

INSPECTION REPORT

WASELEY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116951

Headteacher: Mr D Thurbon

Reporting inspector: Dr Philip Crumpton
2784

Dates of inspection: 18 – 22 November 2002

Inspection number: 252049

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: School Road
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Birmingham

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Eric Hogg

Date of previous inspection: 2 November 1998

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2796	Sue Bardwell	Team inspector	Citizenship	How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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4145	Roy Kent	Team inspector	English (support)	
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4513	John Thirlwall	Team inspector	Art and design	
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19705	Phil Bishop	Team inspector	Geography	
27922	Dave Perrett	Team inspector	History	
31700	Rebecca Lloyd	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
20620	David Perkins	Team inspector	Music	
2653	Ian Spode	Team inspector	Physical education	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
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' 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	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	19
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	27
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	32
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	37
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	40
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	41
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	47
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	
Provision For Hearing Impaired Pupils	49
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	50
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	58
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN	

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is an average sized 11 to 18 comprehensive school situated in north Worcestershire, immediately south west of Birmingham. It is located on a pleasant, landscaped site overlooking Waseley Country Park. With 898 pupils on roll, it is an average sized secondary school. It has a smaller than average sixth form. There has been a significant increase in its numbers in the last two years and it is currently oversubscribed in Years 7 to 9. This increase followed on from the school's change from a 12 to 18 comprehensive in 2000, which caused considerable disruption.

Pupils come from the full range of social and economic backgrounds and 30 per cent of the school's pupils currently live within the Birmingham area. The number of ethnic minority pupils is below average and there is a very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average and lower than it was in the previous year. The percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register is below average and is also less than it was the previous year. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average; it includes one student in the sixth form.

The school's intake includes the whole range of ability. Results from National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds indicate that from 1999 to 2001, pupils' overall prior attainment on entry to the school was close to the average; for the current Year 7 pupils it is above average. Students' overall prior attainment on entry to the sixth form, based on GCSE results at the end of Year 11, is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective and improving school. In the majority of departments the education provided for pupils, including teaching, is satisfactory and in the large remainder it is good or very good. Standards at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with the averages for all schools. They are also in line with the average for similar schools when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account. At the end of Year 11, standards are above the national average. They are in line with the average for similar schools, based upon pupils' prior attainment. In the sixth form, standards are above average with students making good progress. Attendance levels are high both in the main school and the sixth form. There is a clear commitment to improvement amongst senior managers. The school continues to give satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are above average.
- GCSE results for pupils on the special educational needs register are good
- Attendance is well above average.
- The school has a strong ethos of caring for its pupils.
- It is an orderly community, promoting good behaviour and dealing well with bullying.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- It is an inclusive school with special educational needs pupils well integrated into the community.
- Provision and support for hearing impaired and physically disabled pupils are very good.
- The school's student support centre strongly supports pupils with emotional and social difficulties.

What could be improved

- The extent to which the learning needs of the whole range of ability within classes are met.
- Using marking and assessment more effectively to help pupils make progress and improve their standards.
- Developing a more rigorous process of observing lessons to further improve the overall quality of teaching.
- The contribution of middle managers to school improvement through effective monitoring of their areas of responsibility.
- Meeting statutory requirements for annually reporting to parents the progress of pupils, providing them with a summary of the implementation of the special educational needs policy, and implementing religious education in Year 10.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1998. Improvement has continued and overall progress has been good. Attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was higher than in 1998. It has improved at a rate broadly in line with the trend nationally. GCSE results have steadily improved and the school received a School Achievement Award for improvement in examination results 1997-2000. In 2002, there was a higher percentage of pupils with five or more GCSE A* to C grades than ever before. GCSE results have improved at a rate faster than the national trend. Attendance figures are significantly better than in 1998. There are greatly improved facilities in a number of subject areas, particularly information and communication technology, and in administration. A2-level results for girls in the sixth form were significantly higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

There has also been good progress on the key issues identified in the last report. Pupils' attainment has improved in English, information and communication technology and design and technology; there has been insufficient improvement in mathematics. The attainment of boys has improved in

English, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. Cultural education has improved and is now satisfactory. There has been a big improvement in the provision of textbooks and the problems with the length and spacing of lessons have been rectified. Statutory requirements for information and communication technology and collective worship are now being met, and all sixth form students study religious education as part of their general studies course.

Deficiencies in monitoring and in assessment identified in the last report have not been effectively addressed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A2-level/AS-level examinations taken in 2001. Validated results for 2002 were not available at the time of this inspection.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A2-levels/AS-levels	Male C	2001* Female A	All B		

* National comparison data for AS/A2-level results in 2002 are not yet available.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average. They were well below the average for schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, standards were in line with the average when pupils' prior attainment was taken into account. Standards were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools in 2002, standards in English were below average; they were well below average in science and in mathematics. When pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, standards were above average in English, average in science and below average in mathematics. Generally, there was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls in English. Boys' results were better than girls' in mathematics and science. Given their average attainment on entry, pupils have made satisfactory progress by the end of Year 9.

In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were above the national averages. They were better than when the school was last inspected and have improved at a rate faster than the trend nationally. In comparison with similar schools in 2002, results were broadly average. Over the last two years, pupils have generally attained their best results in English Literature, religious education, science and art and design, and their worst in geography and mathematics. Generally, girls are achieving more

highly than boys. The GCSE results of pupils on the special educational needs register are good. Taking into account their test results at the end of Year 9 in 2000, pupils in this year group have made good progress.

In A2-level examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2001, students' results were above the national average. They improved further in 2002. GNVQ (Advanced) results were close to the national average in 2001. Girls achieved significantly better results in A2-level and GNVQ.

Standards seen during the inspection were generally not as high as those demonstrated by examination results. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' attainments in lessons were in line with those typically expected and generally reflected the latest statutory test results. The higher ability on entry of pupils in Year 7 is not yet evident in their attainment in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, pupils were achieving average standards in contrast to the above average attainment in the latest GCSE results. The discrepancy is partly accounted for by the fact that teachers make special efforts to prepare and mentor pupils for GCSE. Generally, pupils are making the expected progress, given their prior attainment, and they are achieving well in GCSE examinations. Pupils with special educational needs were making satisfactory progress in lessons observed. The school is not giving enough attention to gifted and talented pupils in order to ensure they make maximum progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are achieving as well as other pupils. In Year 13, students' achievements in lessons were consistent with their above average prior attainment. Year 12 students have made a sound start and were progressing well in their lessons.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Pupils are acquiring appropriate knowledge and skills in information and communication technology lessons and in a number of other subjects. Overall, boys and girls are making good progress in information and communication technology.

The school is setting challenging targets for GCSE. In 2001, it met its targets for one or more grades A* to G and for pupils' average points score; it fell just short of its target for five or more A* to C grades. In 2002, it exceeded all its targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The large majority of pupils have good attitudes and work hard in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils generally show good behaviour in lessons and behaviour around the school is good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships and good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) result in good personal development.
Attendance	Attendance levels in the main school and the sixth form are very good.

The generally good response to lessons and most pupils' willingness to learn, play an important part in pupils' achievements and progress. Very good relationships facilitate learning, as does the high level of attendance. The school's ethos is reflected in the way that pupils with special educational

needs are fully integrated into the school community. The few instances of disruptive behaviour occurred when teachers failed to interest or challenge pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Teaching was seen to be good in art and design, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, and physical education. It was satisfactory in other subjects. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound. There was good learning support for pupils with special educational needs.

Generally, teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects. The organisation of lessons is good. They have very good relationships with pupils and their class management is good overall. There is good use of questioning, effective group work and learning support staff contribute well to many lessons. These strengths encourage the majority of pupils to engage effectively with their learning.

Overall, teachers' expectations are not high enough for all pupils to be effectively challenged. Teachers' planning and, consequently, their implementation of lessons, are not sufficiently meeting the needs of pupils with a wide range of ability. Teachers' marking is often positive and encouraging but it is not effectively identifying pupils' specific achievements and what they need to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is largely broad and balanced, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Provision for vocational education in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, is insufficient. Extracurricular provision is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall provision is satisfactory. Hearing impaired and physically disabled pupils have good access to the curriculum. Gifted and talented pupils are insufficiently catered for.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils have the same provision as other pupils. This is appropriate since they are capable English language users.
Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and	Overall, this is satisfactory. Moral and social education is good. Provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is not

cultural development	consistently planned into schemes of work across subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for all its pupils in a safe, orderly environment. The student support centre is making a very good contribution to the school's caring ethos. Assessment is not sufficiently contributing to teachers' planning.

Generally, the curriculum is effectively contributing to the quality of education pupils receive. Careers education and guidance is good in the main school and in the sixth form. The provision for students' personal development in the sixth form is good. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are very well looked after. Generally, all pupils have good access to the curriculum but the needs of gifted and talented pupils are not being sufficiently addressed. Special educational needs pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are not effectively identifying their specific learning needs. Assessment is not contributing sufficiently to pupils' progress. Statutory requirements are not being met for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is soundly led and managed by the headteacher and senior management team. There is a clear aim of raising standards within a caring environment. Middle managers are not sufficiently involved in the management of school improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Generally, governors are supportive and effectively carry out their responsibilities. They participate in setting the direction of the school and challenge proposals where they believe it is justified. They need to more rigorously hold the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's analysis of its examination results is good. It is effectively monitoring attendance and behaviour. Monitoring of teaching and of the school's policies and practices needs to be more rigorous.
The strategic use of resources	Generally, resources are used well to support priorities, fulfil intended purposes and achieve value for money. The sixth form is cost-effective. Financing of departmental priorities needs improvement.

The headteacher and senior management team are providing a clear sense of direction for the school. They are very committed to its improvement. The school is providing a caring learning environment. The senior management team and governors need to ensure a more rigorous approach to school improvement by increasing the management role of middle managers in analysing data and development planning and by improving the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation processes. Statutory requirements are not being met for reporting pupils' progress and the implementation of the special educational needs policy.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High expectations of pupils.• Pupils' opinions of school.• The approachability of the school.• The progress of pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about pupils' progress.• Homework provision.• Closeness of working with parents.

Findings from the inspection support most of the positive views of parents. However, the evidence suggests that teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough. Inspectors found that parents' concerns about homework were not generally borne out by the evidence. The school's communications with parents could be improved, in particular the annual reporting of pupils' progress.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

WASELEY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 110 students which is smaller than average. The intake for the academic year 2002/03 is larger than previous years. There are 65 students in Year 12 and 45 in Year 13; 54 are males and 56 are females. One student has a statement of special educational needs. There are no students who speak English as an additional language. The number of students who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average. A broad range of advanced subsidiary (AS) and advanced (A2)-level courses are provided. A number of vocational courses are offered though currently no student has chosen to follow these, apart from the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in information and communication technology. Key skills are also provided. The school has a policy of encouraging access to AS and A2-level courses by accepting students with five grade Cs and above at GCSE, though each applicant is considered on individual merit. Seven students joined the sixth form from other schools.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is both effective and cost effective. Standards in A2 and AS-level examinations in 2001 (the latest available confirmed results) were above the national average. The results for 2002 are significantly better than 2001, with girls' performance improving considerably. Girls' attainment has risen significantly since the last inspection in 1998 when boys' performance was higher. In 2001, girls attained well above the national average whilst boys' attainment was close to the national average. Standards in AVCE information and communication technology in 2001 were close to the national average. Girls' results were above the national average and boys' were close to the national average. Overall, students in Years 12 and 13 are achieving appropriately and making steady progress. Few students do not complete their chosen courses.

Teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. Of the subjects inspected in detail, teaching and learning were very good in psychology, economics, and geography; good in mathematics, biology, chemistry, and religious education and satisfactory in English and history.

The vision and clear direction set by the school's leadership are shared by the co-ordinator and sixth form staff. However, there is no rationale for the sixth form, defining its position in the development of the whole school.

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are above the national average.
- The achievement of girls has improved significantly since the last inspection in 1998.
- The quality of the teaching is good overall, with teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm inspiring students to work hard and with interest.
- Very good relationships help to ensure that the sixth form is a harmonious and co-operative community.
- Routine management and administration are effective.
- Students are supported very well by a well-informed and committed team of staff.
- The recently refurbished sixth form accommodation enhances provision and is well used by the students, particularly for private study.
- The sixth form is providing good value for money.

What could be improved

- The self-review process used to monitor teaching and learning does not sufficiently contribute to the development of the sixth form.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to follow vocational education courses from Years 10 and 11 to the sixth form.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. A2-level results in 2001 were below the national average. Female students' results have improved considerably. Teaching is good overall although there should be more challenge for higher attaining students. Students are achieving satisfactorily.
Biology	Good. A2-level results were well below the national average in 2001 but improved in 2002. Female students have improved their performance significantly. Teaching is good overall. Brisk pace, good relations and effective questioning techniques motivate students and help them learn well. Teachers do not make enough use of information and communication technology in their teaching. There is insufficient analysis of assessment data to pinpoint areas for improvement.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Chemistry	Satisfactory. AS results in 2001 were above the national average, though A2-level results were below average. There is not enough analysis of students' performance to identify how teaching might be adapted to meet students' needs. Overall teaching is good, and subject knowledge is very good. Questioning techniques do not sufficiently help students to apply their knowledge. Regular assessments of students' work effectively help students improve. Students have very positive attitudes to learning.
Psychology	Good and improving. Results are below the national average but are improving. Teaching is very good overall. It is characterised by good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned. Information and communication technology and library resources are not used enough and students do not have sufficient opportunities to learn independently. Relationships are very good.
Economics	Satisfactory. AS and A2-level results are consistently in line with national averages. Teaching is very good and there is a high level of active student participation in lessons. The low level of resources and inadequate use of information and communication technology inhibit students' learning.
Geography	Very good. Results in 2001 at A2-level were above the national average and a high proportion of students gained the top grades of A and B. Results have improved since the last inspection, especially those of boys. Teaching is very good and information and communication technology is well used to enhance students' learning. Teachers have high expectations and challenge students to achieve well.
History	Satisfactory. Results at A2-level have risen steadily and in 2001 were in line with the national average. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' relations with the students ensure that they are well motivated and have positive attitudes to learning. There are too few opportunities for students to contribute actively to lessons. There is limited monitoring of the work of the department to identify areas for improvement.
Religious education	Good. A2-level results have been consistently above the national average since the last inspection and in 2001, results were well above. Students achieve well. Teaching is good, with good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations of students. Students are challenged and inspired by the teaching. There are not enough opportunities for students to meet members of different faith communities.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English	<p>Satisfactory. The 2001 A2-level results were below the national average and have not improved since the last inspection. However, results for 2002 show a marked improvement. In 2001, AS-level results were satisfactory and unsatisfactory in 2002. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and create a purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Students are given good opportunities to work independently and co-operatively. Students concentrate well and have a positive approach to their work. Teaching does not build upon earlier GCSE work sufficiently and is not systematically monitored.</p>

Work was sampled in nine other AS and A2-level subjects. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen and in most it was good or very good. Very good teaching was observed in a number of subjects. In such instances, teachers had high expectations and challenged the students to work independently and creatively. Students displayed very positive attitudes to their learning. However, information and communication technology is inconsistently used in different subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<p>Students are well supported throughout their time in the sixth form. Sixth form tutors provide regular, comprehensive, individual progress reviews for all students and give them good advice about how to manage their work. Students receive good careers advice. Students value the guidance given.</p>
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<p>The vision and clear direction set by the school's leadership is shared by the co-ordinator and sixth form staff. This contributes to a positive, work-orientated ethos in the sixth form. The sixth form is routinely well managed and administered. The school's self-review process does not enable a clear overview of the overall performance of the sixth form to be established. There is not enough coherent development of vocational education to link with the Years 10 and 11 curriculum.</p>

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of courses on offer meets their needs and career aspirations. • The accuracy, clarity and helpfulness of the information they received about the sixth form courses. • The support they received to help them settle into the sixth form and sixth form work • Teachers are accessible to help with difficulties. • The high quality of teaching which challenges them to do their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on what they should do in the sixth form. • The lack of information about their progress. • Advice on what they should do after they leave school. • Advice about personal problems. • Their treatment as responsible young adults. • The response of the school to their views.

Students are very positive about the sixth form and they value the teaching and support provided. Inspectors found much evidence to support the strengths identified by students. However, inspectors did not find evidence to support the concerns raised on the questionnaire. Indeed, those students with whom inspectors held discussions refuted most of these, especially with regard to the advice available to them about personal problems and on what they should do when they leave school. Inspectors judged that students are given comprehensive advice about what they should do in the sixth form. They also judged that students receive good information about their progress. Students told inspectors that they valued the regular reviews as they helped them manage their own learning better. The school provides a number of ways for students to express their views and provides them with several opportunities to take responsibility.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, the attainment of pupils is close to that typically achieved by pupils of this age range. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11, overall attainment is average. In the sixth form, attainment is above average.

Years 7 to 9

2. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were broadly in line with the national average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. They were well below the average for schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free schools meals. When pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, standards were broadly in line with the average. Over recent years the rate of improvement has been broadly similar to the national trend.
3. In 2002, standards were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. In all three subjects results were similar to when the school was last inspected. Boys' results were higher than girls' in mathematics and science; there was no significant difference in English.
4. When pupils were statutorily assessed by their teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above was above average in mathematics, where there was a significant difference from the test results. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above was close to the average in English and science, with teacher assessments reflecting the test results. There was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls in mathematics, both being above the national gender averages when statutorily assessed by their teachers. In English, girls' results were significantly higher than boys' but both were close to the national average for their gender. In science, boys' results were close to the national average for boys and significantly better than girls', which were well below the national average for girls.
5. In the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, based upon teachers' statutory assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002, standards were well above average in geography, information and communication technology, art and design, music and modern foreign languages. They were above average in physical education, and close to the average in history and design and technology. Standards were below average for the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. In the majority of subjects, girls' results were higher, but in almost every subject boys were performing relatively better against the national average for each gender. Boys' results were significantly better than girls' in history and physical education; girls' results were significantly better in music.
6. From a detailed scrutiny of a representative sample of pupils' work and of the work they do in lessons, inspectors judged that standards overall were close to the average expected

nationally. Standards seen were above average in design and technology, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages; they were below average in history and religious education. It needs to be remembered that only a small number of lessons were observed in each case. However, there were discrepancies between teachers' statutory assessments and the standards observed during the inspection in a number of subjects. This gives some concern about the validity and security of assessment within the school, particularly in history and music.

Years 10 to 11

7. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002, the numbers of pupils achieving five or more A* to C and A* to G grades were above the national averages. This represents a good improvement on the previous year's results and standards in GCSE examinations are significantly higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. GCSE results are broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Girls' results were higher than boys' for the higher grades; there was no significant difference between boys and girls for grades A* to G. Over recent years both boys' and girls' results have been close to the national averages. The school's results have improved at a faster rate than those nationally.
8. Attainment in GCSE examinations across the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was above average. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in English was significantly above the national average and it was above the national average in science. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in mathematics was below the national average. In English and science the number of pupils achieving grades A* to G was above the national average; it was close to the average in mathematics. Girls' results were higher in English; boys achieved more highly in mathematics and science.
9. Overall GCSE standards across all other subjects were broadly typical of those expected nationally. The percentages of pupils achieving A* to C were significantly above average in English Literature, music and religious education. They were above average in art and design, business studies, religious education (short course), history and French. In physical education they were broadly average. The numbers of pupils achieving grades A* to C in geography and drama were below average; they were significantly below average in design and technology and German.
10. Standards achieved by the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language mirrored those of pupils generally. All 16 pupils in Year 11 on the special educational needs register achieved at least two GCSE grades. Three pupils with statements of special educational needs achieved nine or more grades and four pupils designated Action Plus were awarded seven or more grades.
11. Current standards arising from a scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of lessons and talking with pupils are not as high as those demonstrated in GCSE examinations. The evidence suggests that teachers pay particular attention to preparing and supporting pupils leading up to their examinations, including the provision of guidance for revision. Standards observed in lessons were broadly average. Pupils' achievements in lessons were lower than

previous GCSE results in the subject would suggest in art and design, English, music, modern foreign languages and religious education. The reverse was true in design and technology where attainment in lessons was significantly higher than previous examination results in the subject would indicate.

Performance in Basic Skills

12. Standards in literacy are broadly satisfactory. During the inspection, pupils were achieving standards close to the average in English. In some subjects, pupils are satisfactorily developing speaking and listening skills and extending their vocabulary - important words are clearly displayed in classrooms and referred to in lessons. Overall, however, the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has so far had limited impact on the development of literacy across the curriculum.
13. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory. In a number of subjects pupils were observed using numeracy skills: carrying out conversations, calculating and measuring, and using data in charts and graphs.
14. Standards in information and communication technology are broadly in line with that typically expected at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils are confidently using word processing, desk-top publishing, *Powerpoint*, spreadsheets, databases and the Internet. During the inspection, there was very good use of information and communication technology in geography, food technology and English. In other subjects there is not yet sufficient use of information and communication technology.

Progress and Achievement by Age 16

15. Since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment on entry to the school has been broadly average, although it is above average for the current Year 7. Given this baseline, between Years 7 and 9, based on National Curriculum test results, pupils have made good progress over recent years, with results improving faster than the national rate. It must be added that National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were broadly average, lower than they were in the previous year. During the inspection, pupils of this age range generally made satisfactory progress in their learning. However, some important deficiencies in teaching were affecting the quality of pupils' learning. Local education authority data suggests that pupils' progress is not as good as that of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
16. The above average attainment in GCSE examinations in 2002 indicates good progress by pupils who entered the school with average levels of attainment five years ago. Comparing their National Curriculum test results in 2000 with their GCSE results in 2002, indicates that pupils made good progress in Years 10 and 11. The school provided the best pupil progress in the local education authority for these years. During the inspection, pupils generally made sound progress in their learning; they made good progress in more than half the lessons observed. In those lessons where pupils made insufficient progress, it was largely due to deficiencies in teaching. Given their prior attainment on entry to the school, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, as

indicated by their achievements in GCSE examinations. The school is not giving enough attention to gifted and talented pupils in order to ensure they make maximum progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are achieving as well as other pupils.

17. The school is setting targets for pupils' attainment based on a wide range of assessment and prior attainment information. This includes comparisons with school's nationally and with similar schools and consideration of local education authority targets. The identified targets are realistic but challenging. In 2001, the school met its targets for one or more A* to G and average points scores, but fell just short for five or more GCSE A* to C grades. In 2002, the school exceeded all its targets.

Sixth form

18. The inspection took place in the middle of the autumn term and students in Year 13 were not long into the second year of their A2-level courses. Students in Year 12 had been in the sixth form for just over half a term. Once students begin their courses very few leave before completing them; students' mobility has negligible impact on overall standards.
19. In GCE A2-level examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2001 (the latest available confirmed results), students who were entered for two or more subjects gained an overall average points score above the national average. This was higher than the previous year's result and an improvement on the result when the school was last inspected. In 2001, the percentage of students achieving the higher grades, A and B, was lower than it was when the school was last inspected. However, in 2002 a higher number of students achieved A and B grades and the percentage was the same as it was in 1998.
20. Female students achieved more highly than males; their overall average point score was well above average, whereas male students' was close to the national average. In comparison with all post 16 providers for A2-level, results were above average, with female students again achieving more highly than males.
21. Attainment in A2-level examinations in 2001 was well above average in geography and religious education. It was close to the average in general studies, economics, history and home economics. Attainment was below average in chemistry, English literature, mathematics and graphical application, and well below average in biology.
22. In AVCE (information and communication technology) in 2001, the overall average points score achieved by students was close to the national average. Again, female students achieved more highly; their overall average points score was above average, whereas male students were close to the average for their genders. Compared with other post 16 providers for GNVQ (Advanced), the school's results were above average.
23. From lessons observed, from work scrutinised and from discussions with students during the inspection, students in Year 13 were on course to achieve standards which reflect their prior attainment. The attainment overall of students in Year 12 indicate that they have made a sound start to their courses. In discussions, inspectors found students to be mature and

articulate. They talked readily about their work and understood what was expected of them in terms of their target grades. They could identify what they could do well and what they needed to do to reach their targets. Contrary to some concern identified in the student questionnaire, inspectors found the students were well informed about their progress and that the school's review days were very useful in helping them reflect on their own performance. They were particularly complimentary about the support they were given in adapting to the demands of the sixth form. They respond positively to the useful advice given to them by their teachers about how to manage their time and their work outside of lessons. For example, during the inspection students were seen consistently making effective use of the library, the information and communication technology suite and sixth form study room.

24. The school identifies individual targets for students at the beginning of Year 12 based on a range of assessment data, including their GCSE results. The targets are appropriately challenging. The work seen in the school at this early stage of the year indicates that students are on course to meet their targets in almost all subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

25. Pupils have positive attitudes to the school and behave well. They form very good relationships with one another, teachers and other staff, and this helps to create the friendly atmosphere in the school. Pupils respond well when given the opportunity to take responsibility. Overall, pupils' attitude to learning and their behaviour are similar to those reported after the previous inspection. Attendance is well above the national average and has increased significantly since the previous inspection.
26. Almost all pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They are appreciative of the activities and courses offered to them and particularly value the support they receive from teachers. Almost all pupils usually show good levels of interest in their work. Most work hard in lessons to complete the tasks they are given, especially when these are challenging and well matched to their needs. This makes a positive contribution to their learning and achievement in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs try hard to achieve their best and share the positive attitudes to work that pervade the school. Pupils are well supported in order to achieve their best efforts. A particular strength of the school is the way pupils with a wide range of special educational needs are given good access to the curriculum and are well integrated into the classroom. They are often helped by other pupils as well as by learning support assistants. The majority of teachers use methods which enable these pupils to participate and learn effectively. However, a small minority, of all abilities, are less positive in their attitudes so that, when the work they are asked to do lacks interest or challenge, they become noisy and disrupt lessons. Overall, attitudes to learning are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection.
27. Of the 195 lessons observed during the inspection, behaviour was satisfactory in 40 lessons, good in 68, very good in 54 and excellent in 20 lessons. This represents a high proportion of good and better behaviour. In only 11 lessons was behaviour judged to be unsatisfactory and in two lessons, poor. No unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in Year 7. The highest

proportion of unsatisfactory behaviour occurred in Year 8, but poor behaviour was observed in one lesson in Year 10 and another in Year 11. The lowest proportion of very good behaviour was seen in Year 8, but in all other year groups examples of exemplary behaviour were seen with the highest proportion being in Years 10 and 11.

28. In lessons where behaviour was good or better, pupils listened well to teachers and to one another. Tasks were well chosen to motivate pupils to succeed and they almost always tried hard to complete the work set. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson, pupils quickly got ready to start the practical task of making a fruit salad and worked well throughout the lesson; all were able to take the completed salad home. When pupils were interested by the work and had a variety of tasks to complete they settled quickly and concentrated well, rising to the high expectations of the teacher. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson pupils enjoyed the challenging task of writing a leaflet about an aspect of capital punishment and moved beyond producing a simple piece of writing to wanting the audience “to read between the lines”. Pupils of all abilities concentrated well, especially when the work was well matched to their needs. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, pupils of lower ability rose to the teacher’s high expectations and achieved very well although the task was challenging for them.
29. In the few lessons where behaviour was unsatisfactory, this occurred when pupils were insufficiently interested in the task, or were not effectively challenged. In one Year 10 physics lesson, for example, a significant number of pupils made no attempt to answer questions and showed a general lack of interest. In other lessons, teachers talked for too long so that some pupils lost concentration and became noisy.
30. Pupils work well independently when given the opportunity to do so. However, in some lessons pupils remain passive and dependent on teachers without being given responsibility for their own learning. Pupils respond well when asked to reflect on their work and to undertake self-evaluation of it but opportunities to do so are limited. When using equipment, for example in design and technology, pupils usually co-operate sensibly. They co-operate and work well in small groups. For example, in a Year 10 life skills lesson, pupils who chose to work in pairs shared the tasks between them well. Pupils support one another well, especially by listening carefully to others. However, in some lessons a minority of pupils was noisy and unwilling to listen.
31. Standards of behaviour throughout the school are good overall. The school functions as an orderly community. At busy times there is some pushing and jostling in the corridors and narrow staircases, although it is almost always good-humoured. The level of staff supervision around the building is light but sufficient to ensure that pupils know they are unlikely to get away with unacceptable behaviour. Behaviour in the dining hall is usually good. At breaks and lunchtime behaviour is generally good; although at times a few pupils cause disruption to other’s games and conversations, this is usually due to thoughtlessness rather than a deliberate act. Almost all pupils are polite and courteous. They are willing to help visitors to the school, for example by offering directions, and do so confidently.

32. Pupils show good levels of respect to their peers and to staff. They generally treat others with courtesy and consideration and show respect for the feelings and values of others. They usually treat their own, other pupils' and the school's property with respect. There is little graffiti but a significant number of pupils are careless about litter. This is not helped by the windy nature of the site; even litter that is put into bins can be blown out again.
33. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good and is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with one another, teachers and other adults. Pupils respond well to the positive role models provided by staff both in lessons and around the school. They value highly the support provided by teachers and appreciate the extra time that teachers are willing to give. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils promote a good working atmosphere in most lessons. Pupils report that the school takes a strong line with any incidents of bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour, so that incidents are dealt with both quickly and effectively. They feel safe in school, although some younger pupils feel unsafe in the corridors, and particularly on the stairs, at busy times.
34. The school's expectations of behaviour are clear and well publicised. Pupils are aware of the code of conduct and most choose to comply. Pupils also understand the system of rewards and sanctions well. They value the credit points and certificates that they receive for good work, effort, behaviour or service to the school. Pupils know what to expect if they misbehave. The rate of exclusions in the school is falling. Last year there were no permanent exclusions and 45 fixed term exclusions, the majority being for two days. No pupil was excluded more than once. In the previous year, 54 fixed term exclusions occurred, a significant number for three to five days, and eight pupils were excluded more than once. The school is committed to keeping pupils in school whenever possible. A small but significant minority of parents has concerns about the standard of behaviour but these were not borne out by inspection evidence.
35. The programme of extracurricular activities makes a positive contribution to the personal development of the good number of pupils who choose to take part. During the inspection, a large number was involved in rehearsals for the Christmas production. Pupils appreciate the time that teachers devote to running clubs and activities. They are less enthusiastic about the programme of PHSE. While realising that the topics are relevant to their lives, they state that the lessons do not always catch their full interest. Pupils from each year group participate in the school forum. This gives pupils a voice in the school and they determine through consultation how their budget is to be spent. Pupils generally respond very positively to the opportunities they have to take responsibility. However, such opportunities are limited and do not develop sufficiently as pupils move up through the school. There are fewer opportunities than are usually seen for pupils to help organise sporting events both within school and against other local schools. A significant number of pupils is actively involved in the charity fund raising carried out by the school. Year 9 pupils have a charity committee and through this are encouraged to take the initiative in organising fund raising activities.
36. Attendance at the school has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. At that time, attendance in Year 11 in particular was judged to be affecting standards.

Attendance is now well above the national average, with levels of unauthorised absence broadly in line with the national average. Figures submitted to the Department for Education and Skills in June 2002 show that attendance in all year groups was above 94 per cent, between September 2001 and May 2002, with Year 7 achieving 97.47 per cent. Analysis of absence is very thorough, so that any problems are identified at an early stage.

Sixth form

37. Students have very positive attitudes to the school and to their work. They are keen to attend their lessons and value highly the support provided by staff. Students are interested in the life of the school and many volunteer to help in classrooms.
38. Behaviour in the 43 lessons observed during the inspection was of a very high standard. In 16 lessons behaviour was judged to be good. It was very good in 14 and exemplary in 12. No unsatisfactory behaviour was seen. Students maintain these very high standards of behaviour out of the classroom. They are expected to act as role models for younger pupils and do so well. They treat the sixth form building with due respect, obeying the rules willingly. The common room is kept clean and tidy.
39. The very good quality of relationships that exist between students and their peers, between students and younger pupils, and with staff is a major strength of the school. Students are confident, mature young people, able to foster very good relationships with others. The very good quality of relationships helps to ensure that the sixth form is a harmonious and co-operative community. Students understand the impact of their actions on others and are respectful towards them. They are willing to take responsibility. For example, many students volunteer to help in lessons for Years 7, 8 and 9. The head boy and head girl, who are elected by their peers, speak at open evenings and undertake a range of other responsibilities. Students also participate in the sixth form committee, which organises a range of social activities.
40. Students are interested and enthusiastic learners. They develop good learning skills. However, too often they are expected to listen and take notes, which limits the opportunities to develop their learning skills. In the lessons seen, students were very focused on their tasks. They are able to take responsibility for their own learning. They are able to work independently for sustained periods of time and they also work very well together in small groups. Students are confident learners who rise well to the high level of challenge seen in some lessons.
41. Levels of attendance are well above the national average. In the first half of the autumn term attendance was 93.93 per cent in Year 12 and 91.84 per cent in Year 13. Students are expected to attend all lessons and attendance is well monitored. The rate of unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

42. Overall, the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory, though there was a significant proportion of good and very good teaching and a number of unsatisfactory lessons. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 teaching was satisfactory, though it was more consistently good or better in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in the sixth form was good.
43. A total of 195 lessons or part lessons were seen during the inspection: 86 in Years 7 to 9, 66 in Years 10 and 11 and 43 in the sixth form. Of the total lessons observed, 16 were judged to be unsatisfactory or worse; 104 lessons were judged to be good or better and of these, 50 lessons were judged to be very good. These figures are very similar to those recorded when the school was last inspected. The variation in the quality of the teaching reflects the inconsistent monitoring of teaching across the school. The best teaching practice is not being identified and used to improve deficiencies.
44. The teaching programme is planned on a weekly cycle with five 60-minute lessons each day. Most teaching is carried out by specialist teachers. Pupils are mostly taught in ability groups, based on pupils' prior attainment in individual subjects.

Years 7 to 11

45. One hundred and fifty two lessons or part lessons were observed in the main school. Fifteen lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory or worse; 37 were judged to be good or better and 39 were judged very good. More unsatisfactory teaching was observed in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was judged to be good in art and design, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, physical education and modern foreign languages. It was satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, citizenship, history, music, drama and religious education. There was good learning support for pupils with special educational needs.
46. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their teaching specialisms are generally good and well used to help pupils learn. Pupils gain knowledge and understanding because teachers' explanations are clear and new ideas are presented well. In history, for example, lively and colourful presentations from teachers captured pupils' interest and sustained their rate of learning. Some very effective teaching was observed where real life examples from society were used to aid pupils' understanding and add relevance to discussions. For example, in religious education, Year 10 pupils were asked to consider the emotions of the families of victims of the recent terrorist attack in Bali when discussing suffering. Teachers ask probing questions which make pupils think more extensively about the topics they are studying. Equipment and resources are well used to promote pupils' interest. This was well exemplified in art and design where teachers frequently used a variety of practical demonstrations, pictorial references to artists and boardwork diagrams to stimulate pupils' interest. When teachers wished pupils to extend their learning through sharing ideas and opinions, they effectively organised and managed pupils working in pairs and groups.

47. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and in most lessons pupils concentrate well and complete tasks. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils and a strong sense of harmony amongst pupils. These effective relations, built upon trust and mutual respect, make a significant contribution to pupils' good habits of working. Teachers help pupils to collaborate with each other by teaching them how to work efficiently and effectively in groups and in pairs and to value each other's contributions. A good example of this was seen in a Year 7 PSHE lesson. Here pupils were shown how to work methodically in groups by the skilful use of prompt cards to help them discuss and analyse the health hazards in smoking. Exceptionally, Year 10 and 11 pupils are not managed well in some science lessons and this is adversely affecting pupils' learning.
48. Some very good teaching was observed where teachers set pupils challenging tasks. For example, in a Year 11 drama lesson, pupils showed high levels of achievement when they were asked to prepare an improvisation using just a single off stage comment. The high standards achieved were a result of skilful teaching which encouraged pupils to use their existing knowledge of character and plot and to evaluate each other's responses critically. Another example was seen in a mathematics lesson where the teacher was using a technique recommended by the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. A lower attaining group was set a very challenging number exercise at the beginning of the lesson. They were asked to respond by holding up their answers on small white boards. Not only did pupils enjoy the activity but also they achieved well in this task and continued to work productively and with pace for the rest of the lesson. In much of the satisfactory teaching observed, teachers tended to use a rather narrow range of teaching methods, setting fairly mundane tasks which tended to limit pupils' achievement.
49. The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils' oral and listening skills are generally good as they are encouraged to practise and refine these skills in a number of subjects in well-structured activities. During the inspection, this was observed in drama, modern foreign languages and PSHE. The school has made the introduction of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy a priority and provided training for all staff on how to teach literacy skills. Some departments, for example, history and PSHE are ensuring pupils use appropriate language and vocabulary for their subjects, and a few, such as information and communication technology, are helping pupils learn to write for different audiences. However, overall, there was limited evidence of the strategy's techniques being used across the curriculum.
50. The teaching of numeracy is also satisfactory. Most pupils demonstrate a sound grasp of number and are provided with opportunities to use this skill in a number of curriculum areas. For example, some very good use of statistical diagrams and calculations was observed in pupils' geography coursework. However, opportunities for pupils to refine other numeracy skills are few and little use has been made of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy's recommended teaching techniques.
51. Good support is provided for small groups of pupils who are withdrawn for additional literacy support. This support is well planned and effective, with teaching sessions having clear, measurable objectives. This work is complemented by good support in classrooms

by 15 teaching assistants. Although these assistants are targeted to support particular pupils, they also provide more general support for other pupils.

52. The quality of IEPs is inconsistent and often unsatisfactory. In many seen, the targets were too broad, for example, “to develop literacy skills”, “improve reading skills”, “develop numeracy skills”. There were some examples of specific targets being set and where this was the case, pupils’ progress was better. Some IEPs did not have review dates included or they were not frequent enough, for example, “review at parents’ evening”. Unsatisfactory IEPs make it very difficult to gauge the progress pupils are making towards targets set and to evaluate the effectiveness of provision being made for them. The impact of teaching on the learning of pupils would be greater if IEPs were more sharply focused with specific, measurable, achievable targets being set on a more consistent basis.
53. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs, supporting individual pupils and groups of pupils very well and ensuring they make progress in the classroom. For example, the support provided to a hearing impaired pupil in a Year 11 life skills lesson was helpful and not directive. The pupil was therefore able to work independently and succeeded in applying knowledge of the Highway Code to a national driving skills test. However, teaching assistants are rarely involved in planning lessons and teaching schemes so their knowledge of pupils is not sufficiently utilised to improve the pace of learning.
54. There were some deficiencies in the quality of teaching. Although lessons were generally effectively structured, many lessons observed did not have clear learning objectives and pupils were not often made aware of the purpose of their work. Teachers frequently told pupils what they were going to *do* rather than what they were going to *learn* and why. For example, a Year 11 science lesson had as its learning objective “to use chemical tests to identify food types” rather than what pupils would learn by the end of the lesson. However, some very effective planning was observed in design and technology and modern foreign languages where teachers shared the intended outcomes of the lessons with pupils. As a result, many lessons in these subjects had a good sense of purpose and proceeded briskly with pupils clear about what they had to do and why and so were fully engaged in their work.
55. Several teaching schemes and teachers’ lesson planning do not take sufficient account of the range of pupils’ different needs. Teaching methods are often not adapted accordingly. As a result, pupils do not always make enough progress. For example, in mathematics, teaching relies too much on following a published scheme for teaching lower attaining pupils even though some aspects of the text are not appropriate for the pupils. Some interesting research is being carried out in the school to identify pupils’ different learning styles but as yet this has had little impact on how teachers plan and teach their lessons.
56. Teachers do not systematically use the assessment of pupils’ learning to plan future work. Results from national tests and other assessments are not sufficiently analysed to help target particular aspects of work which the pupils find difficult or to help with pitching work at the appropriate level for different pupils.

57. The quality of teachers' assessment is unsatisfactory. The marking of pupils' classwork and homework rarely clearly identifies and praises pupils' strengths or diagnoses pupils' learning difficulties or shows them how to improve. During the inspection, some unsatisfactory work in English was seen to be marked as acceptable and in mathematics incorrect work was marked as correct. In a number of subjects, inaccuracies were rarely followed up. Few lessons seen during the inspection contained constructive feedback to pupils about their work. Teachers make little use of pupil summaries at the end of lessons to evaluate what has been learnt. As a result, neither pupils nor teachers have enough information about the progress made. As a result of these deficiencies in assessment, teachers lack knowledge of pupils' specific prior attainment and progress. Subsequently, their expectations of pupils' achievements are generally too low. In a number of lessons observed, particularly though not exclusively, in Years 7 to 9, pupils were not sufficiently challenged to attain as highly as possible, especially the more able pupils.
58. Homework is mostly planned to integrate with classwork. It is set regularly to extend pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported by the staff in the student support centre where provision is made for pupils to do their homework.
59. Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. Their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is sound overall, though where teaching focuses upon the application of knowledge and the use and refining of skills, pupils make much better progress. Pupils generally work with interest and concentrate well, except where teaching lacks challenge or fails to inspire them. This tends to happen where teaching and learning strategies lack variety and when lessons are not well structured to maintain a good pace. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs learn effectively in all years.
60. Pupils can work independently when given the chance but they have too few opportunities in lessons to show initiative. As a result pupils are often over reliant on teachers to provide information and are not stretched intellectually. Pupils complete tasks and generally work productively but in a number of subjects the exercises they undertake do not promote imaginative and creative responses which involve high levels of thinking. Where pupils are encouraged to carry out enquiries for themselves they achieve well, as was evident in science investigations and geography coursework.
61. Pupils' knowledge of their own learning is satisfactory overall. There is little opportunity for most pupils to assess themselves and evaluate each other's work in several areas of the curriculum. Pupils are not helped enough to understand their strengths and weaknesses as teachers do not sufficiently identify these in their marking or provide effective feedback in lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are made aware of their targets for external examinations. Teachers work hard to ensure pupils have a good understanding of examination standards and provide good support in preparing pupils for assessment.

Sixth form

62. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall. A high proportion of good or better teaching was observed in the sixth form. One lesson was judged to be outstanding, 10 lessons were judged to be very good, 17 good, 13 satisfactory and one unsatisfactory.
63. Forty-three lessons or parts of lessons were observed in the sixth form. Inspectors observed the full range of the GCE A and AS classes and at least three lessons were observed in each of the focus subjects of English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, economics, geography, history, psychology and religious education. Students are taught in specialist subject groups by specialist teachers for their main chosen subjects. They are also taught general studies and key skills in mixed groups.
64. There were very few weaknesses observed in sixth form teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan stimulating learning opportunities in most lessons. Teachers' enthusiasm and love for their subject inspire and motivate students to work hard and with interest. Teachers' questions are used effectively to probe and challenge students' understanding. Such characteristics were evident, for example, in a Year 12 biology lesson on teeth and digestion. Here the teacher effectively used some well chosen visual aids and searching questions to stretch the students' thinking and reviewed their progress thoroughly at the end of the lesson to consolidate their learning.
65. Teachers have high expectations of students and set them challenging tasks, which encourage them to apply their skills and knowledge productively. For example, Year 13 students were encouraged to persevere with their investigation into some difficult concepts in Hinduism. As a result they researched effectively, organising and editing their notes with expertise.
66. Many lessons are planned to enable students to work independently and to use their initiative. For example, geography students were observed competently searching for and selecting relevant information from the Internet, formulating their findings into an argument which was then confidently presented to their peers in an imaginative and creative way. In a few subjects, students do not receive enough help with their research techniques and have few opportunities to make presentations.
67. Teachers foster good relationships with students and these contribute to the latter's positive learning attitudes. Students collaborate with each other effectively, listen well and respect the views of others. This was well exemplified in a Year 12 AS psychology lesson where students were studying memory. Students, including one with special educational needs, took part sensibly and enthusiastically in an experiment and then used their findings in a well-organised discussion.
68. Teachers work hard to meet the needs of their students and ensure all are well supported throughout their courses. As a result, students acquire good levels of skill, knowledge and understanding, work hard and with interest and achieve well.

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

69. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils are satisfactory. Pupils have equal access to all aspects of the school's curriculum, but there is insufficient provision for vocational education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form to meet the full range of pupils' needs. The range of extracurricular activities makes a valuable contribution to many pupils' learning. The school has made good progress in addressing the curriculum deficiencies identified in the last inspection. The duration and organisation of lessons are now more appropriately balanced. These changes are having a beneficial impact on pupils' learning as less time is wasted and pupils' progress can be better planned. In religious education in Years 10 and 11 there is insufficient time for the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus to be fulfilled.

Years 7 to 11

70. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met, though the provision for citizenship is not coherently planned or co-ordinated. Provision for information and communication technology is much improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. All pupils have two weekly information and communication technology lessons in designated information and communication technology suites where they have good individual access to computers. Some other subjects are making good use of information and communication technology but several subjects have yet to make any significant progress in this area. Slightly less than the recommended time is provided for geography and history. Both subjects receive a single one-hour lesson a week, which restricts the range of teaching and learning opportunities. This adversely affects the standards pupils can reach by the end of Year 9.
71. Sufficient time is given to English and mathematics to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is a priority in the school's improvement plan and is being used to promote the teaching of literacy and numeracy in English, mathematics and other subjects. However, the strategy's techniques are inconsistently applied across the curriculum and are not monitored systematically. As a result, it is yet to have a significant impact on improving pupils' standards of attainment and the quality of their learning. This is exemplified in the patchy use of the recommended three-part lesson. Last year, the school did not organise a prompt start to the strategy's catch up programme for English, so that those pupils who did not reach the expected level of attainment when they started Year 7 were unable to make much effective use of this programme. The school has now addressed this deficiency and has trained staff to run the programme.
72. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. It provides sufficient time for most subjects. However, the modular "Your Life" programme does not provide enough time for religious education. There is sufficient time for careers education in Year 11 but in Year 10 most provision is limited to form period time which inhibits pupils' learning. The programme for citizenship is not coherently planned nor co-ordinated.

73. Pupils have equal access to the full range of the school's curriculum. However, the range of vocational courses currently on offer is narrow and there are few vocational pathways for pupils to follow from Years 10 and 11 to the sixth form. This is reflected in the number of pupils who leave to pursue vocational courses at the end of Year 11 as the school is unable to meet their needs. The school's bid for specialist college status in business and enterprise seeks to address this as it includes plans to broaden the curriculum by offering more vocational opportunities.
74. A few pupils have carefully selected work placements and follow relevant college courses, alongside their core curriculum entitlement. Several pupils with emotional and social difficulties receive sensitive academic and pastoral support from the school's study support centre during lessons and break times. This recently created centre is making a very valuable contribution to the school's inclusion strategy and is highly regarded by those pupils using it. In Years 10 and 11, pupils can choose to follow the school's life skills course instead of the full quota of GCSEs. This course successfully helps less confident pupils acquire a wide range of skills which prepare them for life beyond school, such as first aid training and a driving awareness course.
75. There is inadequate provision for those pupils who are gifted and talented. The school has not identified all these pupils. Some pupils receive very good support in music and sport through a good range of extracurricular activities.
76. The provision of time for PSHE is adequate. The programme of work covers all the required elements, including sex and relationships education and drugs education. During the inspection some very effective teaching of sex education was observed where pupils' concerns were dealt with sensitively and within a strong moral framework. Some aspects of citizenship, for example, the electoral system and personal finance, have been usefully integrated into the PSHE curriculum. However, there are no detailed teaching schemes for PSHE and citizenship and no monitoring of teaching to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills progressively over time.
77. The range and variety of extracurricular activities for all year groups is good. There are many sporting, social and additional academic activities for boys and girls and a good number of pupils take part. Many of these are well designed to inspire pupils and sustain their interest such as the drama, Spanish and chefs' club, Young Enterprise, inter-school science quizzes and the mathematics department's fantasy football. The extensive provision for physical education and sport, including those requiring a high level of competition at school, county and national level, provides good learning opportunities for all pupils. Charity and community based activities, for example, musical performances for senior citizens, provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to take responsibility for others. There are regular educational visits to local, national and international venues which enrich pupils' learning.
78. The school provides good careers education and guidance overall though the well-established and comprehensive programme is having to be adapted to fit into the reduced

time available for Year 10 pupils. The school works closely with the local Connexions Service, making effective and regular use of both the personal adviser for careers and the personal adviser for individual support. This close working relationship enables pupils' individual needs to be addressed.

79. Provision for work-related learning is satisfactory. All Year 10 pupils benefit from work experience and the follow-up programme which reinforces the skills pupils have acquired. A small number of pupils receive additional work experience through Project 19, a locally organised scheme, which helps to raise aspirations. The school also promotes work-related learning through its Young Enterprise projects, its active links with Rover and presentations by representatives of local businesses. However, these aspects of provision are not coherently planned and hence do not have the impact they might have in helping pupils learn about the world of work.
80. Links with the local community are sound. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to serve the local community and to enrich their learning by embarking on community based projects. Year 11 pupils are encouraged to visit local institutions when considering their post 16 choices. The Waseley school pyramid provides a good forum for local schools to share effective practice. This has resulted in the development of an effective induction programme which successfully supports pupils' social development in Year 7. However, as yet there are too few curriculum links and joint programmes to make staff aware of what pupils can do academically when they arrive at the school. As a result, teachers' expectations of Year 7 pupils are often too low and pupils do not make as much progress as they might. The school recognises that curriculum links need to be strengthened and its specialist college bid contains some imaginative schemes such as a community Young Enterprise Centre.
81. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. There have been a number of improvements in the school's provision since the last inspection and pupils' moral and social development is now good. The school has produced useful policies to support this area of provision and it is well integrated into the work of some form teachers and departments, such as religious education. However, provision is inconsistent across the curriculum. It is not effectively monitored and there are missed opportunities to enrich pupils' personal development.
82. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall. Whilst many teachers do not plan their lessons to take account of this area, some good examples were seen during the inspection. For example, in religious education, Year 11 pupils contemplated deeply about the frequency of early deaths in the nineteenth century and Year 10 pupils were challenged to consider how God could allow suffering. Some assemblies also provided good opportunities for spiritual development, such as occurred when pupils were asked to consider how different faiths celebrated festivals of light. The school makes provision for a daily act of worship and gives good guidance to staff about how to deliver collective worship. However, this is not always followed and some pupils miss out, particularly by not having the opportunity to reflect or meditate. The school has some approaches which

effectively promote pupils' spiritual development. These need to be shared so that provision can have a more consistent impact on pupils' personal development.

83. Opportunities for moral development are more widespread and are found in lessons and in most aspects of the daily life of the school. As a result provision is good. The expectation that pupils will distinguish right from wrong is reinforced consistently and this makes a noticeable contribution to the high standards of behaviour and positive relationships. Some teachers introduce moral issues in lessons. For example, in geography, Year 9 pupils were required to explore the moral implications of the use of different sources of energy; and in PSHE, Year 7 pupils considered the moral issues involved in smoking. Initiatives, such as the visit to the Anne Frank exhibition in Worcester cathedral, also make significant contributions to fostering pupils' values of fairness and respect for truth and justice.
84. Provision for pupils' social development is also good. The school has effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and has created a secure, harmonious community. A number of teachers nurture pupils' social development well in lessons by helping them collaborate effectively in groups and pairs, by encouraging them to listen respectfully to each other and by involving them in games or activities involving discipline, competition and fair play. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for others in a variety of extracurricular activities such as the sponsorship of a child from Malawi by the student support centre. Pupils would benefit from more opportunities to take responsibility around school and for their own learning in lessons.
85. Cultural development is much improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The development of a racial equality policy has helped to raise staff awareness of their role in promoting pupils' cultural development. There are more opportunities to visit places of cultural interest though not all areas of the curriculum use educational visits to promote pupils' awareness of their own and different cultures. A few subjects, such as modern foreign languages, design technology and religious education, actively promote cultural awareness. This was exemplified in a German lesson where pupils were made aware of the impact of the Euro; in a food technology lesson where GCSE pupils undertook studies of food from other cultures; and in the displays in the religious education room celebrating Islamic art. The curriculum has been enriched with the inclusion of drama and this provides valuable opportunities for pupils to explore a variety of cultural traditions. A number of extracurricular activities enhance the school's cultural provision such as visits to France and Germany and the arts week which enables pupils to work with resident artists. There has been considerable progress in establishing a more enriching cultural programme for pupils, but too few subject leaders incorporate opportunities for cultural development into their teaching programmes.

Sixth form

86. The curriculum for students aged 16 to 19 provides a good range of A2 and AS courses and, in general, few students do not complete their chosen courses, apart from in mathematics. This indicates that the school mostly meets the needs of those students who stay on into the sixth form or join it from other schools.

87. All sixth form students, including those with special educational needs, have good access to the school's provision. They receive their statutory entitlement to religious education through their general studies course and have weekly physical education lessons. There is adequate provision for key skills. All Year 12 students follow a teaching programme of key skills and take the qualification in communications. They also have the opportunity to study application of number and information and communication technology.
88. Whilst the school offers vocational courses, no students are currently taking up any of these, apart from the AVCE in information and communication technology. This reflects the lack of vocational provision in Years 10 and 11, which does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to embark on a vocational route from the ages of 14 to 19. The school is not involved in any collaborative work with other schools' sixth forms or further education colleges.
89. The quality of curriculum planning to ensure students make good progress is inconsistent. In some subjects, such as religious education, teachers plan carefully to ensure the sixth form course builds upon students' learning at GCSE. In others, such as English and mathematics, planning does not take sufficient account of students' earlier learning.
90. The sixth form curriculum is enriched by a number of extracurricular activities, many of which provide students with the opportunity to take responsibility and show initiative. For example, a large number of students are following the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme; all Year 12 students are invited to take part in a Young Enterprise project; many students support younger pupils in lessons and a small group were organising a visit to France for their peers. There is little recreational physical education, especially for female students.
91. There is good provision for students to study outside lessons with ready access to information and communication technology facilities and the study room in the recently refurbished sixth form centre. Students make good use of these facilities. Sixth form staff monitor students' work patterns carefully, intervene appropriately and give clear guidance about how to manage their time outside of lessons.
92. The provision for careers education and guidance is good, though it could be more comprehensive if there were closer links with the Year 10 and 11 careers programme. Sixth form staff and the Connexions Service provide a range of support to meet individual needs. This includes very good assistance for students with their applications for higher education. Students have ready access to advice and information about higher education. Students are made aware of some of the demands through the annual sixth form visit to Birmingham University and the mentoring programme provided by some undergraduates. Most students interviewed during the inspection, expressed appreciation of the advice they are given throughout their time in the sixth form and the regular reviews of their progress. This contradicts concerns expressed in some returned student questionnaires.
93. There is good provision for students' personal development. The general studies programme provides students with many opportunities to research and discuss relevant

topical issues. These enhance students' moral, social and cultural development. This was well exemplified during the inspection by a group of Year 12 students who were seen debating the social and moral implications of income tax. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and others. For example, the sixth form committee manages the sixth form common room, organises social events and is consulted over academic matters such as mock examinations. The elected head female and head male students are invited to speak to governors about the sixth form. Inspectors, therefore, did not find that the school paid little attention to the views of students, which was raised by some students in their questionnaires. Inspectors also found that students were treated as responsible young adults by staff, another issue raised on some questionnaires. Students' spiritual development is addressed satisfactorily through the general studies programme, though this aspect of their development needs improvement. There is provision for a daily act of worship but staff do not rigorously follow the school's guidance on collective worship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

94. This is a caring school where the very high quality of relationships helps to create a positive climate for learning. It provides good care for all its pupils. The care teachers and other staff offer to pupils is securely based on their good knowledge of pupils as individuals. Assessment procedures, however, do not contribute sufficiently to helping pupils make progress.
95. The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including arrangements for child protection and first aid, are very good. Arrangements for dealing with child protection issues are clear and comply with legal requirements. All staff are aware of them. There are clear procedures for health and safety to ensure that any concerns are quickly identified and dealt with. Regular health and safety checks are carried out. In most lessons, teachers and other staff pay good attention to issues of safety. Safety procedures for Internet access are fully in place.
96. Form tutors are responsible for the day-to-day welfare of their pupils and are responsible for the interviews with pupils on the twice-yearly review days when progress is reviewed and targets set. Pupils appreciate this process and find the targets useful. Form tutors are also responsible for following the thought for the day programme with their class. While all form tutors are committed to the pastoral care of their pupils, there is considerable variation in the way tutors approach the thought for the day so that not all pupils have the opportunity to reflect and discuss relevant topics. Form tutors, heads of year and the assistant headteacher responsible for pastoral aspects of the school's work have very good relationships with pupils and know them well. This knowledge is used sensitively to advise and support pupils. The very high quality of relationships helps to ensure that pupils trust staff to deal with any concerns they may have. Pupils in all year groups are confident to approach staff if they need help.
97. The school has worked hard and successfully to promote the importance of regular, prompt attendance. The attendance rate has risen significantly since the time of the previous inspection. Good attendance is rewarded and improving attendance is also praised and

acknowledged. The attendance support worker makes telephone calls home on the first day of absence and helps teachers to follow up any unexplained absences. This system has made a significant contribution to the improvement in attendance as well as the reduction in the levels of unauthorised absence. Parents are reminded through the governors' annual report that one in every five days of authorised absence is designated for family holidays. Despite this, the level of requests for holiday absence in term time remains steady. The school works closely with the education welfare service in the rare cases of persistent poor attendance.

98. The school promotes the importance of good behaviour effectively. The behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy and code of conduct provide a clear framework for achieving good behaviour. The school has a system of rewards and almost all pupils appreciate the credit points and certificates they receive. Procedures for dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour are clear. The school has set up a student support centre where pupils receive individual attention and support to improve both their behaviour and their work. The support centre is used in a variety of ways: some pupils spend certain lessons there, some use it as a safe haven when they are feeling under pressure and for others it provides a structured way of avoiding exclusion. The success of the centre is evaluated. For example, analysis of the exclusion rate demonstrates the effectiveness of the support centre in keeping pupils in school. Parents are involved early in any instances of poor behaviour and most are supportive of the school's actions. Procedures for exclusion are clear and consistently followed. The school analyses exclusion data in detail and is reducing the overall number of fixed term exclusions. Permanent exclusion is seen as a last resort and is rarely used.
99. Procedures to reduce the incidence of bullying and to ensure that pupils report incidents are very good. Pupils are taught how to deal with bullying in PSHE lessons. There is a good system in place for victims, or their friends, to report any bullying. Staff are vigilant. Pupils are confident that teachers deal with bullying quickly and effectively when it does occur. Generally, pupils feel safe in school.
100. Pupils are able to contribute to the development of the school through the school forum. This involves representatives from every form in discussions about current issues and developments. The forum has a small budget and decisions about the use of this are made democratically. Each form also has a form captain with a range of responsibilities. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils' personal development because overall the range of responsibilities is limited. This is especially true in Year 11; pupils' responsibilities are not developed to reflect their age and seniority. Pupils' opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning are also limited. This is due in part to the teaching methods used but also to the poor range and number of books in the library, which makes independent research difficult.
101. The school has made significant progress in working towards becoming an inclusive school. It has a range of effective provision for pupils who have a variety of learning difficulties. No pupil is disappplied from the National Curriculum and good care is taken to provide opportunities which enhance individual pupils' learning. The school is very successfully including pupils who use wheelchairs. The school has worked closely with the local

education authority to improve access around the building for pupils having mobility problems. This has included the installation of lifts. Pupils have full time support assistants and are very well included in the academic and social life of the school. Hearing-impaired pupils are also well supported by specialist staff, class teachers and other pupils. Their needs are very well catered for and the teaching they receive is sensitive and sympathetic yet appropriately challenging. As a result, they are successfully included in most curriculum areas and extracurricular activities and achieve well. The provision for hearing impaired and physically disabled pupils is a strength of the school.

102. The school uses information provided by partner schools to identify pupils entering the school in Year 7 who might need additional support. Cognitive ability testing and an assessment of reading and spelling also take place during the autumn term of Year 7. There is also an effective system in place for subject specialists to alert the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) if there is concern about a pupil. Further individual assessment, when needed, is carried out by the SENCO.
103. All teachers are provided with a copy of the special educational needs register and also with very useful pen portraits of pupils who have the protection of a statement of special educational needs or who are in receipt of additional teaching assistant hours.
104. The school has updated its special educational needs policy to take account of the new code of practice, 2001. It meets its statutory responsibilities in relation to special educational needs apart from the governors' annual report to parents. This needs to be more detailed and provide parents with a summary of progress in the implementation of the school's special educational needs policy, including details of the identification, assessment and provision, monitoring and record keeping for all pupils with special educational needs.
105. Assessment practices are the least satisfactory aspect of the school's care for its pupils. Because teachers' marking is not adequately identifying pupils' achievements and where they need further help, assessment is not effectively being used in teachers' planning. Similarly, the IEPs for pupils with special educational needs are not identifying their learning needs specifically enough for other teachers to help to meet them.

Sixth form

106. Subject tutors have a very clear academic oversight of their students, who value the individual support they provide. Sixth form tutors provide regular, individual progress reviews for all students. Individual support is provided when necessary.
107. Pupils in Year 11 are given clear advice about sixth form courses and options. The school provides students with good advice and guidance so that they are able to make well-informed choices about their courses of study. When starting their sixth form courses, tutors are available to offer support and advice. The sixth form tutors teach the key skills course so that they have regular contact with their students, enabling them to get to know all their students very well. This provides a firm basis for individual help and guidance both on

academic and personal matters. Form tutors also use the tutorial time to monitor students' personal development and to deal with administrative matters.

108. Students have good access to careers advice, including information about higher education and advice about how to access degree course information. The careers service offers individual interviews by appointment. A very good range of information is available about courses, universities and colleges but the current way of displaying prospectuses does not aid ease of access. Students value the programme of guidance about options after A2-levels and state that it is generally well matched to their needs.
109. The head of sixth form operates an open door policy and students appreciate this ease of access. They appreciate the dedication of teachers, particularly the head of the sixth form, in dealing with their concerns. Students are supported very effectively throughout their time in the sixth form by a well-informed and committed team.
110. Very good procedures and policies are in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of every member of the school community, including the sixth form. Child protection procedures are fully in place and comply fully with legal requirements. All staff are aware of them. The sixth form benefits from the good attention paid to monitoring health and safety throughout the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

111. Those parents and carers who made their views known to the inspection team are supportive of the school. Both response to the questionnaire and attendance at the meeting for parents were low. The majority stated that their child is expected to work hard, likes school and is making good progress. Most parents feel comfortable to approach the school with any concerns. Standards are thought to be rising. Inspection evidence bears out parents' positive views.
112. A small but significant number of parents expressed concern about the quality of information they receive about how their child is getting on in school. A similar number stated that their child does not receive the right amount of homework. Some parents stated that the school does not work closely with them, while others do not believe that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Inspection evidence supports concerns about the sharing of progress; annual reports do not provide sufficient information. However, inspection evidence does not bear out parents' other concerns. Overall the amount of homework set is appropriate and helps pupils to learn. However, teachers do not always insist that homework is entered in the homework diary and this is not helpful to parents. The school tries hard to involve all parents in working in partnership and achieves a good level of success. The range of activities outside lessons is good overall, although as many of the clubs and activities take place during the lunch hour not all parents may be aware of the full range.
113. The school provides a wide variety of good quality information for parents. The prospectus and annual report of governors between them provide most of the information required.

However, the governors' report does not provide the full range of information about special educational needs. Informative newsletters are sent out on a regular basis. The twice yearly Waseley News celebrates the achievements of pupils well. However, information about the curriculum is limited. Much of it is given in the annual progress report and is therefore retrospective. The school provides all parents with a calendar that includes the days when the school will send out letters. Some parents are concerned, however, that their child does not receive, or does not give them, such letters. Although "round robin" letters are sent out using pupil post, the school posts individual letters. Parents are invited to a forum meeting three times a year, each with a different focus. Some of these, such as sessions on revision techniques, are well attended but attendance is lower for the annual forum where the headteacher asks parents to share concerns or suggestions.

114. Parents are invited to attend the twice-yearly review meetings that all pupils have with their form tutors. At these, progress is reviewed and targets set. A good number of parents attend the reviews but, as they take place during the school day, not all are able to arrange to be present. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings, at between 60 and 80 per cent, is good. The school makes contact with those who do not attend so that all parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress. Parents with children in Years 9 or 11 have the opportunity to attend meetings about option choices or post 16 choices; these are well attended. Parents whose children have special educational needs are very well involved and informed at all stages. The specialist teachers of the hearing impaired pupils maintain close links with the parents of their pupils. Many IEPs are reviewed at the annual parents' meeting. This is too infrequent. The IEPs need to be reviewed at least twice a year. More frequent reviews may be needed for some pupils.
115. Annual reports were criticised in the previous inspection report. While improvements have been made in the way attainment is reported, the reporting of progress remains unsatisfactory. Reports cover all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and PSHE. Information on the curriculum that has been studied is always provided. Most reports provide information about the attainment of pupils but this is rarely developed so that parents have a clear picture of what their child knows and can do. Although they sometimes give an indication of progress in general terms, comments do not include information about the specific progress made in each subject. Strengths and weaknesses are not consistently identified.
116. The form tutor is the first point of contact between parents and the school. All pupils have a homework diary that is used as a means of communication between home and school. Parents are involved at an early stage when concerns arise, for example, over completion of homework, attendance or behaviour. If it is not possible to deal with parents' queries immediately, the school aims to respond on the same day or within twenty-four hours. This ensures that any concerns do not have time to become serious problems. Almost all parents support the school very well over disciplinary matters, attendance and homework. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that parents are kept informed and involved at all stages. The school has a successful parent teacher association, WHASPS, which organises a range of well-supported social and fund raising activities.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management - *Years 7 to 11*

117. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are sound. They have a number of strengths which have played a significant part in building up a trend of improvement since the last inspection of the school. On the other hand, if this improvement trend is to be maintained and if the school is to make the full progress of which it is clearly capable, then its key staff involved with leadership and management will need to take a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. In addition, they will need to ensure that the climate of improvement existing within the senior management of the school is rigorously adopted by staff at all levels.
118. The leadership of the school is satisfactory. There are clear aims that set out its intentions to achieve the highest standards within a school that is a caring community. The school's ethos was identified as a strength when the school was last inspected. It is set out in detail, identifying its commitment to value and care for all the members of its community, to hard work within a positive environment and to partnerships with parents and the wider community. The school is clearly seeking to enable all its pupils to achieve their full potential in an encouraging environment for learning. It is an 'inclusive' school.
119. The headteacher has a clear vision of, and strong commitment to the progress of the school. He promotes its ethos – its aims and values – by effectively communicating it and in leading by example: he spends much time around the school and clearly demonstrates his desire for all pupils to achieve their full potential, as well as visibly caring for their educational and personal welfare. The headteacher is strongly supported in this by the senior management team. His view that senior managers have a shared vision and support the aims of the school is confirmed by evidence from the inspection.
120. Generally, the ethos of the school is supported by staff and pupils. There is a good community spirit and most of its members feel respected and valued, including non-teaching staff such as those working in administration and the dining room, as well as the site manager. Overall, the ethos of the school remains one of its strengths.
121. The senior management team has succeeded in creating a climate of improvement amongst the teaching staff in terms of test and examination results. Teachers work hard to improve pupils' performance in tests and examinations and this is having an impact on the school's trend in results. However, the commitment to ensure that pupils get maximum benefit from their on-going learning and achieve to their fullest potential, is being undermined by a lack of rigour in building upon pupils' prior attainment, identifying their specific progress and in effectively meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities. There is a degree of complacency amongst some staff because pupils are generally performing well in tests and examinations. This needs to be addressed by the leadership of the school.
122. The headteacher and key staff are successfully managing change. This was clearly demonstrated by the handling of the reorganisation to an 11 to 18 school in 2000. The

severe disruption caused by having a new entry of both Year 7 and Year 8 (over 350 pupils), inducting 10 new staff, and by delays in the completion of new buildings, was managed effectively so that pupils' standards were not adversely affected. Nevertheless, the requirements of the reorganisation necessarily preoccupied senior managers over a significant period of time. This has caused some delay in the formulation of some school policies and in the improving and updating of others, for example, the assessment policy. It has also, to an extent, handicapped efforts to create a rigorous climate of improvement amongst all staff.

123. The management of the school is satisfactory. The management structure is clear and represents an improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be at an early stage of development. The senior managers carefully evaluate the school's performance in examinations. They carry out a detailed analysis of available data, including the use of the Autumn Package and information and analysis deriving from the Fischer Family Trust system which incorporates pupils' prior attainment and makes comparisons with schools nationally, similar schools and other schools in the local education authority. This information is used to set challenging examination targets for pupils. The analysis and use of data is having a positive effect on pupils' attainment in examinations.
124. Currently, however, the school is not deriving the maximum benefit because the analysis of data is largely confined to senior managers; data analysis is not effectively being used by heads of department as part of their management role.
125. The school carries out some valuable checking of its performance. Over the last two years it has operated an annual cycle of self-review, incorporating the school improvement plan, performance management and departmental reviews. The review programme includes crucial areas such as attainment, teaching and learning, and departmental leadership. Review days make an important contribution and are valued by staff and pupils. In addition, regular management meetings provide useful feedback about the operation of the school. Attendance and behaviour are effectively monitored. Overall, there has been some significant improvement in the monitoring of the school's performance since the last inspection.
126. The headteacher perceives that the review process is beginning to have an impact on the achievement and ethos of the school. Evidence from the inspection indicates that this is not true of departmental reviews. Departments are to be reviewed in a three year cycle and too few have been through the process for it to have had a significant effect. The fact that only three departments are reviewed each year restricts its impact.
127. The school has implemented a programme of classroom observation. Staff are observed teaching as part of Performance Management and during departmental reviews. The headteacher also monitors teaching. The evidence suggests that the process is benefiting teachers on a personal, one-to-one basis through feedbacks and discussions. However, there is no systematic co-ordination and use of the findings to provide the senior management team with an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching within the school. The job descriptions of middle managers do not contain an overt directive to

monitor teaching. The school's monitoring of teaching has not systematically identified current deficiencies in teaching such as the expectations of pupils, linking learning objectives to assessment, and meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities. Yet these aspects are all amongst the elements included in departmental reviews.

128. Development planning is clearly contributing to the improvement of the school. The school's improvement plan identifies its priorities, details actions to be taken, resources, costings and staff responsible. It is a useful working document. However, it is not a fully effective mechanism for improvement. The plan is not prefaced by an introduction setting out its context; targets are often very broad, for example: 'Specialist Status Bid', 'Key Stage 3 Strategy', and no success criteria are identified. As a result, there is a lack of sharp focus for the priorities; targets and actions are sometimes confused; the processes of monitoring are vague. Departmental development plans suffer from the same deficiencies. Overall, development planning lacks a sharp focus on required improvement, thus rendering effective monitoring difficult.
129. The senior management team comprises members with a valuable variety of experience and expertise. It is making a significant contribution to the steady progress of the school, particularly in terms of its leadership. However, the quality of its management is being reduced by its failure to require heads of department and heads of year to carry out essential management functions such as data analysis, effective development planning and the monitoring of their areas of responsibility, including teaching. This omission is a major reason for the weaknesses in the monitoring of the school's performance. It also contributes significantly to the lack of a rigorous culture of improvement amongst middle managers and individual teachers.
130. Good progress has been made on implementing performance management. It is well integrated with the school improvement plan. It is providing useful information for staff development but this is not yet being effectively used to improve teaching.
131. Governors are very supportive of the school, as they were at the time of the last inspection. They play a part in deciding the strategic direction of the school, meeting with senior managers every two years to discuss long-term planning. They have acted as 'critical friends' in the appointment of staff, in disciplinary committees and in improving the school's management structure. Generally, they have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body, however, is not sufficiently holding the school to account. It has not played an effective part in ensuring that a rigorous culture of improvement spreads from the senior management team to include staff at middle management and individual teacher level, particularly in development planning and the monitoring of performance.
132. Financial planning has significantly improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. The governors' finance sub-committee and senior staff ensure that the budget supports the school's priorities and it is carefully monitored. Up to date records are kept and financial control is good. The school ensures that available finances are used for the benefit of pupils currently in the school.

133. The school is satisfactorily applying the principles of Best Value. It compares its results with similar schools and uses information from the local authority to compare its costs; it effectively tenders for its spending; it consults relevantly about its major decisions: for example, wide consultations took place with governors, staff and parents about the change to an 11 to 18 school. Funds are used for their intended purposes: for example, a Learning and Skills Council grant has been used to finance the student support centre and local education authority funding to support transitional information and communication technology development has been used to finance *Powerpoint* presentations between primary and secondary schools. Ear-marked funding is having a positive effect on the provision of the school.
134. In its financing of priorities, application of Best Value and its use of funds for their designated purposes, the school is using its resources well. Its sixth form is cost-effective. However, the use of departmental finance to support priorities is in need of improvement.
135. Specialist staffing is sufficient overall to meet the demands of the curriculum. Recent key appointments in a number of subjects are resulting in clear improvements in those areas. Conversely, difficulties in appointing staff have adversely affected standards in music.
136. At the time of the last inspection, accommodation was judged to be unsatisfactory, detracting from the quality of education provided by the school. Little has changed in the appearance of some areas of the school where little has been done to brighten up available spaces and utilise them to interest and motivate pupils. During this inspection, a number of displays were in a deteriorating condition and even out of date; such presentations are contributing little to pupils' learning. There was too much litter around the school, as was the case when the school was last inspected. Overall, the condition of the accommodation does not sufficiently contribute to the school's ethos of caring for its pupils.
137. With standards above average at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form, attendance rates high, and a strong, caring ethos, the school continues to provide satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

138. The sixth form is led and managed as an integral part of the whole school. There is a sixth form co-ordinator but the post is part-time, with the holder combining the role with that of head of geography. The co-ordinator is not part of the school's senior management team, although he joins meetings of senior managers when it is judged to be relevant. These restrictions inevitably reduce the contribution of the post holder to the leadership and management of the sixth form. Nevertheless, the sixth form is seen as an important part of the continued development of the school, and its marketing is seen as a key issue in that development.
139. The sixth form benefits from the sound leadership of the whole school. The clarity of the school's aims and the strength of its ethos apply equally to the sixth form. The vision and

clear direction set by the school's leadership is shared by the co-ordinator and the sixth form tutors. This is contributing significantly to a positive, work-orientated ethos in the sixth form. Students are generally well motivated and strongly committed to the school.

140. The sixth form is routinely well managed and administered. The co-ordinator and form tutors are clear about their roles; they relate well together and with students. In addition, the co-ordinator has some involvement with the school's data analysis. Value-added charts are used to plot students' results related to their prior attainment, and data is used to set challenging targets for students.
141. The school has not constructed a clear rationale for the sixth form or defined its relation to the main school. There is no discrete development plan for the sixth form. It is included within whole-school development planning and it is a component part of the school's improvement plan. Each subject is required to include the sixth form in its departmental development planning. The sixth form, therefore, is subject to the strengths and weaknesses in whole school and departmental planning identified earlier.
142. The sixth form is included in the school's self-review programme and benefits from this. But it is also subject to the shortcomings of the process: the lack of co-ordination of the findings from classroom observations and the slowness of the departmental review process. There is no evidence that the sixth form co-ordinator is enabled to participate in or receive information from the self-review programme. Because of his limited managerial role, the co-ordinator has no clear over-view of the overall performance of the sixth form.
143. The money available to the sixth form is used effectively and efficiently, ensuring that the principles of Best Value are fully met. Priorities identified in the school improvement plan are funded. There is careful financial control and care is taken to keep teaching groups of viable size. As a result, the sixth form is currently cost effective. With attainment above average, good teaching, high attendance levels and very good attitudes, the sixth form is giving good value for money.

Resources

144. There are sufficient qualified teachers to deliver the sixth form curriculum. Overall, resources and accommodation are good. However, despite the improvement in information and communication technology in the school, there are still shortages in mathematics, biology, chemistry and economics.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

145. The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, should take the following actions to raise standards by:

1) Improving the extent to which the learning needs of the range of ability within classes are met by:

- ensuring that tasks set commonly for the whole class have the scope to challenge the full range of ability;
- ensuring that teachers' intervention and support is effectively targeted at those pupils who are in need of it;
- ensuring that extension tasks have the quality to extend pupils' learning rather than simply providing extra work to be done.
- [16, 29, 52, 55, 57, 60, 75, 121, 127, 163, 172, 173, 184, 236, 246, 264, 273, 275, 279, 285, 288]

2) Improving the contribution of marking and assessment to pupils' attainment and progress by:

- ensuring that teachers' marking identifies pupils' specific achievements and what they need to do to improve, so that pupils receive effective feedback, and judgements about their progress based firmly on their prior attainment and needs;
- ensuring that assessment of pupils' work is linked to sharply-focused learning objectives to enable the quality of learning to be evaluated;
- ensuring that such specific information from assessment is used to inform teachers' subsequent planning and reporting of progress to parents;
- enabling teachers to develop strategies for organising marking so that it is both effective and manageable;
- regularly monitoring the quality of teachers' marking and including progress reports on the agendas of leadership meetings in order to secure improvement.
- [6, 54, 56, 57, 61, 94, 105, 121, 127, 164, 173, 174, 186, 187, 198, 205, 218, 227, 236, 259, 265, 269, 275, 277, 285, 288, 297, 298]

3) Improving the monitoring of teaching by:

- developing a system of effective classroom observation, including that of PSHE, which is operated by all departments;
- building the process into the school calendar;
- co-ordinating the findings from the process in order to evaluate the quality of teaching, and disseminate good practice, and address identified weaknesses through the staff development programme.
- [127, 129, 130, 131, 221, 377]

4) Increasing the effectiveness of the contribution of middle management to school improvement by:

- ensuring that heads of department and area managers clearly understand and carry out the managerial roles and responsibilities included in their job descriptions;
- improving the quality and consistency of the monitoring of the performance of departments, including analysis of data, implementation of policies and progress of action planning;
- regularly including progress reports from monitoring and evaluation on the agendas of management meetings so that relevant action is taken to secure improvement and derive full benefit from initiatives.
- [124, 127, 129, 131, 134, 142, 165, 176, 190, 191, 201, 237, 256, 257, 270, 287, 305, 311, 359, 377]

5) Ensuring that statutory requirements are met by:

- Providing sufficient time in Years 10 and 11 to implement the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
- Reporting to parents a summary of progress in the implementation of the school's special educational needs policy, in particular the identification, assessment and provision, monitoring and record keeping, for pupils with special educational needs.
- Effectively reporting the progress of pupils to parents.
[104, 112, 113, 115, 282, 288]

Other Suggested Improvements

- Extend the provision of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
[73, 88]
- The quality of development planning both whole-school and departmental, through more sharply focused targets and precise action plans, systematically monitored and evaluated.
[128, 141, 190, 237, 248, 277]

Sixth form

- 1) Improving the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that an overview of the quality of teaching effectively contributes to the development of the sixth form.
[127, 129, 130, 131, 142, 377]
- 2) Widening the provision of vocational education courses.
[73, 88]

Other Suggested Improvements

- Provide a rationale for the sixth form and its relationship to the main school.

[141]

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

PROVISION FOR HEARING IMPAIRED PUPILS

146. The overall provision for pupils having hearing impairments is very good.
147. A teacher of the deaf, employed by Worcestershire County Council, is based at the school on a part-time basis each week. There are also three specialist teaching assistants based at the school. This mix of support from a specialist teacher of the deaf and specialist hearing impaired teaching assistants results in identified pupils receiving 100 per cent support. Specialist staff provide very good advisory and teaching support.
148. There are currently five pupils attached to this provision and this includes two pupils having mild hearing loss, one pupil having a severe hearing loss and two pupils having profound hearing loss.
149. Hearing impaired pupils spend the majority of their time in mainstream curriculum areas with the support provided for them. Some individual withdrawal tutorial support is provided for pupils when necessary. These pupils make satisfactory progress and generally achieve well. They make good progress in meeting targets set in their IEPs. Their attitudes and behaviour are generally very good.
150. Staff at the school are supportive of these pupils, with teaching being sensitive and sympathetic to their needs and yet appropriately challenging. Positive staff attitudes and the specialist support ensure that these pupils have access to a broad-based curriculum. It is commendable that some staff and some pupils have learnt signing to assist these pupils.
151. Annual reviews for these pupils are co-ordinated by the specialist teacher for the hearing impaired. Communication between home and school is shared between mainstream teachers and specialist staff. The school cares very well for these pupils.
152. All teachers have been provided with written guidance on how to help pupils with hearing difficulties. Staff have also received awareness training on the needs of the hearing impaired pupil.
153. Provision for hearing impaired pupils is a strength of the school.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	152
	Sixth form	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		77

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	34	37	61	12	3	0
Percentage	3	22	25	40	8	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	10	17	13	1	0	0
Percentage	2	23	40	30	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 here as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

NB *One sixth form lesson was observed where there was insufficient evidence for a judgement on teaching to be made.*

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	788	110
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	50	1

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	68	1

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	76	61	137

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	54	57
	Girls	45	39	34
	Total	96	93	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (79)	68 (68)	66 (73)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (46)	38 (43)	26 (32)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46	60	50
	Girls	49	49	36
	Total	95	109	86
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (64)	81 (74)	64 (72)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (25)	46 (44)	33 (32)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	71	88	159

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	38	67	70
	Girls	51	83	84
	Total	89	150	154
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56 (49)	94 (90)	97 (96)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.1 (37.8)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A/AS/ Advanced GNVQ/VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	16	26	42
	Average point score per candidate	14.1	19.9	17.7
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*

		For candidates entered for GCE A2/AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ/VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	16	26	42	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average point score per candidate	14.1	19.9	17.7	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*	*	*	*

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	882	45	-
White – Irish	-	-	-
White – any other White background	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	-	-
Mixed – White and Black African	2	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	1	-	-
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	-	-
Asian or Asian British - Indian	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	-	-
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	-	-
Black or Black British – African	-	-	-
Black or Black British – any other Black background	-	-	-
Chinese	1	-	-
Any other ethnic group	-	-	-
No ethnic group recorded	1	-	-

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	51.15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	567.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.2%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	2,248,315
Total expenditure	2,252,019
Expenditure per pupil	2,622
Balance brought forward from previous year	109,385
Balance carried forward to next year	105,681

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	22

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.76

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	898
Number of questionnaires returned	109

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	50	9	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	54	10	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	17	59	13	1	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	56	26	6	0
The teaching is good.	12	65	13	0	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	38	26	10	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	43	9	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	44	9	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	19	44	25	5	8
The school is well led and managed.	25	43	13	3	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	54	15	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	48	18	1	10

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils' attainment in the national tests and examinations for English has improved since the last inspection.
- Girls make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers' classroom management skills are effective, and their relationships with pupils are warm, positive and respectful.
- Teachers have good specialist subject knowledge.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to English, and usually concentrate well in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Lessons planning to provide pupils with a higher level of challenge.
- Marking to help pupils improve their work.
- Departmental monitoring and evaluation procedures.

154. During the inspection, 15 lessons (including two lessons of drama) were observed. Pupils' written work was scrutinised, and discussions held with staff and pupils. In addition, schemes of work and other documents relating to English provision were studied.
155. In the 2002 tests for 14-year-olds, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 5, as well as the proportion achieving higher levels, was broadly in line with the national average. It was below average for similar schools, although when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, standards were above average. There was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls. These standards show a significant improvement since the school's last inspection. The rate of improvement over recent years has been faster than the national trend.
156. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the GCSE English examination was significantly above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the English Literature examination in 2002 was significantly above the national average. Pupils' results in English were higher than their average across their other subjects. Girls have consistently out-performed boys by a wide margin in both English and English Literature, the difference in attainment being greater than that found nationally. Although GCSE results in English have shown some variation in recent years, attainment in both English and English literature has shown a pattern of improvement since the time of the last inspection. In 2002, the number of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C in drama was below the national average.

157. Overall, attainment in lessons seen and work scrutinised during the inspection was lower than that reflected in test and examination results, and was broadly average. This is because some teachers do not routinely provide pupils with enough challenge to produce higher standards, whereas pupils facing examinations receive effective mentoring and support.
158. At the age of 14, standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are sound. Pupils are able to express themselves clearly in speech, using Standard English and grammar when appropriate. Contributions to discussions are often positive and constructive, enabling pupils to deepen their understanding. This was shown in a Year 9 lesson on advertising techniques where pupils' ability to discuss ideas sensibly in well-focused work in pairs enabled them to make good progress in their understanding of the persuasive methods used in some magazine advertisements. The majority of pupils read aloud with confidence and accuracy, and most with some fluency and expression. This shows that they understand what they read and that they are able to communicate that understanding to others. Many pupils can express personal preferences, demonstrate an understanding of plot and character development, select information from a text, and support opinions with some evidence. Most pupils produce independent writing at some length, mainly with accurate spelling and punctuation. The majority use an increasing range of complex sentences, and structure their writing appropriately. However, the work of lower attaining pupils still contains many basic errors, and vocabulary is limited. The presentation of work from lower attaining pupils, and especially from boys, is often untidy.
159. At the age of 16, pupils are able to promote a clear point of view in formal presentations, at best sustaining an appropriate form of delivery at length. However, in response to whole class questioning by teachers, while the vast majority of pupils are able to express a point of view clearly and appropriately, many show a reluctance to explain or justify this in detail. This is sometimes because teachers do not challenge pupils to explore issues in greater depth. In their analysis of texts, many pupils show development of personal insight, and a sound understanding of a range of literary, dramatic and media techniques. This was shown in the scrutiny of pupils' work. In Year 10, teachers had provided effective opportunities for pupils to analyse in detail the features of traditional fairy tales, and how these are used to humorous effect in the film *Shrek*. This work showed pupils' ability to analyse thematic, structural and stylistic features of literary and media texts. However, lower attaining pupils tend not to develop their views at any length. Many pupils are able to write in a variety of forms and styles, and demonstrate a more confident use of an impersonal style. However, the punctuation, spelling and grammar of lower attaining, and some middle attaining, pupils remains weak. This is sometimes because work, especially work done by some boys, lacks sufficient care.
160. The progress made by pupils overall is sound. For girls, progress is good in Years 10 and 11, largely because of their consistently high levels of motivation, good response to teaching, and care with their work. Boys in the main also demonstrate good attitudes, but from Year 9 onwards the interest of some boys begins to decline, and they produce work that is clearly less than their best. Where this occurs, it is not always consistently challenged by teachers. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities, is in line with that made by the majority of pupils.

161. The teaching of English is sound. It is rarely less than satisfactory, and on numerous occasions it is good or very good. This picture is broadly similar to that in the last inspection. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour, have good relationships with pupils and create a positive atmosphere for learning. They demonstrate effective classroom management skills in all but a very few lessons. These strengths have a clear impact on the good attitudes shown by the vast majority of pupils, on their generally high levels of concentration, and on their willingness to apply themselves productively to tasks set. In some lessons teachers' expectations of work are also high, resulting in good standards being achieved by all pupils. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge is consistently good.
162. A combination of these strengths was shown in a Year 10 lesson, related to a viewing of the film *Let Him Have It*. In this lesson, the teacher's effective classroom management skills and very good subject knowledge enabled pupils to use information and communication technology effectively to research information for a leaflet presenting a point of view on the death penalty. The pupils responded with considerable enthusiasm and enjoyment, showing an impressive ability to work independently and co-operatively, and producing research work of a very high quality. In a Year 11 drama lesson, pupils of a wide range of ability were set a very challenging task of preparing an improvisation based on a single comment made off stage, based on the play *Our Day Out*. Guided by the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, all pupils rose very well to this challenge, using their clear understanding of character and plot, high level skills of co-operation, and structured opportunity to evaluate each other's work, to make excellent progress. Such high quality teaching in drama contributes significantly to overall standards in English.
163. Work set in all but a very few lessons is appropriate to the learning needs of all pupils. However, weaknesses in planning, particularly in relation to teaching strategies to be used, sometimes mean that opportunities to challenge pupils even further are missed. For example, during whole-class question and answer sessions, teachers do not always use strategies to ensure the involvement of as many pupils as possible. Although numerous opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their ideas through small group discussion, these opportunities are not always sufficiently well structured for pupils to achieve as well as they could. While the work of teaching assistants is usually well focused, on some occasions this support is not sufficiently well targeted to the pupils who need it. In a few lessons, these weaknesses result in some pupils, especially boys, losing interest and at worst engaging in behaviour which is less than satisfactory.
164. Assessment procedures and practices within the department lack consistency and, in some respects, rigour. In particular, although there are examples of effective marking within the department, including the setting of targets for improvement, teachers' marking is in general unsatisfactory. Too much marking is cursory. Written comments often do not give a clear view on attainment and do not often give specific advice, which could realistically be acted upon, as to how the work could be improved. In some cases written comments provide a misleading view of what has been achieved. For example, work which is evidently of unsatisfactory quality is sometimes responded to as being acceptable. This approach to marking does not support the strategies which teachers use in other contexts to communicate

higher standards and expectations. Reports to parents in general do not provide sufficient information on attainment and progress.

165. The department is staffed by a team of qualified specialist teachers, which helps to ensure a high level of subject expertise. It is accommodated in a suite of pleasant rooms, which impacts positively on the working atmosphere in lessons, and on pupils' attitudes. These are significant factors in the progress pupils make. However, procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department, and for using feedback to inform departmental improvement, are under-developed. This does not help to ensure consistency of effective practice and a clear focus for departmental improvement. Neither does it help to ensure that all pupils are provided with a sufficiently high level of challenge and targeted support.
166. The previous inspection highlighted the need for greater challenge in teaching, and for more use of information and communication technology in English. These issues need continued attention. Progress on the remaining issues raised in the last inspection has in some cases been sound and in others good.
167. With regard to the explicit teaching of literacy in subjects other than English, there was little evidence during the inspection that significant progress has been made overall since the last inspection. However, there are pockets of effective practice. In modern foreign languages and PSHE, for example, pupils are given well-structured opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. In information and communication technology, pupils are required to produce extended writing for a range of audiences. In some subjects, such as history, there is developing use of explicit strategies to develop pupils' vocabulary. For example, important words are clearly displayed in classrooms and referred to during lessons. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has so far had limited impact on the development of literacy across the curriculum, although it is just beginning to influence some work in English. For example, in one lesson the use of teaching approaches recommended through the Strategy were used effectively to teach the conventions of Haiku, resulting in good progress made by the pupils.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics.
- The behaviour and attitude of pupils.
- Relationships within the classroom.
- Management of pupils.
- Accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE A* to C results.
- Challenge for the most able pupils.
- Assessment and marking of work.
- Departmental monitoring and the use of performance data.
- Development planning and schemes of work.
- Opportunities to use and apply mathematics.

168. In 2002, the number of pupils aged 14 achieving and exceeding the nationally expected standard was close to the average for all schools. It was well below the average for similar schools. Overall, in these tests, boys have attained results consistently higher than girls. Attainment has slightly improved since the last inspection at a rate slightly faster than the national trend. Attainment in lessons for the current Year 9 was in line with the standard seen in the most recent examinations and there was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress. Taking their prior attainment into account, the achievement of pupils by the age of 14 is satisfactory.
169. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades for both boys and girls was below the national average for 2002. Boys' results were higher than girls'. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to G grades was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' results are lower than their average across other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Standards seen in lessons in both Years 10 and 11 are at least in line with national expectations.
170. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils could calculate percentages, add fractions and identify patterns. The most capable could understand and use algebra reliably and interpret graphs and data in a table with confidence. However, these pupils were often not given sufficient opportunity to plan their own strategies and so improve their capacity to achieve similar high standards in investigative work. Many of those who find learning difficult could solve simple number problems and work with graphs and charts. One group had a very challenging number exercise at the start of the lesson, holding up their answers on white boards. The pupils responded well.

171. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining pupils can manipulate algebraic expressions confidently and present statistical data well. One group of pupils were challenged to use graphs to solve a series of quadratic equations. These pupils showed excellent skills in analysing and thinking about the problems. Pupils in another group could calculate the circumference and area of a circle and work seen showed that the most able were able to solve quite complex problems involving the areas of sectors and segments of a circle. In one lesson, pupils who find learning a challenge were using decimals and percentages confidently and showed good skills in numeracy. Almost all pupils have a positive attitude to learning and work hard, building upon skills acquired in earlier years.
172. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is, however, variable with a large gap between the best and the least effective teaching. Generally, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Some lessons were stimulating, conducted at a brisk pace and pupils were challenged to think for themselves. In these lessons the teachers used questions appropriately to deepen pupils' understanding of their work and teachers had high expectations of behaviour using firm but good-humoured class management. In most lessons seen the pupils were set the same exercises from textbooks and this was often appropriate. However, there were instances where the work set did not sufficiently challenge the most able and yet was too difficult for some pupils. Teachers are not always providing work that matches the needs of the full ability range within classes.
173. Over reliance on published texts and trying to introduce too many concepts restricted pupils' learning. In some instances this contributed to deteriorating behaviour. Support for lower attaining pupils is satisfactory but the over reliance on published texts is leading to inappropriate work for some pupils. The sharing of learning objectives with pupils was rarely seen and consequently the required learning was not always clear. This sometimes led to confusion amongst pupils and ineffective teacher planning.
174. Support assistants were well deployed in the lessons seen and worked effectively and sensitively with individuals and groups of pupils. However, opportunities were missed to use information and communication technology in mathematics lessons and insufficient resources inhibited the use of practical and investigative work. There was insufficient evidence of pupils having the opportunity to use and apply their mathematics. There were many instances of work in books that was not marked. There were examples of incorrect work marked correct and also of incorrect work not being followed up and corrected. In some instances pupils had written comments in their books stating that they did not understand and teachers had not followed up these comments. In these instances, marking and the use of assessment to develop pupils' understanding of their work is unsatisfactory.
175. Pupils' attitudes are good in all years. In Years 7 to 9 there is an orderly start to lessons. When given the opportunity, pupils responded positively to oral and mental mathematics questions and activities. They commenced work immediately when presented with a task and all become involved in the topic. Relationships were good. Pupils listened well to each other and to teachers. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also settled well as lessons commenced. They were prepared to answer questions from teachers and to ask their own. They showed mutual respect. Pupils were interested in their work and sustained concentration. Teacher-

pupil and pupil-pupil relationships were very good. Overall, pupils' positive attitudes contribute significantly to their progress and achievement.

176. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Initial progress with the key issues from the last inspection was slow and some of the key issues such as A* to C performance remain. Development planning and schemes of work were in need of improvement and resources were not well matched to the needs of the pupils and the curriculum. Currently, the head of department leads by example and has effectively begun to implement the many changes required. Development planning has improved and is matched to the plan for the specialist college application. New schemes of work are being developed and these contain useful guidance to teachers on the content of lessons. Opportunity needs to be provided for the head of department to monitor the work of the department effectively. Accommodation is good, although there is a need to develop information and communication technology facilities and other practical resources.
177. Provision for numeracy is satisfactory. In modern foreign languages, pupils used their target language to convert pounds sterling to Euros. In GCSE food studies, pupils were converting between metric and imperial quantities and in information and communication technology pupils were using spreadsheets to display data in charts and graphs. In PSHE, pupils were calculating the cost of smoking and using measuring instruments to work with wood. Pupils in geography completed independently some outstanding coursework containing a variety of statistical diagrams and calculations including Chi squared.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards at the end of Year 11 are above the national averages.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and foster good relationships with students. All staff, including the technicians, are committed to the delivery of the subject.
- Investigative work planned and carried out by pupils.
- The use of support staff for pupils with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Meeting the needs of the range of ability within classes.
- Ensuring that behaviour is well managed particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department to ensure that standards are consistent and that best practice is shared to support the improvement of teaching.

178. At the end of Year 9 in 2002, standards were broadly in line with the national average for the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or better. They were well below the average for similar schools. Standards, however, are higher than when the school was last inspected. Boys' results were better than girls' when compared to the national gender averages.

179. At the end of Year 11 in 2001 standards were above the national average. Compared with their average across all their subjects, pupils gained over a quarter of a grade higher in science than in the other subjects they took. Standards were average in comparison to similar schools.
180. In 2002 the percentage of pupils achieving A* to C grades, was slightly above the national average. All pupils took double science award at GCSE and 99 per cent obtained a grade G or above. Boys achieved more highly than girls at the end of Year 11 in 2001 or 2002. Standards in examinations at the end of Year 11 are higher than at the time of the last inspection.
181. Standards in lessons and pupils' exercise books in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11 were lower than those indicated by the results in tests and examinations. Pupils were achieving average standards in lessons compared to the higher standards achieved in tests and examinations. The amount of progress made in lessons was generally satisfactory but rarely good or better.
182. The quality of teaching overall was satisfactory as it was at the previous inspection, but there were fewer examples of good teaching. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They gain pupils' interest using a varied range of strategies such as practical work, models, demonstrations and video recordings. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants and make satisfactory progress in lessons.
183. The frequent opportunities pupils have to carry out investigative work as well as routine experiments is a strength of the department. In the majority of modules, pupils plan, carry out and evaluate at least one investigation related to the content of the module. In these lessons pupils work well together and learn from each other's ideas and suggestions. In Years 10 and 11, many pupils use their own computers to write-up and present final pieces of work.
184. Teachers often control and direct the work of pupils. Consequently, all pupils are doing the same activity at the pace of the slowest. Even where extension work is indicated in the planning this is used as additional work and not work of a more challenging nature. The needs of the middle ability and more able students are not being fully met. There are few opportunities for pupils to work independently and take responsibility for their learning. For example, in some lessons teachers do not allow pupils to collect their own apparatus or light their Bunsen burners. Pupils are given insufficient opportunities to carry out research both in lessons and for homework. However, an example of research carried out successfully was in a project on car safety undertaken by Year 10 and 11 pupils who had used a range of sources, including the Internet, to produce a document of interesting ideas and facts. The majority of questions asked by teachers are about knowledge or request a description of what has been seen. They do not challenge the pupils' understanding of concepts or help them to apply their scientific knowledge to new situations.

185. The management of the behaviour of pupils in Years 10 and 11 in a large number of classes is unsatisfactory and this is having a detrimental effect upon the rate of learning and the standards achieved in the lessons. In these lessons teachers do not insist on silence whilst they are talking and shout over the noise made by pupils. Pupils are frequently not on task and this is ignored by teachers. In some lessons, a considerable amount of time is spent by teachers trying to establish a purposeful working environment and insufficient progress is made in these lessons.
186. Ongoing assessment, including marking, is unsatisfactory: it is inconsistent across the department and does not inform planning. Comments in books are frequently positive but do not inform pupils of what they need to do to improve. For example, teachers do not indicate on pupils' investigations which aspect of the work, such as the prediction, needs to improve or how to improve it. Marking sometimes demonstrates low expectations of pupils. Pupils are sometimes praised for mediocre work and the completion of missed work is not regularly checked by teachers.
187. Learning objectives frequently focus on what the teacher is to 'teach' rather than on what the pupils are to learn. Teachers confuse the learning purpose with tasks which are to be carried out. For example, the learning purpose given for a lesson, 'pupils to use chemical tests to identify food types' does not identify exactly what learning is to be achieved by the end of the lesson. Marking was identified as an area needing improvement at the previous inspection and there has been poor progress in this aspect of teaching.
188. The behaviour of pupils in Years 10 and 11 has deteriorated since the previous inspection and is hindering the rate of progress in many lessons. Textbook provision has improved particularly in the sixth form. For each laboratory there are now half sets of textbooks for Year 7 to 9 and Year 10 and 11 pupils to share. These books are not used regularly for homework. Towards the end of a key stage, pupils are provided with a revision workbook for their own personal use, which has a good impact upon improving their standards. Data logging equipment has been purchased but its use in lessons is still insufficient. Library provision is poor.
189. Extracurricular activities such as school quizzes, visits to museums and University lectures, inter-school competitions and an annual science week are all enhancing the promotion of pupils' interest in science.
190. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. The department development plan lacks criteria against which to monitor and evaluate its progress. There is no monitoring or evaluation of the day-to-day work of the department such as teaching, marking, or homework. One result of this is that good practice is not shared. Three members of staff teach each class and there is inadequate co-ordination between the different teachers.
191. In Years 10 and 11, data is analysed to set targets and this analysis leads on to the mentoring of under-achieving pupils. Teachers do not regularly analyse the answers given by pupils in the end of module tests and end of year examinations to identify areas of weakness

in the teaching of the subject and to identify pupils who are not achieving in line with teachers' expectations.

192. The quality of the accommodation is currently unsatisfactory with the furniture and fittings showing excessive signs of wear and tear. Floors are in a poor condition with broken and loose tiles and are a safety hazard. There are, however, plans to refurbish the laboratories as part of the school's rolling programme of improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- The positive relationships between staff and pupils support learning at every level.
- Positive attitudes of learners.
- Homework is focused well to support project research and graphical skills.
- The open-door policy encourages pupils to work beyond what is required of them.
- Practical demonstrations in lessons ensure that pupils understand how their work can progress.
- Teachers set targets for each pupil through written comments which support development.

Areas for improvement

- Contextual references to inform learning in practical activities needs greater consistency.
- Subject-specific language incorporated into display work.
- Some learning objectives need greater clarity in planning and teaching.
- Information and communication technology as a creative tool for studio activities.
- Enrichment and curriculum opportunities through gallery visits.

193. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 were well above average in statutory teacher assessments in 2002. At the end of Year 11 A* to C grades in the GCSE examination were above the national average, showing considerable improvement from 2001, and from a bigger entry. All pupils entered achieved grades A* to G. In Year 12, five out of six students entered for AS-level achieved grades A to B. In Year 13, all A2-level students were awarded grades C to E.
194. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 engage in tasks to increase their two- and three-dimensional skills with an appropriate range of materials and techniques. They increase their understanding of art through engagement with the visual and tactile elements following an ordered plan. At times, this is supported with references to the work of art and crafts, enabling pupils to increase their knowledge of and about art. A Year 9 class was introduced to the work of Kandinsky and Caro during a lesson planned to develop an understanding of composition and form, and a knowledge of abstract and abstraction in art. The pupils took care to apply shapes from a previous still-life drawing, trying out a variety of compositional possibilities for future reference and application. They showed interest and enthusiasm for the task, and increased their knowledge and understanding of art and artists considerably.

195. Pupils studying for the GCSE are encouraged to develop individual responses to project work and to make individual choices regarding materials and scale. Pupils who make considered references to the works of artists early in their planning, produce work of a much higher quality than those who fail to make such connections. Those pupils tend to make only limited progress, failing to address with sufficient rigour the examination criteria for the contextual aspect of each unit of study. A Year 10 group was shown a variety of works from artists who experiment with surface marks and effects, and watched a demonstration by the teacher of how they can do similar explorations themselves to be incorporated into a later work. The pupils immediately grasped the concept of material experimentation, and used the opportunity to produce some interesting and unique responses. In another class, a group of Year 11 pupils was laboriously drawing food packaging with limited enthusiasm and no real conviction of how they would be developing their work. They had not considered the works of Pop artists to see how similar subject matter had been tackled and to help them to move forward in their own work.
196. Students studying for AS and A2-level have the opportunity to select from a variety of topics using a range of materials and artist references. They select from a whole range of different two- and three-dimensional techniques, and demonstrate a high level of skill and commitment. One student talked with great enthusiasm about how she developed her painting, incorporating a wide variety of experimental techniques to establish surface textures within a framework of a bold composition. Another student explained how he was influenced by the works of Georgia O’Keeffe, and how he was having some difficulty incorporating her technique with his desire to create a composition of natural forms.
197. Pupils generally show an enthusiasm for their work in art and design. They can talk about their homework and classwork, and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Sketchbooks are used by most pupils for research, preparation and skill development. There is a good working atmosphere in the studios, which contributes to the progress of boys and girls equally. Pupils with special educational needs and those with particular talents make satisfactory progress.
198. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Lessons are planned to challenge pupils at all levels of ability, but some are overly prescriptive and reduce personal involvement and choice. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about what they teach which underpins their authority during lessons. They present their lessons with a sensitivity to the needs of learners, using a variety of practical demonstrations, boardwork diagrams and technical vocabulary, pictorial references to artists, and questioning techniques to establish an understanding of what is expected in the tasks. Some learning objectives do not clearly identify intended learning. There is a good relationship established between staff and pupils which builds confidence and trust. Teachers give a high level of individual support and encourage a suitable pace to lessons. In one instance, the quality of teaching dipped below satisfactory, caused by the poor behaviour of pupils who had lost interest in the repetitive and prescriptive nature of the work. Teachers offer pupils the opportunity to work at lunchtimes, which is taken by many of them. Homework is well focused and supports research and graphical skills.

199. Assessments at Year 9 are inaccurate in relation to Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) criteria, but written comments are largely supportive for individual developments of skill and understanding, and marking is used to set appropriate targets for pupils.
200. The department has continued to maintain progress since the last inspection with an improvement in the quality of teaching. Resources for teaching about art and artists have improved considerably, and the quality and range of visual reference material is good. The studio accommodation has improved, although the space is still not fully utilised due to limited storage facilities. There is still no dedicated space for teaching AS and A2-level students. The use of information and communication technology in the department is still severely limited by availability of resources, and the opportunity to visit art galleries remains a weakness in the overall delivery of the subject in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11
201. Management of the department is satisfactory. The studios are equipped for a variety of creative activities and are well organised for teaching and learning. Planning is most effective when the work of artists and craftworkers are made central to the learning process. The materials and topics are in the main suitably matched to the ages, interests and abilities of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with special talents. There is no structure for the critical monitoring of the curriculum as a whole to effect changes in content and direction over time. There is a shared commitment to improving the skills and understanding of pupils. The time available for teaching students in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form is less than found in the majority of schools. Pupils' work is celebrated in the studios and at other places around the school, increasing the aesthetic appeal of the buildings generally. However, there is a lack of subject specific language in displays of work.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The school ethos, which promotes strong and supportive relationships, enables pupils to collaborative with each other effectively.
- The school provides a variety of opportunities to help pupils develop good skills of participation and responsible action.
- The school's curriculum statement on citizenship successfully describes its approach towards citizenship.
- Some adaptations to the PSHE programme enable pupils to gain a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society.

Areas for improvement

- A co-ordinated and coherent curriculum programme for citizenship.
- Teaching schemes to help implement the curriculum programme.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' progress in citizenship.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.

202. There is little explicit evidence of pupils' attainment in citizenship because, as yet, there is not much planned provision. Where the curriculum has been adapted to accommodate the new citizenship programmes of study, as in the teaching of PSHE, or where there are activities such as the school forum, pupils reach average standards by the end of Years 9 and 11, showing understanding of political systems and the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens. In such instances, pupils are enthusiastic, take an interest in their work and achieve satisfactorily. They are generally able to contribute to group and class discussions effectively and take part in constructive debate. However, because there is no coherent and co-ordinated programme of teaching and learning, achievement is inconsistent across all groups of pupils.
203. Many pupils take advantage of the variety of extracurricular activities which help them to develop their enquiry and communication skills such as Young Enterprise, a Year 9 mock court competition and language exchanges. Groups of pupils also develop their skills in participation and responsible action through taking part in activities such as charity events, The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, musical performances for senior citizens groups and environmental projects. These are valuable opportunities for pupils to achieve in citizenship, but because there is no monitoring of pupils' involvement and subsequent action to ensure there is full participation across the pupil population, not all pupils can make progress.
204. Only a small amount of citizenship teaching could be observed during the inspection, as it is not yet fully integrated into the curriculum. When it was observed, teaching was satisfactory, containing activities which enabled pupils to explore their views on political and topical issues and to develop their understanding by taking part in real life scenarios such as conducting an election by using a secret ballot. Whilst there was good evidence of teaching focusing on pupils' active involvement, there were few opportunities for pupils to reflect on the process of participation.
205. The school is at a very early stage of implementing citizenship. It has made slow progress in preparing for the introduction of this new National Curriculum subject. There is a useful curriculum statement, which explains the school's intended approach to providing for citizenship. This is based upon the school's existing curriculum provision and encompasses the school's positive ethos, the range of extracurricular activities and its community links. It also emphasises the contribution of different subjects and form period time. However, as yet, this statement has not been fully discussed by the school's staff and there is no curriculum plan to ensure that all pupils follow the statutory programmes of study across the school. As a result, apart from its integration into PSHE, current provision is incidental and there are no effective procedures in place to assess pupils' progress in citizenship. There is no monitoring of teaching and learning so that effective practice can be identified and shared between staff. The department's development plan for citizenship, which includes an audit of current provision, aims to address some of these areas and provides a sound basis for the future direction of the subject. The plan would be improved if it included devising coherent teaching schemes. These schemes should build upon the best of the school's existing provision and help pupils accumulate their knowledge, skills and understanding in a progressive way as they move through the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good relationships with pupils and pupils' enthusiasm for the subject.
- Quality of teaching: subject knowledge, teaching strategies and the planning and organisation of lessons.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills in handling materials, equipment and components.
- Pupils' high level practical skills.

Areas for improvement

- Development of computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and access to computers for all areas of the department.
- The relevance of some of the projects to pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of assessment to develop pupils' learning in Years 7 to 9.
- The integration of product analysis activities into units of work.

206. During the inspection, 17 lessons were visited representing all specialist areas within the department. Pupils' work was scrutinised both as a sample group and during lessons. A number of discussions took place with pupils and staff and extracurricular activities were visited.
207. Standards overall are above average.
208. At the end of Year 9 in 2002, when pupils were statutorily assessed by their teachers, attainment was close to the national average. Girls' results were higher than boys'; the difference in the achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar to the national picture. There is clear progress against National Curriculum criteria within all material areas across Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs achieve equally as well as other pupils. Pupils who are gifted and talented achieve very well but could be still further extended by increasing the opportunities for more challenging design activities as they progress through Years 7 to 9. Standards at the end of Year 9 are good and have improved slightly since the last inspection.
209. The number of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C in 2001 was above average. However, examination results in design and technology at the end of Year 11 in 2002 were significantly below the national average. Pupils' results were significantly below their average across other subjects. However, this has not been the pattern since the last inspection as attainment in previous years has been consistently above national averages. In 2002, girls' results were significantly better than boys'. Examination performance continues to be stronger in textiles, graphic products and food.
210. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have remained about the same as they were at the time of the last inspection.

211. In the sixth form the comparatively small number of students taking product design attain generally good examination grades showing high levels of achievement bearing in mind the prior attainment of the students taking the subject.
212. Generally, pupils with special educational needs achieve better than might be expected due to both the high quality of extra support they receive in the classroom as well as teachers' understanding and planning for their needs. Less able pupils sometimes become disaffected and have difficulty in meeting coursework requirements. The majority of pupils achieve as would be expected.
213. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 generally have a very good knowledge of materials and components, for instance, Year 8 pupils making a moisture sensor were able to identify electronic components, identify resistance values and even explain the function of a transistor. Year 8 pupils in textiles showed a lot of skill in modelling their design work through pattern prototyping. This project also provided pupils with a valuable experience of 'smart materials'. Year 9 pupils showed a lot of understanding of 'target groups' for their food technology designs. A high level of practical skill and co-operative working in practical areas is a major strength of pupils. This could be seen, for instance, in Year 11 food where pupils worked on individual food preparation tasks with very high levels of independence. In Year 10 GCSE industrial processes, pupils engaged in a variety of engineering tasks (i.e. lathe-work, brazing, screw-thread cutting etc.) and produced high-quality products. Both in Year 11 and in Year 13, pupils and students in graphic products and product design showed technical graphical skills of a high order; particularly strong was their grasp of applied geometry concepts and their drafting skills.
214. Pupils' designing skills in Years 7 to 9 vary a little between specialist areas. Standards of presentation are high in textiles and graphic products; however, pupils' pictorial drawing to illustrate their designs could be improved.
215. Due to a lack of resources, pupils' use of CAD/CAM and information and communication technology to enhance design and technology is inadequate. This was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' levels of creativity could be further developed with the widening of opportunities for 'real' design challenges in Year 9. Pupils' knowledge of design, manufacturing and the impact on society could be further improved by a more consistent use of product analysis activities.
216. Since the last inspection, the organisation of Years 7 to 9 now gives pupils a more balanced experience of the specialist areas. The provision for information and communication technology has remained poor.
217. Teaching within design and technology is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. All teachers in the department are now subject specialists and they continue to have very good relationships with pupils. Support staff are very well used and provide excellent support to ensure the quality of practical sessions.

218. Teachers employ a variety of strategies to engage pupils of all abilities and deliver very clear explanations and spot demonstrations using different techniques to appeal to different learning styles. Their subject knowledge is almost always very good and pupils recognise, and show respect for, their teachers' experience and wisdom. Teachers' planning is of a high standard. They are well aware of the requirements of the programmes of study and examination objectives. However, the recording of this planning is not as well developed. Management of pupils is very strong with clear objectives, usually task led, being shared with most groups and as a result a good sense of purpose and pace pervades most lessons. The quality of feed-back to pupils as to how well they are attaining is not very strong and marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, with lower ability pupils not receiving the same level of advice as the most able.
219. The projects that teachers run in resistant materials are sometimes fairly traditional in nature and could be redesigned to be more relevant to the interests, needs and skill requirements of pupils.
220. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is almost always of a high order. Encouraged by some charismatic teaching, good relationships and skilful pupil management, pupils rarely stray from their tasks and show their enthusiasm for the subject by attending extracurricular workshop or 'chef-club' activities.
221. The newly appointed head of department is making an impact in bringing some unity to the work of the specialist areas within the department. However, the monitoring of teaching is not yet well established. The management of the subject overall is satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management.
- All pupils are supported to progress in an inclusive department.
- High quality project work and coursework.
- Use and quality of information and communication technology.

Areas for development

- More challenge and opportunity to work independently in Years 7 to 9.
- Marking to identify pupils' strengths and what they need to do to improve.

222. Standards at the end of Year 9 in teachers' statutory tests are well above national average; the work in pupils' files is in line with the national average. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, the percentage of A* to C grades in 2002 was just below average. This has varied in recent years from slightly above the national average to slightly below it. Results were lower than pupils' average across their other subjects. A* and A grades have been present in good numbers in all recent years. In 2002, boys' results were significantly better than girls'. The coursework of GCSE pupils is of a very good standard. There are no significant differences between the standards attained by boys and girls.

223. Pupils make sound progress in Years 7 to 9. In Year 7 they build well on the graphical and data handling skills learned at primary school, but there is insufficient opportunity for them to gather material for themselves and to develop it at length. These opportunities increase in Years 8 and 9, where pupils are encouraged to work independently on projects on energy, Italy, Brazil and farming. These are of good and very good standard. Pupils' work here shows imagination and includes model making, striking posters and effective use of information and communication technology.
224. Sound progress is again made in Years 10 and 11. The department has introduced simulation exercises and these are beginning to give pupils the chance to work co-operatively and to engage in discussion. GCSE coursework is well planned and supported by teachers; the best pieces are of excellent standard, showing good independent research. Sixth form students state that this coursework has been of significant help in preparing them for A2-level studies.
225. The department is inclusive in nature. Boys and girls attain equally well. Pupils of lower attainment are well supported by learning assistants, and pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into group work.
226. The quality of teaching and learning varies from unsatisfactory to very good; overall it is good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers prepare lessons well and start them crisply. Planning ensures that lessons are split into manageable sections, and this aids pupils' concentration. Teachers use video clips effectively and there is good use of information and communication technology as a teaching and learning aid. Sixth form students volunteer to help in lessons and provide a good role model for younger pupils.
227. Lessons in Years 7 to 9 do not always provide sufficient challenge for pupils – teachers present much information, but there is not enough opportunity for pupils to process it, discuss it or make their own notes. Attention to the development of objectives which specifically identify intended learning would improve progress in these lessons – as would the use of more open questions that promote discussion and reflection by pupils.
228. Leadership and management of the department are very good. A new head of department, who also has significant other management responsibilities in school, was appointed in July 2002. He has done much of good quality in a short time, developing a vision statement and aims, and beginning to write schemes of work that incorporate citizenship and social and moral education. These are of very good standard. He has begun to use assessment data effectively, and is further developing the use of fieldwork and information and communication technology.
229. Standards have risen at GCSE since the last inspection. The department has successfully addressed the attainment of boys and the issues raised in the last inspection report on the development of fieldwork and information and communication technology. The head of department has a clear vision for the future, and is well supported by the second member of

staff. However, both geography teachers carry heavy loads in terms of numbers of classes and pupils taught in a week.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examinations in 2002.
- The percentage of boys attaining A* to C grades in the GCSE examination in 2002.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupil behaviour.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have positive attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teachers' marking and assessment to inform planning in order to meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- Raising the standards of pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 by evaluating the impact of existing timetable arrangements on standards and by revising schemes of work to ensure learning meets the needs of middle and higher attaining pupils.
- Developing systems to enable the subject leader to monitor and evaluate the work of the department and pupil progress and improve the quality of the departmental development plan.

230. Standards indicated by teachers' statutory assessments for pupils aged 14 in 2002 were in line with the national average but represent a decline since the last report when pupil performance was assessed as well above the national average. In 2002, boys' performance was higher than girls and was also higher than boys' average attainment nationally. Over the past three years, boys' results have been consistently above the average for boys nationally. However, the results for girls have fallen from being above the results for girls nationally to below the average in 2002.
231. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2001, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C was significantly below the national average. In 2002, the percentage of pupils attaining A* to C grades had risen to above the national average. This is an improvement on results at the time of the last inspection. Where results fell below the national average they were in line with the school's targets set on the basis of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9. The percentage of boys attaining A* to C grades was slightly higher than that of girls. Boys' results were higher than the average figure attained by boys nationally. The percentage of pupils attaining a pass grade A* to G has fallen from being slightly above the national average in 2000 to slightly below in 2002.
232. Standards of work seen for pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 was below that found nationally. Higher attaining pupils were able to describe the reasons why the Industrial Revolution occurred but they lacked confidence and conviction when asked to categorise or prioritise these reasons and to make judgements as to why they believe the revolution happened. They were able to extract information from a range of sources, for example, sources related

to children working in the textile mills, but gave very brief answers that sought to explain the reliability of historical sources when investigating the past. Lower attaining pupils, including those with statements of special educational needs, were able to extract information from historical sources and a textbook to develop an understanding of the state of roads in Britain in 1750. However, a scrutiny of their books revealed a significant amount of incomplete work, work that was poorly presented with many spelling errors. Opportunities for all pupils to develop the skills of organising and structuring historical information in extended pieces of writing are limited – an issue identified in the previous inspection report.

233. Standards of work seen for pupils in Years 10 and 11 were in line with the average for all schools. Higher attaining pupils demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the events associated with the Cold War and the Vietnam War. They used this understanding to write at length about issues such as who was to blame for the Cold War and to assess the success of the Cuban Missile Crisis. They were also making effective use of historical sources to help explain different interpretations regarding the changing nature of the New Deal in America after 1933. Lower attaining pupils, including those with statements of special educational needs, were using historical sources to develop their understanding of the Liberal Welfare reforms and the Suffragette movement. At times, all pupils' organisation and structuring of written work are greatly assisted by the effective use of commercial materials. Opportunities for pupils to write at length were evident in a scrutiny of their work and this represents good progress since the last inspection when it was judged to be an area in need of improvement.
234. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils make satisfactory progress both during lessons and over time. This is due in part to the positive attitudes they display towards their learning. For example, in one Year 11 lesson, pupils' behaviour was very good and they sustained concentration and worked well to develop an understanding of why Russia wanted to build and maintain a strong control over Eastern Europe in the years after the Second World War. For most of the lesson they worked independently, needing little assistance from the non-specialist supply teacher. In Years 7 to 9, most pupils make satisfactory progress when developing their knowledge and understanding of the history they study. The progress of pupils with statements of special educational needs is satisfactory overall but at times is good. This is often the case when they are effectively supported by learning support assistants. In one lesson, a pupil with a statement of special educational needs purposefully contributed to a whole class discussion on attacking and defending castles, showing an increasing understanding as a result of the targeted and well-managed interventions of a learning support assistant.
235. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Where teaching was most effective teachers built upon good relationships with their pupils and a good subject knowledge, making use of lively exposition to capture the interest of pupils and sustain their rate of learning. These strengths were sometimes enhanced by teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour, a good use of learning support assistants and occasionally in Years 10 and 11, effective use of commercial materials to help guide and structure learning. Many of these features were evident in a Year 11 class analysing the reasons why the Americans lost the Vietnam War and in a Year 7 class investigating the role of castles in the mediaeval period.

236. Where teaching was less effective, teachers' lesson planning did not take account of the needs of individual pupils. As a result teachers did not plan or target their interventions to support or extend the learning of all pupils. The subject scheme of work does not set out clear expectations nor give sufficient emphasis to developing historical skills to support individual teachers' lesson planning. Consequently, planning does not address the learning needs of all pupils and often results in teachers failing to extend learning activities consistent with the demands of the National Curriculum at average and above average levels of attainment. The quality of teachers' assessment and marking is unsatisfactory. In many lessons observed and in a scrutiny of pupils' work, teacher assessment did not identify pupils' strengths and areas for improvement to help inform them about progress, or to assist them in the planning of future learning. Whilst teacher-pupil relationships are far more secure than at the time of the last inspection there are still occasions when the shortcomings identified above lead to pupils losing concentration and engaging in non-productive talk, which limits their progress and learning. This was evident in a Year 8 class studying Henry VIII and the Dissolution of the Monasteries.
237. The subject leader is well aware of the areas for development identified above and they feature in the subject self review and audit document. However, there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupil progress. As a result the departmental development plan lacks important information needed to ensure improvement. It also lacks success criteria that will assist the department in measuring the impact of any changes they make. In addition, the school has not fully evaluated the impact of the existing timetable arrangements for history on the standard of pupils' work. For example, the time allocated to history is below the national guidelines.
238. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection report. In particular, significant progress has been made in improving the learning environment, which no longer restricts the learning of pupils. Learning resources have been improved and the subject now offers opportunities for learning to extend beyond the classroom, with organised visits to places such as Warwick Castle.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The very good leadership and management of the department.
- The substantial improvement in resource provision since the last inspection.
- Teaching was well managed.
- Well motivated boys and girls of all abilities often making good progress.
- Good provision and use of the lunchtime computer club.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work, including strategies for supporting all abilities, and developing literacy, numeracy, spiritual, moral, social, cultural education and citizenship.
- The use of information and communication technology in subjects across the curriculum.
- The use of attainment data so that pupils' progress is effectively monitored and targeted for improvement.
- Planning for the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of resources.

239. Over the past three years the attainment of pupils in teachers' statutory assessments at the end of Year 9 has been well above national averages. Those pupils that were entered for General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002, performed well below the national average; this was partly due to the limited time and access to teaching and learning.
240. The Advanced Vocational Certificate in information and communication technology was introduced in 2001 for sixth form pupils and Year 12 and Year 13 students are making good progress.
241. Standards of attainment of pupils currently in the school as seen in specific lessons in information and communication technology were overall higher than those typically expected of 14-year-olds. Observations show that by age 14, many pupils successfully complete a range of challenging work. They confidently use word processing, desktop publishing, *Powerpoint*, spreadsheets, databases and the Internet. Boys and girls of all abilities make good progress over time. They particularly benefit from individual access to the computers. Pupils with disabilities or learning difficulties are well supported and integrated within lessons.
242. The work seen for the GNVQ Part One examination course in information and communication technology by pupils aged 16 was of average standard. The limited time allocated to study this course has hampered progress. Current Year 10 pupils are taking the GCSE short course. They do have sufficient study time and most are making at least sound progress. Two pupils with learning difficulties were observed to cope well with the tasks set.
243. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy for information and communication technology audit has been completed and there is now a plan in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning of information and communication technology across the curriculum. Currently, information and communication technology is not well integrated into many teaching programmes. A number of teachers do not feel sufficiently confident to use it in their teaching. The school is providing extensive training to address this. Some departments, such as geography, are making good use of the new computer suites and the recently acquired interactive white boards. This approach is motivating pupils and having a very positive impact on their learning. During the inspection, there was evidence of some good and very good curriculum use of information and communication technology, particularly in geography, food technology, English and media studies. The use of information and communication technology in other subjects requires further improvement. Bookable access

to one of the information and communication technology suites has recently been made available and this is being well used by some subject teachers and sixth form students.

244. Nearly all pupils have very positive attitudes to using information and communication technology and overall, their attitudes in information and communication technology lessons are good. They are highly motivated and confident users of information and communication technology. Most show good levels of independence. They listen well and behave very well. Many pupils attend the information and communication technology lunchtime club that is available in three suites over four lunchtimes every week. The time is often used to complete lesson or coursework and this is helping to support overall progress in learning. The information and communication technology club is making a good contribution to pupils' social development.
245. The quality of teaching seen was good overall. It was at least sound in all lessons observed and in most it was good or very good. Good subject knowledge, commitment and high expectations contributed directly to the attainment and progress of pupils of all abilities. On-line support resources, interactive whiteboards and handouts provide clear guidance for pupils. Lessons progressed at a good pace with appropriate levels of challenge and support. Teachers explained tasks clearly with good use of questions to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Those pupils with a disability or learning difficulty were well supported, and, where needed, received additional support from learning assistants. Teachers' marking is thorough.
246. The leadership and management of the department are now very good. Staff in the department feel well supported by the head of department and there is a strong team ethos. Much has been done in the past academic year and this term to improve the organisation and management of information and communication technology resources. There has been recent improvement to planning and assessment, although schemes of work need further development to more clearly identify strategies for supporting all abilities, including gifted and talented and less able pupils. Schemes also need to more clearly indicate how literacy and numeracy are being targeted as well as how spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and citizenship are to be developed. The information and communication technology attainment data for each pupil is now collated and there are plans in place to introduce more comprehensive analysis of pupil progress over time.
247. The school now complies with statutory curriculum requirements in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. There has been substantial improvement to resources and accommodation since the last inspection. There is now a 1:6.5 ratio of computers to pupils. There are four specialist suites, three with 31 and one with 14 high-grade computers. There is also networked provision in the library and in the learning support base. Very recently a non-timetabled suite of 31 computers has been put in place for cross-curricular access and this is already being well used by some departments and sixth form students. These suites are all networked and well managed through a specialist technician. There remain gaps in resources and breadth of provision, particularly for modelling and control, CAD/CAM and data logging. Current Year 9 pupils have had insufficient prior experience due to lack of

resources but are now making good progress. Current Year 11 pupils have only nine hours access over the year as part of the 'Your Life' programme.

248. There remains the need for the school and governing body to ensure a robust and costed forward plan for the maintenance and further upgrade of existing information and communication technology resources.
249. Overall, the department and school have responded well to the issues raised in the previous inspection. Improved provision and access are contributing positively to raising standards of attainment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **very good** and a strength of this school.

Strengths

- High expectations of pupils in terms of behaviour and work.
- Quality of teaching methodology and sequencing of skills.
- Positive learning environment in terms of ethos, physical environment and learning resources.
- Sharing of learning objectives with pupils.
- Regular setting of homework to consolidate and move pupils' learning forward.
- Positive teacher-pupil relationships and good pupil behaviour.
- Promotion of cultural and social values.
- Vision of the head of the department to move the department forward.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups to practise language intensively and work independently.
- Use of marking to identify pupil' strengths and what they need to progress further.
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies and schemes of work.
- Tracking and analysis of the progress of groups and individual pupils.

250. Standards overall in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above the national average. Boys' results were significantly above boys' average results nationally. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002, the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in French was just above the national average. It was well below in German. The number of pupils achieving grades A* to G was close to the national average in French but below in German. Although results in French have fallen over the last three years, the number of pupils entered has more than doubled. The small number of pupils taking German have had a late start to the language and, therefore, have not had the expected amount of curriculum time studying the subject.
251. Attainment in lessons in Years 7 to 9 was at least in line with national expectations in both French and German and above them in nearly half the lessons seen. This shows significant improvement since the last inspection. However, the late start to German has had an impact in Years 10 and 11 where standards of attainment were generally lower than typically

expected. Standards in French in Years 10 and 11 were broadly in line with national expectations. These standards were evident in books where top ability Year 9 pupils were using the perfect and future tenses, and writing complex sentences and paragraphs accurately. The attainment of boys has improved significantly in Years 7 to 9 and is well above the typically expected standards. The choice of the modular GCSE more appropriately matches boys' needs and the good motivation of a significant number of boys in language lessons was evident. Both the schemes of work and the policy on raising boys' attainment identify strategies and approaches to support teachers in this area.

252. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in languages, particularly in oral and aural work.
253. The quality of teaching was good. Modern foreign languages are taught by specialist language teachers whose sound subject knowledge and understanding enable them to teach a wide variety of activities progressing through the different skill areas, appropriately sequenced, using a range of resources, visual and aural stimuli. As a result, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory or better in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 and across both French and German. Teaching was very good or excellent in one third of lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 and in over half the lessons seen in Years 7 to 9. The impact of good teaching was reflected in the quality of learning. Enthusiasm for modern foreign languages is evident in attitudes in lessons and pupils' interactions with teachers. Pupils were well behaved, responded positively to teachers and worked hard in lessons. This indicates a significant improvement since the last inspection in 1998.
254. Teachers foster a positive supportive learning environment where pupils' responses are valued and instant feedback given in oral work. Pupils are able to work in a relaxed, but purposeful atmosphere. Humour serves to maintain the pace of lessons and is an indicator of good teacher-pupil relationships. Teachers share learning objectives with pupils in order that they understand the context of what they are learning. Teachers regularly set homework to both consolidate and move pupils' understanding forward. There is consistency across the department in terms of high quality display work. This includes target language support, keywords, cultural dimensions celebrated through artefacts and photographs of recent trips to France and Germany and pupils' work which reflects high standards and opportunities for creativity and extended writing. The Spanish club has added a further cultural dimension to the department. The trips to France and Germany are valuable, borne out by enthusiasm communicated by pupils and evidenced through the diaries on display. These trips have added to the pupils' interest in learning languages.
255. The curriculum develops cultural understanding through the numerous examples of life abroad; social interaction is developed through many opportunities for communication and spiritual and moral aspects are evident in lessons. Numeracy is supported through, for example, exchange rates, counting challenges and 24 hour clock conversions, and literacy is reinforced through, for example, colour text marking and word, sentence and text level understanding.

256. The leadership of the department is good. The vision of the head of department has ensured that major changes have taken place to benefit all pupils. German has now been introduced into Year 7 to give pupils equal access to both languages and to ensure those pupils choosing German in Years 10 and 11 will not be disadvantaged. In Years 10 and 11, the whole cohort of pupils is now entered for a GCSE in their chosen language, thus equipping them with a useful skill for life. This is a great improvement since the last inspection where only approximately one third of pupils was entered for GCSE. Policies and schemes of work have been developed to support teaching and learning and the head of department leads by example, setting very high standards in all aspects. Areas needing development are the monitoring and evaluation of policies and procedures to ensure they are applied consistently by all teachers in the department; the analysis of data so that the progress of pupils can be tracked more closely and value-added analyses to support more closely the identification of areas for development. The department development plan shows how the department is moving forward and that progress against actions is monitored regularly.
257. Much progress has been made in this department since the last inspection. The use of target language has improved and where it is used extensively, it has a direct impact on the quality and speed of response by pupils who are able to imitate good quality pronunciation, intonation and inflection of the language. However, this is not consistent across all teachers in the department and there is a need to monitor the use of target language and to share good practice in order to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity. Pair and group work also need to be developed to maximise the time pupils have to practise intensively newly acquired language and to foster more independence in learning.
258. Listening materials are used regularly so that pupils are exposed to target language spoken at near normal speed. Trips to France and Germany are now established and an exchange programme is in the planning process. Textbooks have now been purchased and are used to good effect, supplemented by high quality resources produced by the teachers. Although additional reading material has been purchased, resources in the library are inadequate to support independent research or reading. Information and communication technology has been incorporated into the schemes of work and evidence of its use is on display in classrooms, but this could be developed further.
259. Although a marking policy has been adopted, marking needs to be improved so that pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do to progress to the next National Curriculum level or GCSE grade. Self-evaluation sheets, introduced recently, enable pupils to reflect on their learning.
260. In conclusion, the department has made rapid progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve further.

MUSIC

The provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- GCSE A* to C grades remain well above the national average.
- The subject attracts above average pupil numbers in Years 10 and 11.
- Medium and long-term planning for progression, for variety of activity and for the development of skills.
- Quality and range of extracurricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Greater consistency in the quality of teaching.
- More effective learning objectives and assessment procedures.
- The management of visiting instrumental teachers from the County Music Service in order to maximise the impact of this valuable additional resource.

261. At the time of the inspection, the head of department was on maternity leave and her work was being covered by a music specialist supply teacher. Overall, standards in Years 7 to 9 are close to those typically expected whilst in Years 10 and 11 they are above average.
262. At the end of Year 9 in 2002, pupils' attainment in statutory teacher assessments was above average. These standards are higher than those observed during the inspection. Where standards were highest, pupils were able to build on their previous learning creatively, producing music which was clearly their own and over which they had taken some time and made considerable effort. This was the case with a group of Year 9 boys who had taken the main musical elements from an existing piece and adapted it, using their own harmonies and melodies, into a piece of interest and originality in its own right. Where standards were satisfactory, pupils demonstrated control over electronic keyboards with some pupils able to co-ordinate well between the right hand, left hand and automatic accompaniment. Pupils could maintain a steady beat and play in time and their composing work demonstrated a level of technique and creativity close to national expectations at this age. However, pupils' listening skills appeared under-developed, possibly due to the lack of focus for listening provided by the teacher. When talking about the music they heard, they did not draw upon their previous listening to describe it. There was no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
263. In GCSE at the end of Year 11 in 2002, the number of pupils achieving grades A* to C was well above the national average, with A* to G results close to the national average. This achievement, within the context of a doubling of the number of pupils taking GCSE music over the last two years, is a strength of the department. Pupils' results were higher than their average across other subjects.
264. Standards in lessons were highest when pupils demonstrated a level of performing skill and a lack of inhibition in performance, which has clearly been built up over some years. In their composing work pupils were confident enough to take musical risks and work at a creative

level sometimes beyond their technical skill and musical knowledge. However, there was a small number of pupils in each group who found the work difficult and who did not yet have the instrumental skills or confidence to achieve their potential. These pupils need more frequent and targeted intervention from the teacher in order to stimulate, refocus and encourage their work. In general, performing and composing skills were more highly developed than pupils' listening skills which appeared to be well below the level expected for the higher GCSE grades.

265. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' progress in lessons was satisfactory at best. Too often learning objectives were not made clear by the teacher and pupils, despite their efforts, were not clear on what they should be doing and why. In Years 10 and 11, progress was satisfactory. This was often due to the additional work pupils do for themselves beyond the classroom, such as in instrumental lessons and extracurricular work, rather than what took place during the lesson itself. An over-reliance on the use of headphones inhibited progress. Whilst this enabled pupils to focus on their own work it also meant that they could not hear what other groups were doing and so they could not learn from them or be inspired by them. There was no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls, although boys appear to be better represented in current extracurricular activities. Pupils with special educational needs progress at the same rate as other pupils.
266. The quality and range of the extracurricular work provided by the department has significantly added to the ethos of the school and to its reputation in the local community. It is clear that pupils' work beyond classroom lessons adds, not only to their musical development, but also to their own personal and social development.
267. The quality of teaching overall was satisfactory in the majority of lessons. However, in a significant minority of lessons, it was unsatisfactory or poor. Where teaching was good there was an emphasis on practical music making. There was a good choice of tasks which were challenging but achievable, as well as being attractive to the pupils as they were based on "real" music. Performing, composing and listening work were all based on a variety of styles including reggae, current popular and TV music, as well as pieces from the classical repertoire. The teacher often employed a light-touch, facilitator role which enabled pupils to progress at their own rate and focus on their own individual needs.
268. Where teaching was poor it was often characterised by a slow pace to lessons. Introductions were over-long and lacking focus. Lessons sometimes finished early without any review of the lesson's work or progress made. Classroom management was sometimes poor with dispersal into groups and re-assembly leading to poor behaviour. Learning resources were not always appropriate or available at the right time. Similarly, behaviour management was sometimes very poor with teacher interventions sometimes leading to a worsening, rather than improvement, of behaviour. The school's behaviour management policy was often not implemented.
269. The medium and long-term planning of the department is a strength. Schemes of work clearly plan for progression, variety of activity and the development of skills. However, planning for individual lessons is weak. Learning objectives are not clearly identified nor

shared with pupils and this leads to a lack of focus in some lessons which inhibits pupil progress. Assessment criteria are sometimes vague and non-musical, and not shared often enough with pupils. Pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their work.

270. It is clear from departmental documentation and other evidence that the department has been well managed and strongly led. The strength of this management has enabled the department to maintain the core of its work during the interregnum caused by the temporary absence of the head of department. The school has provided adequate support to the supply teacher in terms of the management of the department. However, the support provided for teaching and learning within the department has not been sufficient and pupils' progress and development have suffered accordingly. The management of visiting instrumental teachers from the County Music Service appears haphazard and insufficient care is taken to ensure that all pupils have equal access to this valuable resource.
271. Progress since the last inspection has been limited. GCSE results remain above average and the size of the groups has increased twofold. However, there is still inadequate provision of learning resources within the department. There are insufficient percussion instruments, both tuned and untuned; very little provision is made for music from other cultures, and information and communication technology equipment remains inadequate in terms of hardware. A2-level provision, considered a strength in the last inspection report, has now been withdrawn. The loss of a group of high-attaining sixth form music students has implications, both in terms of the inspiration and example they would provide to younger aspiring musicians, and the quality and depth they would add to the extracurricular work of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths:

- Classroom management and behaviour.
- Leadership of the department.
- Extracurricular programmes.
- Relationships and team ethos.
- Recently introduced assessment system.
- Pupils' positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement:

- Monitoring of standards, teaching and progress.
- Assessment for learning within planning and in lessons.
- The development of vocational accreditation and leadership awards in Years 10 and 11 and post 16.
- Partnerships with the community, local clubs and other agencies.

272. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 in teachers' statutory assessments was above the national average. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, the number of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C was close to the national average. Overall, since 1999, GCSE results have improved. Boys achieved better than girls and their results were higher than their average across other subjects. The department's first AS group was examined at the end of Year 12 in 2002. Of 19 students entered, two attained A grades and 13 achieved grades C to E. An increasing number of students are high achievers in a broad range of sports and gain borough, regional and national benchmarks.
273. The achievement overall of both genders is satisfactory. Many pupils make appropriate progress over Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. However, the progress of higher attaining pupils in lessons is frequently hindered by a lack of challenge. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11 there is clear evidence that the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress as a result of their own positive attitudes to learning and teacher's commitment. Special educational needs pupils make good progress and are well supported by very effective learning assistants. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have a good knowledge of cardio-vascular and flexibility aspects of the warm up and cool down and are able to participate in gymnastic events with appropriate levels of technical competence and efficiency. Netball, basketball and volleyball skills are well developed with pupils showing consistent control when passing, catching, dribbling, shooting, dragging and volleying. Less well developed are pupils' observation and evaluative skills.
274. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to draw on earlier knowledge and use this to adapt performances and show a good understanding of the health related fitness aspects of the programme. Advanced techniques in soccer and volleyball were performed with consistency and precision. Less well developed were the girls' badminton skills. Higher achievers were able to transfer known skills and tactical awareness into other sports. They were also able to anticipate the responses of others and adapt their own programme in consequence.
275. All teaching and learning seen during the inspection was satisfactory, with a significant number of lessons, mainly in Years 10 and 11, being graded as good or very good. The more effective teaching was characterised by: good subject knowledge, classroom and behaviour management, organisation, use of resources, relationships, inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and the deployment of learning assistants. Weaknesses were the limited use of regular assessments to improve learning and the restricted range of methodology employed. This is resulting in a failure to meet the different needs of pupils, especially the more able and limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility or to develop analytical skills.
276. Spiritual, moral and cultural issues are addressed inconsistently as a result of not being highlighted in planning; however, teachers constantly reinforce the view that the talents of all pupils should be recognised and valued. Pupils are encouraged to set high standards of personal behaviour and attitude, and show respect for each other. This results in them working well together in pairs and groups. Partnerships with local organisations and sporting clubs lack formal structure.

277. The department has made good progress against the key issues identified in the last inspection report. The recently appointed head of department is providing clear leadership. However, development planning is still at an embryonic stage and the monitoring of teaching and standards at department level is a weakness. Assessment is still not fully impacting on curriculum planning. Extracurricular opportunities are extensive and well supported by teaching staff and pupils. The department has recently introduced GCSE and AS level courses which have had a positive impact on attainment in Years 10 and 11 and at post 16. The proposed development of GNVQ, Leadership Awards and Certificate of Achievement will further enhance curriculum opportunities, as will the development of dance as an additional aesthetic curriculum area.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards in examinations.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Relationships are very good.
- Teachers' questioning skills are used to good effect to deepen and extend learning.
- Interesting displays and well-ordered classrooms create a positive atmosphere for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for pupils in Year 10 who are not following an examination course does not meet statutory requirements.
- A comparatively narrow range of teaching strategies.
- In Years 7, 8 and 9 there is often a lack of challenge in the tasks set.
- The use of assessment to inform teaching and learning is in its early stages.

278. During the course of the inspection evidence was gathered from departmental documentation, a scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with the acting head of department and conversations with pupils. Resources in the department and in the library were reviewed. Eight lessons were observed.
279. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make satisfactory progress but work often lacks challenge and standards are often below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In Year 7, pupils were able to interpret the parable of the Good Samaritan and suggest what meaning Christians might take from the story. In work on the Pillars of Islam in Year 8, pupils identified the key practices involved in the pilgrimage to Mecca and explained some specialist vocabulary, for example, sacrifice and symbolic actions. Pupils were exploring rites of passage in Year 9, and were able to talk about their own ideas of what heaven might be like, comparing this with what others might expect. Pupils responded well in discussion when teachers' questions probed their understanding and were confident to ask questions as well as answer them. They were able to identify basic beliefs in Christianity, Islam and Judaism and to compare and contrast ideas from different faiths. Learning was firmly set in the context of pupils' own experiences and good use was made of contemporary material,

for example, current events and pop songs. Both boys and girls made a positive contribution to lessons and overall written work is completed satisfactorily. However, tasks do not always offer opportunities for the more able to extend their knowledge and understanding.

280. Standards in Year 11 are above the national average in both full and short GCSE courses. In 2002, results in the full course were well above the national average for pupils who gained grades A* to C and in both courses were above the national average overall. These results were also significantly above the average for the school. In Year 11, all pupils currently study for an examination, either full or short course GCSE.
281. The standard of work seen was in line with the expectations of the examination syllabus. In both groupings, pupils were studying life and death issues. Pupils were challenged to debate sensitive issues relating to medical ethics. They expressed their views confidently and with reasons, offering a variety of perspectives and relating these to a Christian viewpoint. The issue of abortion was considered with sensitivity and maturity. In the current Year 10, some pupils have chosen to follow an examination course leading to GCSE (Full Course). Here questioning drew on pupils' experience to explore the topic of marriage from a variety of perspectives, including the Christian viewpoint and responses were of satisfactory standard. Pupils were challenged to explore the concept of morality and encouraged not to make generalisations.
282. All other pupils in Year 10 receive their entitlement to religious education through two six hour modules within the 'Your Life' course. This time allocation does not allow pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding at an appropriate level, and standards are below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Pupils in Year 10 who are not following an examination course do not receive their entitlement and the school is not, therefore, meeting its statutory requirements for all pupils.
283. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils arrived promptly for lessons and settled quickly and quietly to their work. They listened carefully to instructions and responded well to timed tasks, generally completing work to the expected standard. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and manage their classrooms well. Positive attitudes are reinforced with praise, and high standards of discussion work have been achieved by establishing clear rules for responding to questions and listening to the views of others. Teachers and pupils treat each other with respect. Evidence from the work scrutiny shows that pupils take a pride in their work and standards of presentation are high.
284. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Positive relationships and a clear code of conduct mean that an atmosphere of trust is established between teacher and pupils. Pupils feel secure knowing that their efforts are acknowledged and valued. Lessons are planned to meet specified objectives. Teachers' subject knowledge matches the planned activities, and pupils made gains in knowledge and understanding in line with the expected rate of progress. Resources were carefully chosen to promote interest and enquiry, for example in Year 9 a poem was used to explore tolerance and in Year 10 a case study was discussed to investigate medical ethics. Teachers are

careful to relate issues and concepts to pupils' own experience of life, giving a firm context for learning, particularly in examination groups. Very good use was made of discussion work in Years 10 and 11 where teachers' questioning skills encouraged pupils to think deeply and to appreciate the views of others. In one Year 10 lesson, a pupil commented on the effort required to engage in a passionate debate about euthanasia, which was prompted and marshalled by the teacher with great skill. Lessons moved at a good pace and there was usually a balance of whole class teaching with individual activity.

285. From evidence in teachers' planning and in pupils' books, however, the range of teaching strategies appears to be limited across all years and does not cater for a variety of learning styles. Learning objectives are identified but are in the main broad and general. This is particularly true in Years 7, 8 and 9, where objectives are not clearly linked to the expectations of the agreed syllabus. As a result, there is no sharp focus to support teaching or to promote the use of assessment to raise standards, and with younger pupils there is insufficient challenge to ensure that all pupils are stretched. Books are marked regularly and pupils appreciate this. Comments are made and targets are set, but these are often to do with basic skills rather than specific subject content. The department has a marking policy, but arrangements to assess pupils' work in a more structured way to raise standards is not yet developed. Homework is used effectively to extend and develop learning in class.
286. Teaching makes a very positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. There are planned opportunities to extend pupils' experiences in all areas, and teachers also take advantage of examples as they arise. Pupils study the key beliefs and practices of Christianity and encounter Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism at various stages. All examination syllabuses focus on more than one faith. Classroom displays highlight religious experience in a variety of faiths, and draw attention to current affairs involving the faiths studied. Pupils engage in lively debate about matters of life and death and explore moral issues, for example, through work on parables in Year 7. Year 9 pupils have visited the Anne Frank exhibition, but use of visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum remains an issue from the last inspection.
287. At the time of the inspection the head of department was on maternity leave. The school had made very good arrangements to cover this period effectively in a time of shortage of specialist teachers. Non-specialists had made a very positive contribution to the department. The acting head of department had ensured that there was minimum disruption to delivery in spite of extensive senior management roles. From evidence in documentation, from discussions with staff and pupils and from examination results it is clear that there is real commitment to the subject and to the pupils and this is borne out in the consistently good results achieved in public examinations. Schemes of work are planned to be of interest and relevance to pupils as well as to meet the needs of the agreed syllabus. However, currently there is no systematic process to monitor teaching and assessment practices or to share good practice. The department is adequately resourced in terms of books and artefacts and receives funding in line with comparable departments. Opportunities to develop the use of information and communication technology in the subject are planned into the syllabus but some concerns about access remain. Accommodation in a suite of recently refurbished

rooms is very good, and teachers capitalise on this with good displays, which achieve a balance between pupils' work and stimulus material.

288. The department has maintained high standards in examination results since the last inspection. However, arrangements to provide religious education as an entitlement for all pupils have recently changed and as a consequence the school is now in breach of statutory requirements regarding pupils in Year 10. In the main school, development should focus on raising the level of challenge for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, broadening the range of teaching strategies for all pupils and developing the use of assessment to raise standards of learning.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	3	33	52	-	2	0.33	0.79
French	1	-	78	-	13	-	1.65
General Studies	4	-	77	-	19	-	1.92
Other Social Studies	9	78	74	33	11	2.33	1.47
Physics	1	-	52	-	4	-	0.90

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	9	56	88	11	34	2.67	5.25
Chemistry	15	87	90	27	43	4.67	5.90
Economics	9	78	89	33	36	5.11	5.52
English Literature	20	95	95	20	37	4.70	5.91
French	4	75	89	-	38	2.00	5.59
General Studies	36	92	85	19	30	4.67	4.91
Geography	9	100	92	56	38	6.89	5.74
Graphical Applications	5	60	88	20	22	3.60	4.74
History	8	88	88	38	35	5.50	5.45
Home Economics	8	88	83	25	28	4.00	4.73
Mathematics	5	60	87	40	43	4.00	5.80
Music	2	100	93	-	35	6.00	5.74
Physics	3	100	88	-	40	2.00	5.67
Religious Studies	14	100	92	57	38	7.14	5.84

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

289. Mathematics, biology, chemistry and psychology were inspected as focus subjects. In addition, physics was sampled.
290. Numbers taking physics in recent years have been small, though currently there has been a more healthy uptake. In 2002, 13 students took AS level examinations. Ten students gained a pass grade and two students gained the highest grades of A and B. The earlier small numbers make comparisons between the school's A2-level results and national figures difficult. In 2001, all three students taking A2-level passed though none achieved the highest grades of A and B.
291. One Year 12 lesson of physics was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning was good. The teacher ensured the students were clear about the purpose of the lesson and what they had to do. The teacher's explanations were clear and the questioning skilfully drew upon students' existing knowledge. There was a good balance between the teacher providing information and the students investigating for themselves. All students had good access to appropriate equipment which they used competently. Standards of achievement were good as students applied their knowledge successfully through their individual research. There was some high level information and communication technology work on display with which the students had been involved.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching, which was always at least satisfactory and often good or very good.
- Teachers have a good command of subject knowledge.
- Relationships and attitudes of students.
- Management of students.

Areas for improvement

- A high dropout rate from courses.
- Challenge for the most able students.
- Marking and assessment to meet the needs of all students.

292. The inspection covered AS and A2-level lessons in pure mathematics, together with discussions with Year 12 and Year 13 students and scrutiny of their work.
293. The number of students involved in advanced courses is small. In the five years up to 2001 the maximum number of students entered for A2-level courses has been five and the lowest two. In 2001, six students sat AS-level examinations and four were successful in achieving

grades C to E. Four Year 13 students took A2-level examinations and four were successful, achieving the higher grades A to B. There was a high non-completion rate for the course. Historically, male students' results have been higher than females' but over recent years, males' results have fallen significantly and females' results have improved. Female students now outperform males and more females go on to study A2-level mathematics than males.

294. Standards in Year 13 are broadly in line with those typically expected nationally, however, additional extension work would challenge the more able sixth form students. During the inspection, Year 13 students could apply basic techniques in calculus and algebra confidently and had good recall of past work. Effective learning was clear from solutions to the area under a curve problems, using the trapezium rule, work completed on partial fractions, and the binomial theorem. Students were able to use previous knowledge to provide good explanations of the remainder theorem. Students have developed good study habits and worked well on their own and in pairs. Overall, there was a good working atmosphere where students were willing learners, showing high levels of commitment and concentration.
295. Year 12 students demonstrated good recall of algebra studied in Year 11 and were able to use this knowledge in a lesson on the equation of a straight line. Students confidently discussed a variety of methods for obtaining the correct equation for a line and were willing to put forward their own ideas. Occasionally, insufficient thinking time was allowed for the students before the answer was provided by the teacher. In another lesson, students worked independently on differentiation of functions. Some of the questions were quite challenging. However, the high levels of commitment and willingness to share ideas allowed the lesson to progress effectively.
296. Achievement was satisfactory and students had very good attitudes to the subject.
297. The quality of teaching was good overall. Teachers' classroom management was good. All lessons were at least satisfactory and often good or very good. Teachers revealed good subject knowledge and used this to introduce new work effectively, often drawing on examples from society to add relevance to the discussion. Relationships between teachers and students were good. Teaching methods sometimes lacked the open-ended questions that promote whole class discussion and hence lead to greater understanding of the subject. In one lesson, an able boy dominated the discussion and this reduced the opportunity for girls to contribute. Marking of work was minimal, often relying on students to check their own work with the onus on them to seek help. This is a contributory factor to the development of good individual study habits for some students but may contribute to the reduced numbers continuing with their studies.
298. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Teachers are well matched to classes and often meet students outside lessons to discuss problems with work. The scheme of work needs to be developed beyond the list of topics that currently exists. Marking and assessment strategies need to be developed so that the whole range of ability of students is supported. Accommodation is good, although information and communication technology

resources need to be improved so that opportunities to explore mathematics using modern technology can be integrated into the scheme of work.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Improvement in A2-level results.
- Good teaching, with brisk pace, good relationships and effective questioning techniques that motivate students and help them to understand the subject.
- Good recruitment and retention of students with successful attraction of male students.
- The system of student reviews which involves students well in their own learning.

Areas for improvement

- Use of student performance data to analyse the factors affecting improvement (value-added) and identify strategies that are successful in bringing about improvement.
- The attainment of male students.
- Use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning.

299. In 2001, A2-level results were below the national average but they improved in 2002 to come in line with the provisional national average. Female students outperformed male students, as they did at AS-level in 2001 and 2002. The pass rates for AS-level in 2001 and 2002 were close to the national and provisional national averages respectively for female students, but below for male students. The reasons for this have not been analysed by the department. In 2001, biology students did less well than students in other subjects in the sixth form, including chemistry, although results were better than in physics.
300. Improvement in students' examination performance and reasons for students of similar attainment performing significantly differently are not analysed against GCSE results. In fact, of the 11 Year 13 students taking A2-level in 2002, six performed as well as or better than the challenging targets predicted for them, showing that they had performed well in relation to their GCSE results. At AS-level, only four out of 11 achieved results that were as good as, or better than, predicted.
301. The standard of attainment of current students at this relatively early stage in their courses is at least average and often better. In Year 12, they have good knowledge of the ultra-structure of the cell and of models of the biochemical make-up of organelles such as the plasma membrane. In Year 13, they can confidently explain the stages in growth of a bacterial colony and the factors resulting in the graph which represents the stages.
302. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Of the three lessons seen, teaching in one was sound and achieved its objectives and in two it was good. The better lessons were characterised by greater student involvement in their own learning, by the structure of the lessons, the relevance of the subject matter and the element of challenge. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm for the subject and this helps students' motivation

and interest. For example, in a Year 12 lesson to develop student's practical skills, students were challenged to find out the sensitivity of Benedict's reagent. They worked individually to perfect their use of equipment and work out for themselves suitable ranges of concentration of glucose solution in order to pinpoint accurately the sensitivity of the test for reducing sugar. The teacher's guidance was supportive, but did not take the initiative from the students, who organised themselves very well. The exercise was made relevant by discussion of the need for use of similar techniques to measure glucose levels in patients with diabetes.

303. The enthusiasm and good subject knowledge of the teacher, combined with good visual aids and skilful questioning techniques, enabled students to make good progress in a well planned Year 12 lesson on teeth and digestion. Questions were directed at individuals in order to check their understanding or to stretch them. An end of lesson review, checking students' knowledge of the objectives of the lesson, consolidated students' learning well.
304. Students were well motivated. They co-operated well during group work and could work independently too. Relationships with students were very good. They responded well to the obvious interest that teachers showed in them and the subject being taught. Students' written work is in the form of notes, assignments and practical work that are conscientiously marked by teachers, often with detailed constructive comments that give students good feedback about their progress and how to improve. Assignments are marked using grades which enable students to see how they are performing in relation to the targets set for them. Students who are underachieving receive extra help from staff. Students speak very warmly about the good guidance and help that they are given by their teachers. The system of student reviews is very effective in helping students to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and discuss these with their teachers. Students have good study techniques, which include devising presentations that involve use of a variety of resources including information and communication technology, which help to develop the key skill of communication. Files and notebooks are usually well organised. Students were confident in their use of books and some in their use of information and communication technology. The curriculum is enhanced by fieldwork at a Field Studies Council centre, but there are few other organised visits to places of scientific interest or lectures.
305. Management of the subject is sound. There are currently no improvement plan priorities for biology in the science plan, but last year's priority for raising standards at A2-level by improved student monitoring was met successfully. Teachers have a shared enthusiasm for the subject. There are, however, no formal schemes of work. Lessons are planned from the subject specification by individual teachers. The expertise of the two staff teaching the subject is not pooled in order to create guidance which incorporates their ideas and experience. Observation of teaching by the head of subject is at present underused as a way of improving practice. Monitoring strategies involve regular tests and checking of students' results, but not value added analysis.
306. Students' awareness of how performance at GCSE influences potential performance at A2 and AS-level is very good. Year 12 students understand that the average points score at GCSE is a better predictor than grades in the subject. Targets are set by the head of sixth

form, but neither students nor biology teaching staff are involved in the process. The difference between targets that represent average progress compared with those that require above average progress (and therefore challenge) is not made clear to students.

307. Students are well briefed on the requirements for higher education.
308. Information and communication technology resources are not readily available and make little impact on the teaching and learning of the subject. Displays of preserved gruesome specimens in a laboratory do not present an appropriate image of biology in the 21st century or engender respect for living things.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- AS-level chemistry results for 2001 were above the national average for the higher grades A to B.
- Good teaching by a teacher with very good subject knowledge and good ongoing regular assessments of students' work.
- Students' very good attitudes to learning.
- Very good relationships between the teacher and students.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at A2 and AS-level to ensure that they are at least in line with national averages.
- Questioning techniques to ensure that students' understanding is keeping pace with the quantity and depth of the work covered.
- Analysis of data, particularly value-added information to inform planning and improvement.

309. The numbers of students taking the subject are small and so it is difficult to make valid comparisons with national data. However, the previous inspection report indicated that the percentage of students achieving the higher grades at A2-level was below the national average. In 2001 they were below the national average and since 1999 there has been a fall in results at A2-level. Subject performance indicators for 2001 show that students were performing as well as their average across their other A2-level subjects.
310. Standards in AS-level examinations in 2001 were above the national average for the higher grades A and B and in line with the national average for the full range of grades A to E. In 2002, the percentage of students gaining the higher grades decreased from 2001 but all students gained a grade.
311. Analysis of improvement against GCSE results is not carried out. Also, analysis of students' performance to find out why those of similar attainment at GCSE perform significantly differently at AS and A2-level is not carried out. The school sets targets for the students and carries out its analysis against these targets. At A2-level, of the six Year 13 students who took the examination, five performed as well as or better than the targets set for them.

At AS-level, of the 12 Year 13 students who took the examination, only two attained results below the targets set for them.

312. Currently, only one group of students in the sixth form in Year 13 is preparing for A2-level chemistry. There are no students preparing for AS-level. Attainment in lessons at this early stage in the A2-level course is average to very good and progress is good for both boys and girls.
313. Teaching is good overall, and students are making good progress. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and is enthusiastic about the subject. However, during theory lessons, the teacher's questioning techniques were insufficiently developed to enable students to demonstrate their understanding and apply this to new situations. Students' attitudes to learning were very good and relationships between students and the teacher were also very good. Regular ongoing assessment of work is thorough. At the end of a topic problem questions are set and marked. This ensures that students are fully aware of the areas of work where improvement is needed. They appreciate the support which they are given and the good accessibility of this support in order to address their areas of weakness.
314. Students were able to concentrate well in lessons and co-operated well during group practical work. Although they find the subject challenging their attitudes to the subject were good. Their project work shows that they are able to work independently using a variety of resources, including information and communication technology.
315. Resources such as textbooks and materials for practical work are good and visits to industry and university lectures are a regular supportive feature of the course, which reinforce the role of the subject in the modern world. Information and communication technology resources are, however, not readily available in school and are making little impact on the teaching of the subject. Many students have computers at home and are encouraged to use these for their course work. One member of staff teaches the subject and this ensures that links between the different aspects of the subject are reinforced and that continuity and coverage are systematically maintained. It also enables student progress to be effectively tracked.
316. In comparison to standards at the time of the previous inspection there has been no trend of improvement although standards did improve in 1999 and 2000. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher grades in A2-level was below average at the previous inspection and is still below average. The progress of students in the sixth form was good at the time of the previous inspection and this is still the case. The attitudes of students were good and these are now very good. Fans in the fume chambers are now fully effective.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- A2-level results in 2002.
- Good quality teaching.
- Learning opportunities for students.
- Departmental improvement plan.
- Leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Performance of students at AS-level.
- Increased use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning.
- More evenness of independent learning opportunities for students during lessons.
- Increased library resources.

317. Psychology is a relatively new subject being offered in the sixth form, with a Year 12 group and a Year 13 group being first examined at AS-level in the summer term of 2001. In the current academic year there are 39 students studying at AS-level (Year 12) and 10 students studying at A2-level (Year 13).
318. Nine students sat AS-level examinations in 2001. Of these, three achieved grades A to B and four grades C to E. Results at AS-level in 2002 were below average when compared with national figures. Only seven out of 22 students examined achieved a pass grade with 15 students being ungraded. Many students achieved grades below that which was predicted for them. Staff absences during the year would seem to have been a contributory factor to students' under-performance. In contrast, A2-level results in 2002 were much better with 19 out of 24 students achieving a pass grade, a 79 per cent pass rate. While this was still below the national pass rate it was a good performance given that these students would also have been affected by staff absence during the examination year.
319. Attainment in Year 13 is satisfactory for the majority and very good for some students. The majority of students displayed a mature and conscientious attitude to their work. The majority of work seen in AS and A2-level classes included satisfactory and sometimes good quality responses from students. In one A2-level class in which an objective was to increase their understanding of ways in which media may influence/encourage aggressive behaviour, students showed that they could debate confidently and accept constructive criticism and challenge well. Students listened carefully to, and were respectful of, the views of others. Students showed a good understanding of appropriate subject terminology and there was evidence of secure prior learning. In an AS-level class in which students were looking at the reconstructive nature of memory, they took part enthusiastically in an experiment to generate data for later discussion. Students participated well in discussion, offering relevant interpretation and explanation of the data under analysis. A student with special educational needs was well included in this lesson.

320. Psychology is a new subject for students in Year 12. During the inspection week, students were observed to work well independently and in groups. They were attentive and listened well to their teacher and to each other in discussion and generally participated very well in activities. In their answers to questions and from their comments in discussion and from inspection of some of their written work, there was evidence that the majority of students were making steady progress in acquiring specialist subject vocabulary and in grasping key subject specific concepts. Overall, Year 12 students were making satisfactory progress.
321. In all lessons observed, male and female students, and students having different abilities, were equally involved in classroom activities and contributed willingly.
322. Teaching and learning, overall, were very good. Students benefit from being taught by qualified, knowledgeable and supportive teachers who promote high educational standards. All teaching observed was of a high quality. It was characterised by lessons having clear objectives, good planning and preparation and teacher's secure subject knowledge. Careful questioning was used to probe students' understanding and to challenge them. Lesson objectives were made explicit for students at the outset with teachers providing good scene setting introductions and concluding with useful summaries. Students were provided with a range of learning opportunities, which included formal teaching instruction, purposeful whole class and small group discussion and individual and small group tasks. Students were challenged in their thinking in a supportive atmosphere. Students were generally positive about studying psychology. They were generally positive in their attitude and behaviour during lessons. They listened well and respected the views of others. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. The only criticism was of the unevenness of opportunities to learn independently. Students seemed to very much value opportunities for discussion and debate. Students were well supported by their teachers and were sufficiently confident to request additional information and advice when needed. They felt that their teachers provided a supportive learning environment.
323. Students have had opportunities to use information and communicative technology in the preparation of their presentations and coursework. But information and communication technology is not yet systematically developed as a teaching tool. The main school library contained very few texts to support this subject.
324. In general, there was a clear link between good quality teaching, student learning and attainment.
325. The teacher in charge provides good leadership and management of the subject. There is a subject improvement plan in place with some key areas for development identified. Planning and co-ordination of the subject is systematic and thorough. Performance data is increasingly being used to assess and monitor student progress.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

326. Until recently, A2-level graphic communication has been taught to Year 12 and 13. This has recently been replaced by A2 and AS-level product design. This is the only subject being

studied in this area. The number of students taking the subject is typical for a school of this size and students with a wide range of ability are accepted on the course. The examination results are satisfactory with some notable achievements by lower ability students. There are some exceptional examples of design work, such as an energy efficient home presented as a very detailed, professional looking model.

327. One Year 13 lesson was observed during the inspection. The teaching was judged to be very good in the traditional skills. Students do have access to computer aided design programmes for home use but the use of CAD/CAM is not yet well established in the school. Very good support was provided for individual students and their progress was carefully monitored. Students responded well and were enthusiastic about the course.

BUSINESS

328. Economics was inspected as a focus subject. One Year 12 lesson of business studies was sampled. The teaching was sound. Planning identified clear learning objectives; teacher-student relationships were very good. Students made sound progress and showed good understanding of economic principles. However, the lesson was very teacher-led and students were not encouraged to debate or come to their own solutions.

329. No students took business studies A2-level in 2001 and 2002.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Teaching, especially in relation to knowledge of the subject and ensuring the appropriateness of opportunities to meet examination requirements.
- Positive attitudes of students and their knowledge and understanding.
- Working relationships between teacher and students.
- Experiences gained from Young Enterprise activities.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of additional resources, including textbooks, source and research materials, and access to information and communication technology in the classroom.
- The development of classroom environment to raise further the interest of students in the subject.

330. Students in Year 13 working towards GCE A2-level in economics are the final group in the school to currently take the subject. In Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, provision has changed from economics to business studies. This curriculum development has had the consequence of reducing the number of students recently taking economics. During the inspection, two lessons in Year 13 were observed. These observations together with a scrutiny of students' work and discussions with students and the head of department provide the basis for the evidence gathered.

331. Over recent years attainment has been maintained at around the national average at both GCE AS and GCE A2-levels. In 2001, 16 out of 19 students achieved grades A to E, although only two were awarded grades A to B. Results at A2-level in 2002 were clearly above those of previous years. There has been no significant difference in attainment between male and female students.
332. Work in lessons, notes and essays show that standards achieved by students in Year 13 are reaching what is required at the present stage of their course. There is an appropriate balance of descriptive and analytical work, with consistent linking of key concepts to examples from the national economy. Students showed confidence in discussions and were willing to share their own experiences when adding to debates and taking issues forward. The good relationships amongst students and with their teacher resulted in their taking ownership of their study while being closely guided on the general directions to be pursued. This was seen, for example, during class presentations by pairs of students on graphical questions relating to the minimum wage. All students displayed enthusiasm for the subject and the ability to work co-operatively on challenging accepted ideas. This was demonstrated in ideas gained from personal Internet research. The very positive attitudes and behaviour were central to the making of progress in lessons with attainment being in line with that expected for successful completion of the course.
333. The quality of teaching is good. There is commitment to the subject and to meeting the needs and ensuring the progress of individual students. Lessons were well planned and structured, with emphasis on the application of analysis and the links between economic theory and experience in both the national and world economies. This was seen in work on the degrees of flexibility in labour markets. Lessons set out to achieve a high level of participation amongst the students, with new concepts debated and challenged at all points. Homework effectively extends the work within lessons and contributes to the careful preparation for examination requirements. Appropriate targets are set and support the understanding by students of their progress and their potential performance. Young Enterprise activities and the contributions made by company advisers add a further significant dimension. The present group was seen during the inspection to be maintaining the levels of determination which had made previous groups so successful in their business plans.
334. Management within economics is very good. Subject aims and policies are well established, and schemes of work continue to be reviewed and developed in business-related areas of study. The experiences offered to students would benefit significantly from additions to the available level of resources. Textbooks and research materials meet only the essential needs of the course. There is no access to information and communication technology in the classroom, and students are not being provided with the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge during lessons through such resources and activities. There needs to be a clear commitment to the development of this increasingly important element in the teaching of economics. This approach would benefit teaching and learning strategies in relation to economic models and to activities within business and the economy. The interest of students in the subject area could be further raised if their lessons were to be within a more stimulating classroom environment.

335. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department has shown that it has the ability to succeed in its provision of economics and business studies related courses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

336. This was not a focus subject for the inspection. Three lessons were sampled.
337. Standards of attainment of students studying for the Advanced Vocational Qualification (AVCE) in information and communication technology were good. This course was introduced in September 2001 and 17 students were entered for the first examination in summer 2002. Forty seven per cent of students gained A to C grades and 82 per cent A to E grades. From three lessons observed and work seen during inspection, many students were achieving at above the standards expected nationally.
338. The quality of teaching was good. Teaching was well managed with relevant use of resources and appropriate levels of challenge and support. Good subject expertise and high expectations helped to ensure that all students understood the purpose of tasks set. All the students observed worked with high levels of independence, motivation and concentration. In two lessons observed, students were seen working confidently through a project on database design. Lesson plans ensure that gaps in prior knowledge and skills are addressed so that coursework can be completed to an appropriate standard. Students have very good access to high quality resources in lesson times and during private study time. They make good use of the specialist suite that they have priority access to.
339. The scheme of work and planning for this AVCE fully reflects the syllabus criteria. Marking is thorough and students receive appropriate levels of feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. There is scope to extend the scheme of work and use of data so that it better takes into account the development of key skills and progress towards individual learning goals.
340. Overall, organisation and management of the provision for this AVCE is good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

341. There was no focus subject in this area, but lessons in art, physical education, media studies, drama and theatre studies were sampled.
342. Numbers taking A and AS courses in art are too small to make significant comparisons with national figures. In 2001, seven out of eight students entered for AS-level examinations achieved grades C to E. In 2002, all six students entered achieved grades A to E, with five being awarded grades A to B. A2-level students attained low pass grades. Two lessons in art were observed, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching was good or better in both lessons and students responded well. In both AS and A2-level work, students have the opportunity to select from a variety of topics using a range of materials and artists' references. They select from different two- and three-dimensional techniques and

demonstrate a high level of skill and commitment. They had a positive attitude to their learning and talked about their work with maturity. Attainment in Year 12 was in line with national expectations and reflected the spread of ability in the group. Year 13 students attained very highly.

343. The school recently introduced an AS course in physical education. It has proved popular and the first cohort of 19 students took the examination in 2002. Fifteen gained a pass grade and two students gained the very highest grade. One Year 12 AS lesson was observed during the inspection. The lesson began well with clear teacher explanations and high levels of student discussion. This led to some effective learning. Students' involvement was not sustained as the lesson became focused on note taking and as a result students' interest waned.
344. One Year 12 lesson in drama and theatre studies was observed. The quality of teaching and learning was very good. Teaching was challenging and enabled students to work independently. Students responded by displaying high levels of concentration and commitment. They co-operated well and showed a very good attitude to their learning.
345. One Year 12 lesson in media studies was observed. Teaching and learning were good. The teaching made very good use of information and communication technology and the teacher's good subject knowledge was used to effectively support individual pupils. There were good opportunities for students to work independently. Relationships were very good and students worked purposefully and co-operatively. They displayed good understanding of newspaper design and publication.

HUMANITIES

All subjects offered in this area were a focus for this inspection.

Geography

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

Strengths

- High standards at the end of the A2-level course.
- Very good teaching – which has developed a positive attitude in students.
- Good working relationships between staff and students.
- Effective use of information and communication technology as a support for learning.

Areas for development

- There are no major areas for development.

346. Geography is increasingly popular – Year12 in 2002-3 contains 34 students. Standards at A2-level are very good – above national averages. In the three years 1999 to 2001, 35 students were entered for the examinations and all succeeded in gaining an A to E grade. In 2001, 55 per cent of students gained an A or B grade. In all the lessons observed during

the inspection, standards were above the level typically expected. Students were learning effectively and making good progress.

347. Students are committed in their approach to the subject. They quickly learn how to organise themselves and their files. In discussion, they revealed considerable background knowledge and the ability to be discriminating when searching for information. They were well able to use specialist terminology. Students worked well together.
348. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons and lesson materials are well prepared. Students are challenged – for example, in one lesson on soils the teacher required them to work together to answer examination questions and insisted on clear explanations and correct use of the very technical vocabulary. In a second lesson students had to search for information from the Internet, select those items that supported the argument they wished to put forward, and display information attractively, and present it to the group. There are good working relationships between staff and students.
349. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Teachers monitor the work of students well. Good relationships between staff and students have produced an atmosphere of optimism among students, several of who volunteer to act as teachers' aids in lessons in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Resources for sixth form teaching are stretched, but the department uses the Internet well to supplement its books.
350. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Attainment at A2-level has risen, male students are attaining higher standards, and information and communication technology has been developed.

History

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

Strengths

- A2-level results.
- Improvement in students' performance in the past three years.
- The percentage of students attaining pass grades A to E in the new AS-level examination.
- Positive students' attitudes to learning.
- Teacher-student relationships that contribute to effective learning.

Areas for development

- Monitoring the work of the department and departmental development planning.
- Extending the range of teaching and learning to include student preparation and presentations.
- Developing strategies to encourage students to read a range of relevant texts to improve their analysis, evaluation and communication skills.

351. The school offers courses at AS and A2-level. The number of students who choose history in Year 12 is variable with the present number being 18. A high proportion of these students continue to study to A2-level and complete the course.

352. Students' performance in GCE A2-level examinations over the past three years has shown a steadily rising trend, and results are in line with the national average. The percentage of students attaining the highest grades (A to B) in 2001 was slightly above the national average. The results in the new AS-level examinations were above the national average with all students attaining a pass grade. Unconfirmed data for 2002 A2-level results indicate that student performance has further improved. A comparison of the current Year 13 students' standard of work with their achievement at GCSE and AS-level shows they are making progress but their overall standard is still below the national average.
353. Evidence from discussions with the students and a scrutiny of their work indicates that they are acquiring an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the events and the role of individuals such as Gladstone. However, whilst their work demonstrates an ability to extract information from a variety of sources, including written texts and cartoon illustrations, they lack the confidence to use them critically and to use the range of evidence effectively to produce well-balanced and convincing arguments. One reason for this may well be that their work shows a lack of evidence of reading a wide range of historical texts that would extend their depth of understanding and assist in placing historical sources into their context. Essays on the French Revolution indicate that the students can organise information and make accurate use of historical terminology. However, their answers also show that their evaluations are insufficiently substantiated with historical evidence. This is a small year group comprising all female students.
354. The standard of work of students currently in Year 12 is in line with the national average. Higher attaining students are able to write at length, organising information effectively and using evidence to support their arguments. For example, they can clearly explain the financial and political problems confronting the French government in 1787 and they are beginning to evaluate the importance of these features in explaining the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789. Discussion with students also indicates that they are able to analyse the motives of those who joined the political clubs in pre-Revolutionary France and the significance of these clubs with the notion that the revolution is popularly presented as the event that led to liberty and equality for all. However, lower attaining students' responses to essay questions lack precision when evaluating the significance of events. A scrutiny of samples of students' work indicates that a significant number of the male students' folders are poorly presented and that their notes do not record the results of their analysis and evaluation of issues covered in lessons. As a result, they make satisfactory progress in acquiring the knowledge and understanding of history but are not developing their answers with well-supported and coherent conclusions.
355. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, in both courses, although the quality of teaching does vary between satisfactory and unsatisfactory. The strengths of effective teaching are built upon the good relationships teachers have with students. This created a positive learning ethos that ensured that students' attitudes were never less than good and at times were very good. Evidence from lesson observations shows that effective teaching occurs when teachers have a good subject knowledge and support the learning of individual students. This was particularly evident in teachers' assessment of the work and progress of students.

Discussion with students indicated that they have a good understanding of the standard of their work as a result of teachers' marking, group and individual feedback. These features were evident in a Year 12 group studying the importance of the political clubs in pre-Revolutionary France.

356. Where teaching was less satisfactory, teachers failed to give students adequate guidance on how to focus note making, and gave only vague guidance on how to make use of alternative reading texts, including the Internet. In addition, lessons relied heavily on teacher input with little opportunity for students to engage in their learning. As a result, the pace of learning was slow and students displayed below average attainment.
357. Students were well motivated and had positive views about the school and provision made for them through the subject, both in terms of their chances of examination success and the access it provides to higher education courses.
358. Leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The head of department is well aware of the challenges confronting the department, in a period of changing staff, and the need to build upon the success of recent years. However, there are limited opportunities to formally monitor teaching and systematic reviews of student work are not yet in place. As a result, the departmental development plan lacks a clear focus for how to maintain and improve upon the standards achieved to date.
359. The performance of A2-level students in examinations represents good improvement since the last inspection.

Religious education

Overall the quality of provision for religious studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards attained in A2-level examinations are good.
- Students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.
- Relationships are very good.
- Students are inspired by the commitment and high expectations of their teachers.

Areas for development

- Extended opportunities for students to develop independent and collaborative learning.
- There are limited opportunities for students studying Hinduism to meet with the faith community.
- Specialists are not involved with the delivery of religious education as an entitlement for all students within the general studies course.

360. Evidence was gathered from departmental documentation, discussions with the acting head of department, a scrutiny of students' work and conversations with students. Resources in the department and in the library were reviewed. Three lessons were observed. It was not possible to inspect the delivery of religious education as an entitlement in the general studies programme.

361. Standards at A2-level have consistently been above the national average since the last inspection. In 2001, standards were well above the national average at the higher grades and above the national average overall. In 2002, standards at the higher grades were slightly below the national average, but above overall. The small numbers of entrants account for the recent fluctuations at the higher grades. The department has achieved a 100 per cent pass rate at A2-level since the last inspection. In lessons seen, the standard of work was high. Students were able to explain specialist terms, for example, eschatological verification, with confidence. They summarised and presented the arguments of philosophers such as Hick, Flew and Coplestone. The Katha Upanisad was explored using the Internet, and students were able to talk about current practice in Hinduism, illustrating responses with information about the Krishna Consciousness Society and pilgrimage, for example. Male and female students were involved in carefully researched presentations, and a student identified with special educational needs took an active part in oral work.
362. Students' attitudes and behaviour were very good. They speak with confidence about their enjoyment of and enthusiasm for the subject. They arrived at lessons promptly and well prepared. They completed assignments efficiently and keep their subject files in careful order. They are confident that their work is monitored well and appreciate the efforts of their teachers to help them meet the department's high expectations. They feel well supported in the development of essay-writing skills and receive helpful feedback on their work. Teachers constantly reinforce the subject's good examination record in the school, and students find this inspirational. Students spoke with clarity about the value of religious studies in the context of future careers, appreciating the way their thinking and experience have been broadened by their encounter with the discipline of philosophy and the beliefs and culture of Hinduism.
363. Overall the quality of teaching was good. It was supported by good subject knowledge which is conveyed with commitment and enthusiasm in a style which is appreciated by students. Students feel that they are treated in a mature way and respond to high expectations which are constantly reinforced. They feel confident to take an active part in lessons and make regular contributions through presentations on key issues. Independent learning is developed through research work, using texts and the Internet, although the range of strategies used to extend students is limited. Basic study skills are emphasised and attention is drawn regularly to the need to develop good examination techniques. Lessons were planned effectively and broad objectives were identified. Students were challenged and inspired by the teaching, for example, in work on the cosmological argument they were obviously encouraged by their ability to come to grips with key ideas and concepts. Teaching encourages tenacity, and students in Year 13, dealing with difficult concepts in Hinduism, pursued their research with determination, organising and editing detailed notes with expertise. Homework is used effectively to prepare for or extend classroom learning.
364. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is well supported by their work in religious studies. The examination syllabus provides a framework for the extensive study of belief and practice in Hinduism and students encounter a culture very different from that in which the school is set. They spoke clearly about the broader perspective they gain from studying the faith and are able to bring this knowledge and experience to bear on their

everyday encounters with others. They discuss moral issues with confidence and learn to think ideas through in order to produce logical arguments. There are opportunities to develop independent and collaborative learning skills. Students take part in a number of conferences during the course and the school was recently able to arrange a visit from the philosopher John Hick to enhance understanding.

365. The acting head of department has worked very hard to support the smooth running of work in the sixth form in the absence of the head of department and a very positive contribution has been made by specialist staff working outside their A2-level specialism. There has been good collaboration to develop and deliver appropriate materials to support students already embarked on the course, and also those who have just started. Students have adjusted well to the situation, and have adapted with consideration and maturity.
366. High standards in examination results have been maintained since the last inspection. All students in the sixth form now have access to their entitlement through the general studies course. The department could build on its success by extending the range of teaching strategies to cater for different learning styles and further promote independent learning.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for inspectors was English.

English

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

Strengths

- Teachers' high expectations of work and behaviour.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge.
- Students are given good opportunities to work independently and co-operatively.
- Students show positive attitudes, and apply themselves to their work with concentration.
- Students have good knowledge of what is expected of them, and of how they are progressing in their work.

Areas for development

- In relation to their prior attainment, students are not making the expected progress.
- Students' independent work sometimes needs to be more carefully planned and structured.
- The AS and A2-level specifications currently being taught do not build effectively on students' prior learning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is under-developed.

367. During the inspection, five lessons were observed, two in Year 12 and three in Year 13. Students' written work was scrutinised, and discussions held with staff and students. In addition, a range of documentation was studied.

368. Overall, results at A2-level have not shown a clear improvement since the last inspection, when attainment in the sixth form was judged to be average. Following a decline in recent years, results in the 2001 A2-level examination in English Language and Literature were below the national average. Although the proportion of students gaining a pass was the same as that nationally, the pattern of results was skewed towards the lower grades. Female students attained higher standards than males overall, which has been the case most years since the last inspection. This difference in attainment was larger than the national average. In 2002, results in the A2-level examination improved significantly. Although it is not yet possible to compare these results with the national picture, taking into account the total spread of grades it is likely that they will be in line with the national average. Almost half of the students gained grades A or B, and it is probable that this proportion will be above the national average.
369. The variation in standards found at A2-level has been reflected in the AS examinations in recent years, with results being satisfactory in 2001, but unsatisfactory in 2002. Reflecting comparatively low levels of performance in the most recent AS examination, at the beginning of Year 13 in 2002, six out of 13 students did not continue with English.
370. Work seen during the inspection reflected the overall pattern of examination results in recent years, and was below average. This work did not reveal a consistent difference between the attainment of male students and that of females, in part because much of it was the result of collaborative efforts in mixed gender groups.
371. In discussion and in their writing, by the end of the course students show understanding of a range of thematic, structural and stylistic features of texts. For some, this understanding is good. Students are mostly able to use specialist terms appropriately, and are able to support opinions with evidence. Some are able to comment in detail on how writers use language to achieve particular effects. However, many students lack confidence when required to engage in higher levels of interpretation and analysis. This was reflected in one Year 13 lesson: well-focused group discussion enabled students to comment on a range of literary and linguistic features in three texts – a poem by Edgar Allen Poe, a newspaper article, and a speech by former President Reagan. Guided by the teacher's clear explanations and instructions, the students were able to identify a number of linguistic techniques, such as the emotive language used in the speech. However, students were less secure in evaluating the success of these features in creating particular effects.
372. Progress made by students in individual lessons is sound, and sometimes good. However, in relation to their prior attainment, students are not making the expected progress during their AS and A2-level programme as a whole. This is largely attributable to the fact that the examination course currently followed does not build effectively on what the students have learned in Years 10 and 11. For example, in relating writers' techniques to meaning and purpose, students need to be able to use in this particular examination course a range of analytical frameworks. These frameworks include linguistic approaches which require a good knowledge of grammatical terminology, structures and effects. However, for many students this knowledge is insecure. During discussion, students communicated a strong view that they find this course particularly daunting. It is clear that this has detrimentally

affected the confidence and motivation of a significant number of students. This is reflected in the comparatively high proportion of students who discontinued their study of English at the end of Year 12 in 2002. However, the progress made by students with special educational needs is satisfactory.

373. The teaching of English is consistently sound or better, as was the case in the previous inspection. Students spoke very positively indeed about the quality of teaching they receive. Teachers' relationships with students are good, they have high expectations of work and behaviour, and they have well established routines to ensure that students get down to work quickly and productively in lessons. These factors combine to create a very positive atmosphere for learning, and impact directly on students' good attitudes and high levels of concentration. This is because a strong sense of purpose is established from the very beginning of lessons and no time is wasted in getting down to work. These strengths, combined with effective planning, clear lesson structure, and a high level of challenge, were shown in one Year 12 lesson on monologues. In this lesson, students were able to make good progress in their study of the structural, grammatical and word-level features of monologues through a series of presentations made by the students to other members of the group. The lesson also demonstrated the teacher's good subject knowledge. This is a significant strength in the teaching of the subject generally, and is a key factor in the sound progress that students are able to make in lessons.
374. Students are provided with numerous opportunities to work independently, and to develop their understanding through co-operative group activity. These opportunities enable them to think through ideas for themselves, and to apply skills of analysis previously learned. However, independent work sometimes needs to be more tightly planned and structured to enable students to be more carefully guided towards the main learning points. This is the case, for example, in some lessons where, following independent work which students have previously done in small groups, they are expected to take a lead in whole-class discussion on texts studied. In these circumstances, students' understanding is sometimes limited because the independent work has been too open-ended. The teacher, therefore, has to take the lead in discussion. Where this occurs, the teacher's good subject knowledge and clear explanations usually enable students to develop a sound understanding of the texts, and the approaches by which they can be studied. However, the benefits of very good opportunities for students to develop confidence and skill in their own use of analytical and evaluative techniques have been constrained by some limitations in the guidance provided.
375. Ongoing assessment is used effectively to provide feedback to students and to guide teaching. Marking is thoughtful, detailed and constructive, and usually provides clear advice on what students need to do to improve their work. The detailed feedback students receive from teachers is an important factor in their clear understanding of how they are progressing and what they need to do to achieve targets set. In discussion, students themselves expressed strong views on how helpful they find the supportive and constructive guidance they receive from teachers. Students also expressed strongly their appreciation of the fact that this help is often provided at length, outside of taught time.

376. The head of department co-ordinates sixth form provision efficiently. However, monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and standards are under-developed. This constrains the extent to which improvements can be planned and implemented systematically.
377. There were no significant issues for development identified in the previous inspection.