's work. Homework is used to good effect and develops pupils' understanding of their classwork with some success. Unfortunately, this is not always as purposeful as it might be and too many pieces have not been marked carefully or developmentally.

132. Leadership and management are good and resources are well organised. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Accommodation for the department is good. Display work is very good and used well to encourage an interest in the subject. The learning aids around the walls of classrooms are particularly good. A programme to monitor teaching through classroom observation has been established but its effect upon pupils' learning has yet to be evaluated. The department needs to share its own good practice and gain better access to the ICT areas as an essential part of broadening its teaching methods. Opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are built into the schemes of work. Understanding of citizenship is well supported through work on topics like the English Civil War and life in Nazi Germany. The study of Islam in Years 7 to 9 gives pupils a very good opportunity to develop their knowledge of other world cultures. Work on Nazi Germany under Hitler presents pupils with a moral dilemma as to whether or not any nation can allow its leaders to dictate policies that are racist, sexist and discriminatory. The department develops learning opportunities by organising trips, such as that to the World War One trenches. This extends pupils' understanding of the world in which they live and gives them a much broader picture of history.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

#### Strengths

- Shared commitment of the teachers in the department to improve standards.
- Capacity to improve further.
- Recent significant improvements in resources.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards of ICT across the whole school.
- The range of ICT experiences in Years 7 to 9 to ensure that progress is made in all strands of ICT capability and used in all curriculum areas.
- Pupils not following a GCSE course in ICT in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their statutory ICT entitlement.
- Procedures to share good teaching practice are limited.
- Schemes of work do not take account of all abilities.
- Assessment is inaccurate and does not inform pupils of their progress or identify the learning needs of individual pupils.
- The number of computers available for use by pupils which is well below average for a school of this size.

133. Overall, standards of attainment in ICT are unsatisfactory for pupils in all year groups. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well below average and only a relatively low number of pupils, approximately one fifth of the year group, were entered for the examination. These results were similar to those achieved in 2001. No pupils took a GCSE examination in ICT in 2000. The results in 2002 were achieved following a period when there was no head of department in place, and the school has had difficulty in recruiting specialist staff. In relation to their prior attainment, which was well below average at the end of Year 9, the achievement of pupils completing the GCSE course was good. For example, pupils studying the GCSE course made good progress in a well-planned Year 10 lesson where they worked well on their web designs by applying skills such as 'mouse over' effects that had been demonstrated to them. Pupils not following a GCSE course make unsatisfactory progress in ICT as they do not receive

their statutory curriculum entitlement. A new ICT course (CLAIT) is also being studied this year by all Year 10 pupils but this does not develop pupils' ICT capability effectively as they are repeating text manipulation that they have already covered in Years 7 to 9. The standard of work seen during the inspection was generally below average in Years 7 and 8, and well below average in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below average for pupils following the GCSE ICT course, and well below average for other pupils in Year 11.

134. Since the previous inspection, the assessment of pupils' levels according to National Curriculum criteria has not improved and is still unsatisfactory. In 2002, overall attainment of pupils by the age of 14 based on teachers' assessments of pupils' standards was reported as well above the national average. This assessment was inaccurate. It is evident from work seen that the ICT capability of pupils at the end of Year 9 is currently well below average and that the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. The school has re-organised the timetable for this year to start to remedy this situation and now has one period of discrete ICT teaching per week which is broadly in accordance with recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 ICT Strategy. The school has also started to broaden the range of experiences for pupils and, in particular, to raise the attainment of pupils in the area of 'modelling with ICT'. ICT targets set for overall pupil performance are inappropriate as they are based on the very unreliable teacher assessment.
135. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but it ranges from unsatisfactory to good. Where teaching is good, there is good pupil and classroom management, objectives are made clear to pupils at the start of the lesson and there is good interaction with pupils to test and challenge through effective question and answering opportunities. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, resources are not available to develop learning without computers and studies are inappropriate in relation to prior learning. A well-organised programme of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9, including the use of presentation software, web design, desk-top publishing and ICT modelling experiences, has been planned and is being implemented. In a good 'catch up' Year 9 lesson, pupils developed their ability to change variables and rules in a model. They then went on to produce clear, understandable charts from the data in their spreadsheets which showed that they had learnt the necessary procedures. The department is aware that the schemes of work require review and development as they do not currently ensure that pupils make sufficient progress. Insufficient reference is made to gifted and talented pupils, and pupils do not have enough opportunities to review, modify and evaluate their own work. Homework is not used effectively to extend learning in Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported in the class by the teachers. Library resources to support independent learning in ICT outside of lessons are underdeveloped, as are opportunities for speaking and listening and extended writing to improve learning in ICT. Attitudes and behaviour seen during the inspection were satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are generally keen to use the computers in school and, where experiences are planned, these support the effective development of their knowledge, skills and understanding.
136. Good use is made of ICT resources outside lesson time. Computer clubs and ICT coursework clubs are provided by dedicated teaching staff. Pupils have their own area to store work on the computer network so, in computer rooms and the learning resources area, pupils can go into their own work area and continue to work on tasks started in a lesson. English, design and technology and business studies have integrated the use of ICT very well to support pupils' learning. In design and technology, pupils use computers for computer-aided design (CAD) work. In other subjects,

although there is some evidence of planning, the actual use of ICT is insufficient and does not meet statutory requirements. ICT use in departments was a key area for development two years ago and, although progress has been made in some departments, there is much room for improvement. Although resources are generally short, better use could be made of the available resources through effective co-ordination practices. There is some use of the Internet, and a school intranet has started to be used by pupils to gain access to course materials and learning resources.

137. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. A vision of how ICT should be developed as a discrete area has been implemented. There has been significant recent development within the department but overall improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The school timetable has been modified to support the teaching of ICT, and pupils in Years 7 to 9 now have one lesson of ICT teaching every week. A programme of work is in place to use this time effectively for pupils this year. Whole-school leadership of ICT, however, is unsatisfactory as pupils do not have experiences planned for them to use ICT to support learning in all subjects, and resources are underused. Although the new head of department, who started in September 2002, is currently on long-term sick leave, management of the department is satisfactory as an ICT specialist who is new to the school is providing very good support during this difficult time. The department is aware of the improvements that are required and these are listed in a departmental action plan. They include the development of differentiated resources with further use of the intranet, improvement of assessment and provision of opportunities for measurement and control. Although the number of computers available to pupils has recently been significantly increased, it is still below average for a school of this size. The school has recently extended the network in readiness for further expansion, and a school ICT technician now supports these resources. There is a commitment within the department to the further successful development of ICT for the benefit of all pupils and there is capacity to improve.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

138. Pupils can choose to study GCSE business in Years 10 and 11. Performance is increasing and, in work seen during the inspection, indications are that this will continue. Standards of attainment are average. The quality of teaching seen was very good. In a well-planned Year 11 lesson, pupils studied business cash flow forecasting. The teacher interacted very well with the pupils, using their names effectively to target questions to individuals in order to test their prior learning and made good use of the whiteboard in the communication of key messages and vocabulary. Vocabulary development was also well supported with clear word walls. Pupils were able to demonstrate their understanding of sales figures, balances, incomes and expenditure. Pupils' ICT skills were underdeveloped but this did not deter the teacher from using the computers appropriately to support the development of knowledge and understanding in business. The teacher conducted a skills development activity using well-organised support resources to bring pupils' ICT skills up to speed. Excellent displays also created a stimulating environment for the development of business knowledge and the production of high quality work. This work was well marked and provided clear indications to pupils about how their work should be improved. This course provides a sound foundation for post-16 study.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (French, German and Spanish)

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in French and Spanish in Years 7 to 9, and improvement in French in Years 10 and 11.
- The confidence shown by pupils when speaking the foreign language.
- Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is very good and teaching is good overall.
- The positive relationships between teachers and pupils and throughout the department.
- The department is led well and teachers have a common approach to lesson planning.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning for mixed ability lessons in Years 7 to 9 to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Use of assessment information.
- Classroom management in a minority of classes.
- Use of ICT to promote language learning and independent learning.

139. The school currently offers French, German and Spanish in Years 7 to 9 and Year 10, and French and German in Year 11 and post-16. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results in French have steadily improved. In 2002, the percentage of pupils entered gaining A\*-C grades, at 55 per cent, was above the national average for all maintained schools and in line with most other subjects in the school. The percentage gaining the highest grades, A\*-A, was also above average. In German, results have remained below the national average, with 46 per cent of those entered for GCSE in 2002 gaining A\*-C grades compared to a national average of 53 per cent. In both subjects, there was no significant difference between the performances of boys and girls.
140. Standards achieved by Year 11 pupils, as observed in lessons, are above average in French and German. Pupils are achieving above average standards in speaking, reading and writing but their listening skills are weaker. During the listening exercises seen, tapes were frequently, sometimes unnecessarily, stopped which prevented pupils from being challenged to listen at a near normal speed.
141. Standards attained by the age of 14 in French and Spanish are above national expectations, and have improved since the previous inspection. Standards in German are in line with national expectations as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' attainment in 2002, as determined by teacher assessment, was comparable with other subjects in French, higher in Spanish but below other subjects in German. Overall, their achievement is good. Lower attaining pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as a second language, make good progress. The listening skills of pupils are well developed, although some higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Speaking skills in all foreign languages are well developed through the consistent approach by teachers in using the foreign language for classroom instruction and their high expectations in demanding full answers to their questions. The standard of written work is good. It is set regularly in each of the three languages and pupils are regularly given written guidance on how to improve their literacy skills in the foreign language.
142. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has remained good despite several fluctuations in staffing. Two-thirds of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or better with two very good and three excellent lessons. In the best lessons observed, teachers used lesson time to the full and sustained a brisk pace

by setting challenging time limits on activities and exercises. Teachers' use of the foreign language as a teaching medium has increased further, resulting in pupils speaking freely and with confidence. Teachers throughout the department share lesson objectives with pupils and review progress in plenary sessions at the end of lessons. This raises pupils' self-esteem as they know what they have learnt in each lesson and feel successful. In the best lessons, pupils reviewed learning objectives themselves. Teachers encourage full pupil participation in all lesson activities and share a common determination that each pupil should learn to the full extent of their capability. Teachers support pupils' progress well through thorough assessment of their work. Pupils' work is well marked and teachers give written targets together with advice on how to improve. In a small minority of lessons, classroom management is not well enough developed, resulting in an unchallenging pace and an inability to check progress at the end of lessons.

143. This is a good and well-managed department. The change in management structure, implemented in September 2002, is already having a positive impact in this short time. The new team shares a collegiate spirit and a determination to raise standards further and have set ambitious but achievable targets for 14- and 16-year-olds. There is clear awareness of priorities, such as making more effective use of assessment information and the need to increase the use of ICT within the department. The departmental development plan specifies opportunities for study visits and exchanges abroad for which plans are well advanced.

144. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Well-planned schemes of work provide a broad and progressive curriculum.
- Specialist music teachers have very good subject knowledge that they pass effectively to pupils.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and they are fully engaged in learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop the singing curriculum across all years, to provide more opportunities for pupils to improve their singing skills.
- Extend, beyond keyboards, the use of new technologies in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11.
- Improve accommodation so that all classes have the opportunity to take part in group activities.

145. Standards of attainment in music are above national expectations at the end of Year 9. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average. Good progress in Years 7 and 8 ensures standards are well above the average in these years. There is a slight dip in achievement in Year 9, though pupils remain above average in all aspects of performing, composing, listening and appraising. This dip is a legacy of past staffing difficulties which are now resolved. Lessons are well balanced, with performing, composing and listening activities fully integrated, though singing is under-represented in schemes of work. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 11 are well above average, with pupils attaining a higher percentage of higher level grades at GCSE. In 2002, all pupils entered achieved grades A\*-C, with seven out of ten pupils achieving

grades A or A\*. The small numbers of pupils taking GCSE in recent years make detailed comparisons insignificant. Lesson observations provide evidence that the GCSE curriculum is now being accessed by a much larger group of pupils of wider ability range.

146. Achievement in music is good, both within lessons and across the key stages. In all years, pupils with special educational needs are well catered for and they make satisfactory progress. Pupils with particular musical ability are generally well catered for though, on occasion, their achievement could be improved by a higher degree of teacher intervention to keep pupils on task, alongside better-differentiated activities. Some very good achievement was observed in both key stages. In Years 7 to 9, very good progress was in evidence where work was well differentiated, such as in Year 8 where pupils' performances and compositions in a Calypso style showed a high degree of differentiation in parts. In Year 9, achievement in lessons was very good because the teacher's expectations were high, the pace of the lesson was fast and instrumental parts were suitably matched to pupils' abilities. During one Year 9 lesson observed, pupils revised blues structure, practised notated melody and bass lines, and added chords, using different rhythmic devices according to their level of skill. They improvised melodies over the top, and performed to each other individually and as a whole class. In some lessons, progress was more limited because of the poor accommodation which prevented pupils from hearing their own work sufficiently, especially in small-group activities where all the groups were playing in a small area. In Years 10 and 11, excellent progress was observed. This was because of the teacher's skill in creating a highly-organised lesson, where activities ensured the musically able were stretched fully by being given more complex tasks, while the lower attaining pupils received additional support from the teacher. Lessons in Years 10 and 11 had a sense of urgency, with a fast pace being set through timed activities. There was a very good balance of the teaching of skills, combined with independent learning opportunities. One Year 11 class had pupils taking differentiated parts to create an excellent class performance of a Michael Nyman piece, with the highest achievers using suspended chords with 7ths, 9ths and 11ths, whilst less musically experienced pupils played melody, countermelody and bass lines.
147. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in all years are always positive. Teachers make real efforts to ensure that all pupils, including those with particular difficulties, are welcomed, supported and are successful in their learning. Pupils show confidence and sensitivity when giving constructive comments to evaluate their own and others' work. They are eager to speak in class debate. They enjoy performing in front of each other because they are confident their contribution will be valued. The very good relationship between pupils and their teachers makes a significant contribution to pupils' attainment and progress.
148. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and it is often very good. In Years 10 and 11, it is very good with some excellent teaching in Year 11. Where teaching is excellent, learning is carefully focused through a very clear teacher explanation at the start of the lesson. Pupil questioning is fast and furious, ensuring all pupils are engaged. Pace is maintained because of the teacher's encouragement of pupils to try their very hardest throughout the lesson. There is a very good balance between pupils learning autonomously and the teacher intervening appropriately at an individual pupil level, to provide the next skill or piece of information needed for each pupil to progress. Musical technique is constantly reinforced. Excellent classroom management ensures rapid intervention, and pupils are clear of assessment criteria. Where teaching is less effective, progress is limited by pupils moving off task too easily



and this tends to be the more musically able, who are not presented with sufficient challenge through additional tasks.

149. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The director of music has initiated imaginative new schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 and is preparing a more detailed scheme for Years 10 and 11. This provides very good guidance for teaching and is a key element in ensuring pupils achieve a good rate of progress. Instrumental performance and composition have greater emphasis than singing, which needs further curriculum development. Systems and procedures for assessing pupils' achievement and setting targets for improvement within lessons are well established and effective in helping pupils to understand their standard of attainment and to know how to make progress. Predicted grades given to Year 10 pupils are inappropriate as they are based on outcomes of other curriculum areas and do not relate to prior attainment in music. Extra-curricular activities are well organised, though the short lunchtime limits opportunities. The director of music is overstretched by the demands of his extra-curricular and pastoral roles, but still manages to provide an appropriate range of activities, including numerous rock and pop bands, two choirs, an orchestra and a performing arts troupe. Accommodation and resources are inadequate, as an increased time allocation for the subject has placed additional demands on music facilities. The second music room is too cramped for group work to take place. Resources are managed well, but accommodation limits group performing and composing opportunities. Limited provision of ICT equipment prevents some pupils from achieving the highest grades in composition. Lack of ability in using music notation limits some pupils' progress but this could be overcome with increased access to music technology equipment.
150. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Increased time allocation in Years 7 to 9 is helping pupils to attain above average standards. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, with no unsatisfactory teaching seen and the majority of lessons observed being good, very good or excellent. The director of music is making a real impact in raising the status of music within the school and the wider community.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in Years 7 to 11 is above the national average.
- The leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Teaching is good and pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- The new facilities provide an excellent learning environment.

### Areas for improvement

- Planned opportunities for numeracy, citizenship and ICT.
- The range of activities for boys in the Year 9 curriculum.
- The lack of time allocated to core physical education in Year 11.

151. GCSE results in 2002, where 70 per cent of pupils attained A\*-C grades, were an increase on results attained in 2001 and continued the rising trend of previous years. The 2002 results were well above the national average for all maintained schools. The

results of girls and boys were similar and a majority of pupils achieved well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils' results in 2002 were significantly better than those attained in most of their other subjects.

152. In all lessons observed, pupils of all abilities, in all years, made good progress. Their achievement is good overall and illustrates well the department's commitment to helping and challenging all pupils. On entry to the school, pupils attain average levels in a few activities and, by the time they reach the end of Year 9, their attainment is above the national average. Boys and girls in Year 7 are able to work co-operatively in small groups with a good understanding of team and communication skills. Girls in Year 9 have good body tension and control when working on group counterbalances. The present GCSE pupils are working to a standard above the national average. The presentation of written work in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Pupils draw detailed diagrams and use photographs to illustrate their work. Year 11 pupils have a good understanding of the benefits and disadvantages to sponsorship. GCSE pupils are well informed about their performance and future targets and this helps them make progress as they know what to do to improve.
153. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 in the non-examination classes attain standards above those expected nationally. Boys have competent skills in football and basketball. A feature of the above average attainment of pupils in all years is their very good knowledge and understanding of health and fitness. All pupils are able to warm up and stretch independently and effectively. This is a result of consistently focused teaching of this component of the National Curriculum. A few individual pupils and teams achieve very high standards in district, county and national competitions in athletics, gymnastics, rowing and football. The attainment of these talented pupils is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the excellent opportunities offered by the hard work and dedication of their teachers. The high attendance at extra-curricular activities and the increased numbers taking the examination demonstrate the very positive attitudes and involvement of pupils in the subject.
154. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good with some very good features, and this promoted good learning. In the best lessons, pupils benefited from the wide variety of challenging tasks that were set and matched to the needs of all pupils. Although teachers missed a few opportunities to address all the four strands of the National Curriculum in the short 50-minute lessons, their planning and the pace of lessons were mostly very good. Their questioning was rigorous and, through reviewing previous work and sharing the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson, they motivated pupils well. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, and their demonstrations give pupils a clear, visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. The department focuses well on developing literacy skills, and key words and objectives are displayed, but strategies for the development of numeracy and ICT are not as regularly used.
155. The head of department provides clear educational direction and excellent leadership for the subject. She leads by very good example with her teaching and has several very good strategies to monitor teaching and to provide regular support for department members. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, the activities planned for boys in Year 9 are not sufficiently broad and balanced. Also, the time allocation for Year 11 pupils is insufficient to improve their standards or to keep them fit and healthy. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection. Most of the issues raised in the previous report have been addressed. Assessments for Years 7 to 9 are secure and linked to a written test at the end of Year 9. The excellent new sports hall

and hard courts allow higher standards of performance to be attained. However, when used for games activities, the small gymnasium and hall considerably limit the performance of pupils. The changing rooms in this area are cramped and not appropriate for use with large groups. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development. Very good links with parents and with local sports clubs have been developed and these support high performance in numerous sports.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The relationships with, and management of, pupils have a good effect on learning.
- Teaching is always good and occasionally very good.
- Pupils have good attitudes and respond well to the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure clarity about assessment in Years 7 to 9 and plan tasks that are linked to the standards identified in the locally agreed syllabus.
- Improve provision for lower attaining pupils.
- Improve the use of ICT.

156. Attainment in the GCSE short course is well above national averages for A\*-C grades. This figure is based on about three-quarters of the year group taking the examination at the end of Year 10. Of those entered, there is very little difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

157. By the age of 14, pupils reach standards in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. They are able to make links with their learning in other subjects. For example, Year 8 pupils can draw on their history work when studying the effects of the Reformation on the development of Christianity. Pupils in Year 7 are able to identify relevant questions to ask a visiting Jewish rabbi about practices in the Jewish home. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress. Higher attaining pupils develop their skills of evaluation and empathy when studying religious responses to some moral issues such as world poverty. Lower attaining pupils often struggle to understand and complete their work. There is no difference between the progress of boys and girls. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress when supported by specialist staff.

158. Recent changes to the curriculum mean that, at the time of the inspection, there was no Year 11 religious education to be observed. These pupils took their examination when they were in Year 10. Three days of religious education annually are planned for this group and these did not coincide with the inspection. The GCSE course now starts in Year 10 and continues into Year 11 when pupils take the examination. Standards of work seen in the current Year 10 are just above national averages for this stage of the course. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christian and Muslim perspectives on the concept of a 'just war' are developing well and they show an ability to apply their learning to current political tensions in the Middle East. Overall, pupils of all abilities in Year 10 make good progress.

159. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. It is very good in all Year 10 lessons, and always at least good and occasionally very good in all Year 7 to 9 lessons. Teachers always plan their lessons well to include a range of teaching and learning

approaches. Teachers always set clear lesson objectives and most pace lessons effectively to ensure good progress in learning. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning very well to challenge pupils and to assess their understanding. Homework tasks often support and extend learning. For example, Year 10 pupils prepared a profile of Martin Luther based on their decision as to whether he was a hero or a troublemaker. In some lessons, mainly in Years 7 to 9, the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are not fully met with support tasks. Whilst teachers mark pupils' work regularly, there is no shared understanding across the department of the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus and how pupils' work and progress therefore should be assessed. Consequently, pupils in those years are not clear about what they need to do to improve.

160. The subject has been without a permanent head of department for nearly two years. This has had an adverse effect on developments in the subject, although the teacher currently managing the department has made good progress in drafting new schemes of work and in promoting high standards of work. There has been good support from other senior colleagues. Currently, the requirements for religious education in Year 11 are not met but curriculum changes are already in place to rectify this in the coming academic year. The school has experienced considerable difficulty in recruiting permanent specialist teachers of religious education. This is a major factor affecting key developments in the subject. Now that religious education is being extended fully into Year 11, there is an urgent need to address this deficiency. Whilst resources are satisfactory overall, the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. The department also needs to enhance pupils' learning with a greater range of artefacts, video resources and visits to places of religious interest.
161. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils have improved and there are some good textbook resources. Some links have been made with local faith communities. Issues still to be addressed concern assessment of pupils' progress, wider use of ICT and the need to improve provision to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils.

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

In the inspection, five subjects, English, mathematics, drama, geography and history, 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. National performance information for 2001 is bracketed. Changes to the system for calculating average point scores were introduced in 2001. This means that the post-16 average point scores are not comparable with previous years. The national performance information for 2002 is not yet available.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	7	100	(62)	14	(15)	37	
Chemistry	2	100	(43)	0	(5)	25	
Biology	4	50	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	13	
Physics	4	75	(n/a)	25	(n/a)	33	
Business studies	1	100	(76)	0	(12)	20	
Computing	4	75	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	30	
Physical education	3	67	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	23	
Art	2	100	(n/a)	50	(n/a)	45	
Geography	2	100	(74)	50	(6)	40	
History	4	75	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	23	
Government & politics	5	100	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	30	
Psychology	6	33	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	8	
Philosophy	4	50	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	15	
English	2	100	(n/a)	50	(n/a)	50	
French	1	100	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	40	

### GCE A-level and AVCE courses 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	(87)	100	(43)	120	
Chemistry	2	100	(90)	100	(43)	120	
Biology	1	100	(88)	100	(34)	120	
Physics	1	100	(88)	100	(40)	100	
Physical education	2	100	(92)	50	(25)	90	
Art	2	100	(96)	50	(46)	90	
History	2	100	(88)	0	(35)	50	
Government & Politics	2	100	n/a	0	n/a	50	
English	3	100	(95)	0	(37)	60	

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered in depth the AS- and A-level courses offered by the school in mathematics.

In recent years, the number of students taking A-level examinations in science subjects has been very small but current numbers in Year 12 AS-level classes are quite high. The school offers science courses at AS- and A-level in biology, chemistry and physics. Five lessons of these subjects were observed. Overall, the quality of teaching was good, although it varied from excellent to satisfactory. It was excellent when the teacher, through excellent subject knowledge and accurate assessment of the students' understanding, explained physics' principles in a clear and challenging way. In other lessons, all teachers questioned students effectively to engage them in discussion but there was not always sufficient focus on the scientific principles that they were expected to learn. In most classes, relevant examples were chosen to demonstrate the application of scientific theory but, on occasion, some explanations given by the teacher were too abstract. Overall, students make good progress and their standards are average.

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- Attainment has been good, although candidate numbers have been small.
- Lessons are well planned, have pace and purpose, enabling good learning.
- There are good teacher/student relationships and willing support is given to assist learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Further develop existing student performance records to promote ongoing assessment and target setting.
- Improve marking strategies to include more constructive comments to promote learning.
- Ensure ICT usage is incorporated into mathematics teaching and learning.

162. Entry numbers for A-level mathematics are small but, in 2002, all candidates for A2- and AS-levels gained at least D grades, an improvement on 2001 when results were below national averages. Attainment has improved since the previous inspection. It is above average and is in line with expectation based on students' prior attainment at GCSE. More than half of the school's Year 13 students are studying A2-level mathematics, and both boys and girls have achieved well and gained good results in modules already taken.
163. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good and it is occasionally very good. During the inspection, the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory in one of the seven lessons observed. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, they have good subject knowledge and explain principles clearly. They establish warm relationships with their students and have high expectations of achievement. Their lessons are purposeful with clear objectives and have good pace which sustains the attention and concentration of students. In the better lessons, such as in a very good Year 12 lesson on inverse functions and a Year 13 lesson on algorithms, teachers promoted learning and understanding by encouraging much student participation and discussion. Teaching is less effective when, as in a lesson linking algebraic with graphical forms for translations of functions, teachers disregard students' misunderstandings in their determination to complete all the objectives they have set for the lesson. Teachers mark students' homework regularly but give limited written advice to students to help them improve. Written classwork is largely self-assessed by the students themselves. Although this practice promotes independent learning, students do not pick up all their mistakes even when the work is discussed. Consequently, the progress made by students is not as fast as it could be.
164. Students show good application to their mathematical work. They are keen to learn and achieve well in lessons. They are capable of generalising from numeric to algebraic forms and applying formulae, such as geometric series in Year 12 and binomial series in Year 13. They are confident and many readily ask questions, both to consolidate and to broaden their knowledge. Boys and girls make equally good progress. Year 13 boys and girls take full part in discussion, but responses in the larger Year 12 group tend to be mainly from boys with the girls being more passive. Students work co-operatively with each other for mutual benefit. For example, one girl with strong mathematical skills but limited command of English was assisted by another student with the same home language and minority ethnic background.
165. The variety of mathematics courses in the sixth form is narrower than it was at the time of the previous inspection. With current student numbers justifying only one AS-level group in Year 12, no choice of modules can be provided economically. Also, there is no timetabled provision for GCSE re-sits, nor any discrete course on key skills across the curriculum which may be desirable for some students. Use of ICT in post-16 mathematics is still underdeveloped. No use was seen during the inspection, either in lessons or in work scrutinised. Opportunities to consolidate students' understanding and to challenge their thinking through individualised computer-based activities are not being taken.

166. Post-16 mathematics is enthusiastically led and well managed by the recently appointed head of department. Detailed student performance data is recorded. It is used to monitor students' progress and to praise or take corrective action as appropriate, but specific target setting is still in its infancy. The department has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection and is strongly placed both to attract more higher attaining students into post-16 courses and to develop into a major contributor to the future success of the school.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The school offers an AS-level course in product design. One lesson was observed. The standard of work was satisfactory. The teaching was good because it successfully engaged the students in discussion and prepared them well for further work in the commercial world.

## **BUSINESS**

The school offers an AS-level course in business studies which is studied by very few Year 12 students. The standard of work was satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning in the one lesson observed was very good as the lesson was well planned and the teacher engaged students effectively through questioning so that they volunteered their own ideas and applied their knowledge of marketing.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The school offers A-level and AS-level courses in information and communication technology and in computer studies, which are both studied by very few students. Three lessons of these courses were observed. Overall, the quality of teaching seen was good. In two lessons, effective questioning by the teacher encouraged students to apply their knowledge when answering and, consequently, they made good progress in their understanding of health and safety issues related to computer use by employees or of the selection of software and the applications of different computer languages. The standard of students' work in these classes was average. In the third lesson observed, the students had very low prior attainment and their standard was well below average.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The school offers an AS-level course in physical education. One lesson was observed during which students demonstrated above average levels of attainment. Their levels of performance in practical sport activities are very good. The quality of teaching was excellent as the teacher used knowledge of the individual strengths of students to help them link theory with practice and so make very good progress in their learning.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

The school does not offer any courses in this curriculum area.

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

The inspection focused on the AS-level course in drama (theatre studies) which is being taken by nine students. This is the first year in which this subject has been offered in the sixth form. The school also offers AS-level courses in art and in music. Two lessons in each of these subjects were observed.



## Art

In previous years, by the end of Year 13, results in art have exceeded national averages in A-level examinations. In the two lessons observed, the quality of teaching was very good. The teachers have high expectations and their use of a group tutorial, identifying individual strengths and weaknesses, seeking opinions and sharing difficulties is a very effective, intellectually stimulating, teaching strategy. Highly individualised pieces of work emerge as the result of wide-ranging and prolific research and experimentation. Standards are above average.

## Music

Overall, standards are average and in line with expectations but vary according to students' prior musical experience. The quality of teaching was very good because of the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and questioning technique, which constantly reinforced musical concepts. Students were seen making very good progress in learning to analyse the symphonic works of Wagner and Haydn; use of the 'Tristan chord' produced a moment of awe and wonder as students began to comprehend the emotion of the music. Music technology is used well to support students with limited skills in using traditional notation.

## DRAMA (theatre studies)

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

### Strengths

- Good leadership provides a clear sense of direction for the department's work.
- Students achieve well because of their positive attitudes and the good teaching and support they receive.
- Standards of attainment are above average.

### Areas for improvement

- Limitations in accommodation and technical facilities restrict students' experience of theatre studies and the further growth of the subject.

167. Standards are above average overall, and the achievement of students is good in relation to their prior attainment. Some students who have no previous drama experience are achieving particularly well. Students write well about plays they are studying including Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' and Chekhov's 'Three Sisters'. They understand Stanislavskian principles of acting, such as 'emotional memory', and the practical ways in which they can be demonstrated. They are articulate in explaining their ideas and confident about expressing them. They are capable of organising costume for themselves and choosing just the right item to sufficiently denote character when rehearsing scenes from their set text. Their performance skills are above average in terms of use of space, expressive use of voice and gesture and ability to represent a character. As a group, they work very well together, being both well disciplined and also flexible when, for example, coping with the absence of a group member in rehearsals. At present, their grasp of the 'humorous sadness' that pervades Chekhov's play is limited, but their potential to do so is good given their increasing emotional maturity and experience.

168. Teaching and learning are good overall. Particular strengths are the teacher's knowledge of the subject, practical expertise and developmental approach. In a very good double lesson, the teacher's carefully-structured approach to rehearsals of 'The

Three Sisters' helped students to make considerable progress. The introductory activity was designed to get students to think about and reflect on 'atmosphere and emotional memory'. These reflections were transferred to students' chosen scenes and produced absorbed individual contemplation as students put these reflections to the test. Students subsequently demonstrated much trust and confidence in their teacher as she questioned them about their feelings in the role they were playing. As a result, the group's rehearsals of these scenes were sensitive to character and relationships in the play. In another good lesson, the teacher's questioning and careful evaluation helped students to adapt and improve their 'blocking out' of the same scenes. Evidence from students' work folders shows the teacher's good support for their work both in terms of background material and in marking that is informative and helpful about what to do to improve.

169. Students also learn well because the teaching has influenced their attitudes and personal development. They recognise the gains they make in knowledge and understanding because of the clarity and effectiveness of the teaching they receive; 'The teacher knows her subject and how to get the best out of you'. They confirm that they are encouraged to be reflective and independent learners because of the rigorous self-assessment and evaluation that takes place. The teacher's high expectations make them want to do their best. Several who were not considering it before are now looking forward to continuing the subject in Year 13 and beyond.

170. The new head of drama is already providing good leadership because she is perceptive about what needs to improve, has a clear sense of direction and a purposeful approach to raising standards. The accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory. Though adequate as teaching spaces, the rooms are worn and shabby and lack the technical facilities that would provide the full range of experiences required for a theatre studies course. Students too are aware that their experience is restricted by the lack of such facilities. The conditions do not do justice to the department's contribution to the school's work, its aspirations and its obvious capacity to improve further.

## HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on the AS- and A-level courses in geography and history. The school does not offer religious education in the sixth form. It meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus by providing three days per year which focus on ethical and religious issues. The days did not coincide with the inspection but students talked positively of a day recently spent considering issues to do with fair trade.

The school offers AS- and A-level courses in government and politics, sociology, psychology and philosophy. One AS-level lesson in sociology was observed. The quality of teaching was very good. The lesson was well planned and the teacher helped students to improve their presentations by identifying misinterpretations and omissions in their work. The standard of work achieved by students was average.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Overall, teaching and learning are good.
- Students are very well supported and are making good progress in line with their abilities.
- Student/teacher relationships are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Marking in Year 12 needs to be more consistent and developmental.
- Lessons are sometimes too didactic.
- ICT use needs to be further developed as an integral part of lesson planning.

171. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although the sixth form is growing in size, the small numbers of students make it difficult to compare attainment accurately against national figures. Year 12 results at AS-level in 2002 were in line with their prior attainment on entry to the sixth form. In 2002, no candidates were entered for A-level examinations in Year 13. From the work seen and discussions held with Year 13 students during the inspection, it is apparent that, although their standards are below the average for A-level students, their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment at AS-level and GCSE. They are making reasonable progress in developing their historical knowledge and skills.
172. Written work by Year 12 students, on the struggle for power after Lenin's death, shows that they have very good analytical skills, they research thoroughly and select from a variety of sources the key issues which affect the passage of history. In a presentation to their peers, the majority are able to accurately describe why collectivisation occurred in Russia during the Stalinist regime. Their work is of a good standard and several of the students are clearly on line to gain higher grades in their AS-level examination in the summer. The overall standard is slightly above that of an average AS-level group. Taking account of their level of entry on to the course, students' progress is satisfactory.
173. Teaching and learning are good for both Years 12 and 13. In all lessons, the secure subject knowledge of the teacher enables students to extend their thinking, arguments and written responses to questions well. Such an approach helps to increase their analytical skills, and teachers plan work carefully choosing texts and other sources to meet the needs of the students. In the very good lessons, teaching is vibrant and the students take an active part in their own learning. Occasionally, students are required to present their research work using ICT. This gives them a valuable opportunity to share their learning. However, teacher-led approaches predominate and this limits students' development as independent learners. In planning lessons, teachers, whilst very thorough, do not give sufficient attention to finding ways in which students can research, present and interact, so as to take more control of their own learning.
174. In a Year 13 lesson on the foreign policy of Queen Elizabeth I, students demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of the problems faced by the queen in her dealings with Flanders. The teacher used her very extensive knowledge well and, by careful structuring of her questions, she challenged each student, enabling them to make good progress in the lesson. In a Year 12 lesson, students were given the opportunity to develop their key skills by presenting research into the Liberal politicians Asquith and Lloyd George and demonstrated that they are able to interrogate sources on the Internet and use pictorial evidence to support their arguments. By considering the main contenders for power after Lenin's death, Year 12 students showed that they have learned very good analytical skills. Their presentations show a good level of understanding and interpretation, but only one group challenged the reliability of what they had read in sufficient depth. Whilst good, useful notes are made by all students, their learning as a class, and their individual key skills are likely to benefit even more through the use of ICT in their presentation work.
175. Leadership and management of the department are good. A very good assessment process has been established which enables students to develop their work in response to good, formative evaluation of their coursework. The verbal and written feedback that students receive in respect of improving work is very good. However, this

support is not consistently provided as evidenced by poor marking and organisation of several Year 12 folders. The implementation of a new AS-level course, to be followed by A-level next year, is designed to give continuity to the department's work between GCSE and A-level and should make the transition much easier for students.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Standards attained show good achievement in relation to previous attainment.
- The popularity of the subject is increasing.
- Teaching is good, and informative marking helps students to make good progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensuring all students take an active part in discussions.

176. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. At the time of the previous inspection, standards attained by students in A-level geography were below the national average. In 2002, only two students sat the A-level examination and they achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. However, the popularity of the subject is increasing and there are ten students in Year 12 and 18 are expected to choose the subject after they complete their GCSE course.
177. Observations of lessons and scrutiny of work indicate that standards in Year 12 are in line with what would be expected at this early stage of the AS-level course. The one Year 13 student is achieving well. During lessons, students investigate a range of physical and human geography topics. In the Year 12 unit on hazards, students analyse the differences between gales, hurricanes and tornadoes, using the correct geographical terms. They learn the importance of defining words like 'drought' carefully in the context of Britain and Africa. In the unit on settlements, students compare Bicester and Sunderland effectively and learn how to test models of settlement systematically in readiness for the examination. Students' geographical skills are much enhanced by the summer visit to Iceland where they investigate tectonic processes and the human use of a hazards environment.
178. Students learn well in their sixth-form geography courses. They make progress in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in relation to the geographical concepts so vital in all topics. The good teaching helps students learn. Lessons are well planned, with activities that are progressively more challenging so that students build effectively on their prior knowledge. Their understanding of 'settlement hierarchy' is one example of this. Evidence from their folders indicates that the students are able to write confidently and accurately about a range of human and physical processes.
179. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In all lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory and, in some, it was very good. In the more effective lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is so secure that they can guide students' learning with assurance as to what is expected by the examining board, for example by modelling answers. Clear learning objectives are understood and reviewed within and at the end of every lesson. Relentless, probing questioning pressured students to extend their answers and challenged their thinking. In one lesson, a student's work was read out so others could analyse it critically. In another, the onus was put on students to formulate their own learning activity given the sources of information put before them. Concept maps relating to the flooding in Mozambique helped students to revise and deploy their

knowledge systematically. It is important that the very good teaching seen during the inspection is disseminated throughout the department so that others can see the impact of it on students' learning.

180. Leadership and management are very good. The rapport between teachers and students is very positive and underpins the commitment of the students to their work. Informative marking helps students to make good progress. On one piece of work, a teacher comments that the student had 'understood how urbanisation can change the way in which a catchment responds to a rainfall event, but you have not quantified with dates and figures how this catchment changes between 1959 and 1975'. By pointing the way so clearly, the teacher is helping that student to get better at geography. Where teaching was less effective, the pace of learning was sluggish because activities were prolonged and the seating arrangement hindered discussions between students. In these lessons, boys participated less well than girls and the level of interactivity was much reduced. On some occasions a few students did not contribute to discussions and so lost out on important learning experiences.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focused on the AS- and A-level courses in English literature. The school offers French at AS- and A-levels and German at AS-level. The numbers of students in Year 13 French and the Year 12 German classes are extremely small, but the Year 12 French class, although small, is much larger. Overall, the quality of teaching in the four lessons observed was good. The teachers engage the students well in speaking and give them confidence. The standards achieved by students in all aspects of their work are good. The opportunity for students to watch a Molière theatre production increased their interest and added to their cultural development.

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Standards in Year 12 are above average.
- Teaching is good, particularly in developing students' independent learning skills.
- Student attitudes are good and they achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good, particularly in improving standards and raising the profile of English in the sixth form.

#### Areas for improvement

- Improving the use of assessment as a means of further raising standards.
- Involving a minority of passive students more actively in lessons.

181. Standards in English are in line with national averages at the end of Year 13, and above average in Year 12. The proportion of students attaining higher grades in the 2002 AS- and A-level examinations was similar to earlier years when it was below the national average. The entry for A-level was very small in 2002 and only three students are currently following the English literature course in Year 13. Their standards are in

line with expectations, and this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to prior attainment in AS-level and GCSE examinations. The much larger number of students in Year 12 who are following the AS-level course are attaining standards above expectations for this stage in the course, and this represents good achievement.

182. Students in Year 13 make satisfactory progress, and students in Year 12 make good progress, in developing a range of higher level skills such as critical analysis and evaluation. These skills enable students to evaluate the chosen texts with increasing confidence and to communicate their knowledge and understanding with increasing accuracy. Work on a range of literature, such as 'Antony and Cleopatra', Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' and 'The Glass Menagerie', shows a developing ability to comment meaningfully on literary techniques such as form and language. Several students are less confident in analysing pre-1800 poetry, but show good knowledge and understanding in discussing Victorian poetry, particularly that of Tennyson. Several students have a limited understanding of context when studying works such as William Blake's poetry. Higher attaining students, in particular, are able to express their opinions on the works they study with confidence and perception. They achieve this in verbal discussion, and with close reference to the text when developing a written argument. Particularly pleasing is the growing confidence and competence which several students show in research and making presentations, for example about 'The Glass Menagerie'. They are appreciative of the frequent opportunities they get to debate their opinions. The quality of written commentary is often good, particularly in Year 12.
183. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It builds upon the positive attitudes of students towards the subject, and resulted in good progress in the lessons observed. Teachers are particularly effective when giving students feedback in lessons. Teachers help students understand the qualities of their work and how they can improve, with close reference to the relevant assessment objectives. This was particularly evident in a Year 12 lesson in which the teacher gave a careful explanation of the assessment criteria students needed to consider when making presentations on themes from 'The Glass Menagerie'. Teachers convey their good subject knowledge to students, and reinforce students' understanding through skilful use of questioning, as when Year 13 students were studying Aphra Benn's 'The Rover', or when they compared First World War poets. The most effective characteristic of the good teaching is the emphasis put upon the students' developing independent and collaborative learning skills, which results in thoughtful analysis by students of what they have studied. This was a strong feature of most of the lessons observed and was also evident in the discussions with students. It also makes an effective contribution to the development of key skills in communication. On the few occasions when teaching is less effective, a minority of students are passive and the teacher is less successful in getting them to contribute to class debate. This was evident in a Year 12 discussion on Tennyson's 'Mariana', when some students were far more active in debate than others.
184. Leadership and management of post-16 English are good. The department has successfully coped with recent staffing changes and a change in syllabus. There is good professional development for staff, whilst students benefit from a good range of activities such as theatre trips and attendance at student conferences. Some students have just won a public speaking competition. The use of assessment data to set meaningful targets and to influence curriculum planning is unsatisfactory as some students are confused or unsure of how well they are doing or what they should be aiming for. Access to computer facilities is sometimes limited and this restricts use by students. There has been good improvement overall since the previous inspection as standards in post-16 English are now better in an expanding and progressive department.