

INSPECTION REPORT

EASINGWOLD SCHOOL

Easingwold, York

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121664

Headteacher: Mrs Carey Chidwick

Reporting inspector: Linda Humphreys
7956

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th November 2002

Inspection number: 252150

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: York Road
Easingwold
York
North Yorkshire

Postcode: YO61 3EF

Telephone number: 01347 821451

Fax number: 01347 823303

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr W B Taylor

Date of previous inspection: 9th September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
7956	L Humphreys	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
19339	S Evasdaughter	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
4926	T Aspin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18989	B Mason	Team inspector	English	
23246	J Mitchell	Co-ordinator		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22906	B Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT) Physical education	
13189	P Walton	Team inspector	Design and technology	
10316	N Bertram	Team inspector	Geography	
24127	J Kidd	Team inspector	History	
24887	Y Salmons	Team inspector	French	

23480	M Harding	Team inspector	Religious studies	
19043	D Lewis	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
8159	K Wright	Team inspector	Art and design	
20619	J Hazelwood	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism	

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

3 Harrowby Road
West Park
Leeds
LS16 5HN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	8
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	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	15
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	19
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	20
PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	27
The school's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	28
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	29
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	31
Assessment	
Advice, support and guidance	
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?	33
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	34
Leadership and management	
Resources	

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

37

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Easingwold School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 19, serving the town of Easingwold and the surrounding rural area. Some pupils from York also attend. The school is bigger than most, and is presently oversubscribed. It has grown by about 140 pupils since the last inspection. The school serves a relatively advantaged community, and only 2.6 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than most schools. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority groups, none of whom speaks English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of need, is below average. Since the last inspection the school has gained Curriculum, Sportsmark and School Achievement Awards.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The effectiveness of the school is good. Standards at all ages are well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are good: many areas of the school's work are well led and managed. These good outcomes are achieved on an income which is broadly average, and so the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are well above average, and achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.
- Leadership provides a clear educational direction towards high academic standards.
- Many areas of the school's work are managed well.

What could be improved

- Sixth form attendance is not recorded accurately.
- The sixth form curriculum is not as good as it could be.
- Some areas of the school's work are not adequately managed.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form, or for a daily act of worship.

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 1996. Since then, improvement has been good. The school has maintained above average results in the sixth form, GCSE results have improved in line with the national rise, and results at age 14 have improved faster than in most schools. A number of innovations have been introduced since the arrival of the current headteacher, most of which are working well. All pupils aged 11 to 16 now have religious education, and accommodation has been improved. However, the school has not satisfactorily resolved the key issues of meeting the statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form and for a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Standards at age 14 are well above average, and have been rising faster over the past five years than has been the case nationally. GCSE results have improved at the same rate as in other schools and are also well above average, and AS- and A-level results have been consistently above average. The school sets demanding targets: in 2002 it reached some, but not others. Pupils' work reflects the high standards attained in external tests and examinations. Achievement is very good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are keen to come to school. They are co-operative, diligent and very eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils behave very well.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are happy, mature and articulate. They respect other people, and consider the opinions and values of others with tolerance.
Attendance	Attendance in Years 7 to 11 is well above the national average.

The records of sixth form attendance are not accurate enough for the school to know exactly which students are on school premises at any time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

All subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are taught well. The strengths of teaching are teachers' knowledge and expertise, high expectations and good planning of a range of activities and methods to involve pupils actively and to cater for their varying needs. These enable pupils to learn at a brisk rate, and to think for themselves to develop understanding. Few weaknesses in teaching were observed, and no consistently poor practice was identified. Pupils have very good number skills, and they are confident and articulate in speech and writing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broadly satisfactory for ages 11 to 16. A few pupils follow too many GCSE courses. Sixth form subjects have too little teaching time and there are too few non-examination courses. The statutory requirement for religious education in the sixth form is not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Pupils are supported well, and their academic needs are well met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for social and moral development is good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory, although not enough is done to prepare students for life in a culturally diverse society. Provision for spiritual development in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for, and their progress is tracked carefully through all years. Sixth form attendance is recorded unsatisfactorily.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership provides a clear direction towards high standards. Many, but not all, areas of the school's work are well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors know the school well and are committed to the drive to high standards. Statutory requirements for sixth form religious education and for one item of information in their annual report to parents are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Some aspects of performance are evaluated well, but, in some areas, evaluation lacks rigour.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well to promote high standards, but the design of the sixth form curriculum gives rise to an imbalance in expenditure. The school is very careful to make sure it obtains, and provides, good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Behaviour is good, and the school helps children to become mature and responsible. • Teaching is good and sets high expectations about achievement. • Children make good progress. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not feel well informed about how their children are getting on. • They do not feel that the school works closely with parents. • Some lessons are disrupted.

Inspectors endorse the positive views of parents and agree with some of their concerns. In some year groups, consultation meetings with parents come too late in the school year and there are no interim reports on pupils' progress. Written reports say more about attitudes to work than giving specific information about what pupils need to do to improve. However, systems for communicating with parents of pupils with special needs are good. The school plans to review its reporting system to parents. Although inspectors saw records of disruptive behaviour in the past, such instances were extremely rare during the inspection.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

EASINGWOLD SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form in Easingwold School is larger than in most schools, with 126 students in Year 12 and 103 in Year 13, which is about 50 more than when the school was last inspected. Most pupils choose to continue into the sixth form, which offers AS, A-level and a few vocational courses. The students in the sixth form reflect the nature of the school population as a whole. Attainment when students begin sixth form courses is average. Three quarters of students continue into higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Standards above the national average have been sustained since the last inspection, and students achieve well. This is brought about through good teaching and learning, supported by students' eagerness to do well. The courses offered meet students' aspirations and they are well served by the systems for academic and personal support. Leadership and management are good, and the sixth form is very cost effective.

Strengths

- Standards are above average and achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students' attitudes and personal development are very good.
- Leadership provides clear educational direction towards high academic standards.
- Many areas of sixth form work are managed very well.

What could be improved

- Attendance is not accurately recorded.
- Some areas of sixth form work are not adequately managed.
- The sixth form curriculum is not as good as it could be.
- Provision for students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements for religious education and a daily act of worship are not met.

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	Very good. Attainment is well above average and achievement is very good. The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning. Leadership and management are excellent.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Results have been well below average up to 2001, but are much improved in 2002. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Management of

	the subject is unsatisfactory.
Biology	Good. Very good teaching has resulted in very good learning, leading to improved results in 2002. The subject is well managed.
Design and technology	Excellent. Standards in the AS- and A-level courses are very high. Teaching is consistently of a very high quality. Students have a mature approach to the subject. Leadership and management are excellent.
ICT	Very good. This new course has been successfully introduced. Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching and marking. Leadership and management are very good.
Physical education	Good. Attainment is above average, and better than to be expected from students' GCSE results. Teaching, leadership and management are good.
Travel and tourism	Satisfactory. Attainment of the students who complete courses is above average. Teaching is good. Leadership is good in GNVQ leisure and tourism, but unsatisfactory in AVCE travel and tourism.
Art	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good. Research and independent study by students are particular strengths. Subject leadership and management are good.
Geography	Good. Good teaching and marking ensure good standards of learning. Fieldwork is used very effectively, but ICT is insufficiently used as a tool for stimulating independent learning. Leadership and management are good.
History	Very good. Attainment has improved steadily over the last three years and is now above average. Very good teaching and the requirement for students to take responsibility for their own learning are major contributory factors. Leadership and management are very good.
Religious studies	Very good. Standards are above average in both A and AS-level and are improving. Teaching is very good and students are hard working and committed. Leadership and management of the subject are good.
English literature	Good. Standards are rising and are above average. Teaching and learning are good. The subject is well led and efficiently managed.
French	Very good. Standards in French are above average. Teaching is very good and students are very enthusiastic about their learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

In addition, most other courses were sampled. Evidence suggests that attainment is similarly above average, and students' attitudes are just as enthusiastic as in those above.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The educational and personal support for students is good. Most subjects track students' progress very well and careers information is good. However, procedures for recording attendance are poor.
Effectiveness of the	Leadership is very good; it sets a clear direction towards high standards

leadership and management of the sixth form	and is successful in meeting the needs of all students in most respects. Management is good overall. Many areas are managed well, although some are not. Improvement planning lacks focus and is not well evaluated. The statutory requirement for religious education is not met.
---------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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"> Printed information is clear and helpful. School helped them to settle well. Tutors are accessible, and support and help are available for personal problems. They enjoy the sixth form. 	<p>Some students are concerned about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice about options for their immediate future; Help to study independently; How their work is marked; How school responds to the views of sixth formers.

Inspectors support the positive views of the students, and agree with some of their concerns. The help to study independently is not consistent in all subjects: while some subjects carefully structure Year 12 work to develop good study habits and skills, others do little. The quality of marking in a few subjects falls below the high quality in others. The school provides considerable careers advice, but some students feel ill prepared for choosing courses, and want more help with gap-year employment. The school also makes significant efforts to consult with students through questionnaires, focus groups and the sixth form council, but some students feel that responses take too long or are not helpful.

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

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.

1. Pupils' results are regularly well above national averages in national tests at age 14, and in GCSE, AS- and A-level examinations. Results at age 14 and 16 in 2002 are well above average. National comparisons for AS- and A-level results for 2002 were not available when this report was written. Results in national tests for 14 year olds and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C in GCSE have both increased over the past five years. The rate of improvement in the A*-C grades has been similar to the national rise, but the results at age 14 have improved faster than in other schools.
2. In 2001, fewer pupils gained five or more, or one or more, GCSE A*-G grades than in similar schools. It has been the school's policy to enter nearly all pupils for 10 GCSE examinations, when some might have done better by concentrating on fewer subjects. This policy is being changed. In 2002, more pupils reached this standard, but still fewer than in similar schools.
3. When pupils start in the school at age 11, their results in national tests are well above average. When the results they achieve in subsequent national tests, GCSE and AS- and A-level examinations are compared to those of pupils with similar starting points, these comparisons show that, at each stage, achievement is very good.

Teaching and learning are good.

4. Nearly all teaching is at least satisfactory, and a significant proportion is of high quality. The features of good and high quality teaching are the same in earlier years as in the sixth form. These are teachers' knowledge and expertise, high expectations and good planning which often includes a range of activities and methods which emphasise pupils' involvement. Pupils learn well, thanks to the high quality of teaching, and also because they themselves are keen to learn, co-operative, self-disciplined and willing to work hard.
5. In the very best lessons, subject knowledge and expertise are excellent. The teacher's use of language was a good model for pupils examining satire in English. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher knew how to provide the steps pupils needed to develop understanding of high level work. Very high expectations, such as presenting pupils with the uncompromising sophistication of Swift's satire, and a very demanding pace, are significant factors in how pupils learn effectively and reach high standards.
6. Planning is very efficient, and good use is made of time. Imaginative activities encourage pupils to learn very actively. For example, a geography lesson on what makes a good site for a settlement started from group work on settlements, moving on to considering where to place a settlement for a warrior tribe and having to articulate precisely the reasons for decisions. This carefully planned session enabled pupils to understand how compromises have to be made, as well as contributing effectively to pupils' literacy skills and awareness of the real world. This example was matched by many others seen during the week.
7. Pupils learn ICT from age 11 to 14 through a very well planned and meticulously designed and presented set of work units on the school intranet. This sets out not

only tasks for each lesson, but provides help and guidance which enable pupils to work with some autonomy and seek to find their own way out of difficulty.

8. Teachers use a wide range of methods for learning, but they nearly always seek to involve pupils. This is sometimes achieved through the provision of several activities for pupils to do in groups, and sometimes it is achieved through questioning, and asking pupils to put forward their ideas and explanations. A science lesson on energy transfer started with questions to test what pupils remembered from the previous lesson, including using some pupils to write their ideas on the board. The learning was reinforced through a group activity to identify energy transfers in a range of situations and construct their own flow-charts for each one. Discussing the outcomes of their experiments and how to draw the charts made pupils think hard about what they were doing and what it was teaching them.
9. In one of a very small number of unsatisfactory lessons, the work left by an absent regular teacher was not enough to fill the lesson or to stretch pupils' understanding, and in another, poor behaviour was not adequately dealt with. Weaker features of otherwise satisfactory lessons included inadequate presentation and questioning by teachers, a lack of focus in the learning planned, a lackadaisical pace and a limited range of methods. In one instance, lower attaining students in the sixth form were not given the additional support they needed, and in another students were not well briefed on how to use a lesson for private study.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.

10. The school aims to promote a love of learning and this is largely achieved. Pupils enjoy school and are eager to learn. Attendance of pupils aged 11 to 16 is well above average. Pupils appreciate what the school provides and respond to the high quality of teaching with hard work and good concentration in nearly all cases. Behaviour is very good. Pupils learn rapidly to work together and many pupils, from an early stage, can work independently in a mature fashion. They respect each other and the adults in the school community. Pupils' willingness to work hard to rise to the challenges set them is an important factor in the school's high standards.

Leadership provides a clear educational direction towards high academic standards.

11. The headteacher, senior managers and governors are committed to achieving high standards in all aspects of the school's work and make this vision explicit in their planning and expectations. The school maintains high standards, and standards are continuing to improve. Most staff make significant efforts to pursue improvement.

Many areas of the school's work are managed well.

12. Although subjects were not inspected in depth as part of the short inspection, it is clear that many departments whose sixth form work is managed well also do well for the rest of the school. For example, the mathematics department undertake a lot of effective analysis of data to help track pupils' progress. ICT for pupils aged 11 to 14 is carefully planned. The work programme for each year takes the form of learning units published on the school's intranet, which teachers and pupils use for lessons, and which are constantly available to pupils. Pupils' experience of the different aspects of ICT is recorded, and analysed, and the computerised system for this is meticulously designed and very effective in permitting sophisticated tracking of pupils' work and progress.

13. The school's pastoral arrangements are effective in ensuring that pupils feel secure and well cared for. Provision for pupils with a variety of special educational needs is good. The Challenge Award scheme programme is very well planned to be relevant to the needs of lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11, and gives them very useful experience of the world and the skills needed to cope. Careers education is very good. Most departments have good systems for tracking pupils' progress and helping them to achieve as well as possible. The management of administration, financial matters, support staff and the site is good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Sixth form attendance is not accurately recorded.

14. The way in which sixth form students' attendance is recorded is unreliable. Many students have as much as half of school time as private study. Year 13 students are allowed to study independently and are required to be in school only when lessons are due. Many, therefore, do not attend registration, and tutors have to rely on the students present to comment as to who may or may not be in school. These records are not accurate enough for the school to know exactly which students are on school premises at any time.

The sixth form curriculum is not as good as it could be.

15. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of AS- and A-level courses, and an adequate number of vocational courses to complement what is available locally. However, the allocation of time to all subjects is below the recommended minimum for sixth form courses, and further mathematics is given only one lesson. There are very few courses other than those leading to examinations and none of these, with the exception of citizenship which runs only in Year 12, is compulsory. There is no provision for religious education. Because the time allocated to examination courses is low, and because there is little other timetabled provision, many sixth formers are left with considerable time in which to pursue their own studies, particularly in Year 13. Not all subjects ensure that students learn to use this time profitably. There are relatively few extra-curricular activities for those students who are not members of bands, choirs, drama groups or school sports teams.

Some areas of the school's work are not adequately managed.

16. The school's checking systems have not picked up on some of the aspects of the school's work which are not satisfactory. These include the way sixth form attendance is recorded, and the way the design of the sixth form curriculum affects the cost of the sixth form in relation to the rest of the school.
17. The school expects that sixth form students will have opportunities to use and develop key skills of communication, number and ICT through their subject courses, but no one keeps an eye on whether each student is getting enough opportunities in each key skill. In several subjects, students do not have enough access to ICT. Any student following any combination of art, design and technology, mathematics and physical education might find his or her access to ICT very limited.
18. The school has recognised that its policy of entering nearly all students for 10 GCSE examinations is not in the interests of some students, but the pace of change in this policy has been slow.

19. The school's improvement planning sets out worthwhile objectives directed to raising standards, but does not prioritise them well enough. Arrangements to evaluate what progress is made towards the targets set are not rigorous enough to promote rapid development.
20. No satisfactory interim arrangements have been made for the management of the advanced travel and tourism course during the absence of the course leader on sick leave. The allocation of responsibilities within the modern foreign languages department is not clearly established. Some science curriculum planning is inadequate and, in sixth form chemistry, students' progress in lessons is not tracked well enough.

The school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form, or for a daily act of worship.

21. There is no compulsory religious education course for sixth form students, and the requirement for a daily act of worship is not met.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

22. In order to further improve standards and the quality of education, the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Use a system for recording sixth formers' attendance that is reliable and accurate.
- (2) Review the sixth form curriculum in order to:
 - ensure that all departments make equally good provision to develop and support students' independent study skills, so that free time is used to best effect;
 - provide activities in addition to examination courses to enrich the experience of all sixth form students;
 - ensure adequate time for all subject courses.
- (3) Improve the management of the areas of the school's work where it is weak, so that more rigorous evaluation leads to a faster pace of change.
- (4) Meet statutory requirements for religious education and a collective act of worship.

Sixth form

In addition to the issues set out above, governors should also:

- (1) Improve provision for spiritual development in the sixth form.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	39
	Sixth form	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		79

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7– 11							
Number	2	15	13	7	2	0	0
Percentage	5	38	33	18	5	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	9	19	33	9	0	0	0
Percentage	13	27	47	13	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 – 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points in Years 7 – 11, and more than one percentage point in the sixth form.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1119	229
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	26	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	69	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	103	117	220

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	80	78
	Girls	108	94	97
	Total	187	174	175
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (83)	79 (82)	79 (81)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	67 (45)	60 (61)	48 (36)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	81	86	78
	Girls	109	99	95
	Total	190	185	173
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (86)	85 (86)	79 (86)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	67 (53)	64 (53)	49 (43)
	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	106	96	202

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	75	96	101
	Girls	62	89	95
	Total	137	185	196
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	68 (69)	92 (90)	97 (98)
	National	51.2 (48)	89 (91)	94.6 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48.3 (47)
	National	40 (39)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	35	43	78
	Average point score per candidate	13.8 (n/a)	19.6 (n/a)	17.0 (n/a)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (n/a)	18 (n/a)	17.5 (n/a)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	31	39	70	4	4	8
	Average point score per candidate	15.0	19.9	17.7	4.5	16.5	10.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

Figures in brackets refer to 2000, the year before the latest reporting year, 2001.

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	1331	24	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	81.85
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	636

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.4
-----------------------------------------------------------	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	23.74
Key Stage 4	20.64
Sixth form	19.38

Financial year	2001-2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	3860114
Total expenditure	3908348
Expenditure per pupil	3070
Balance brought forward from previous year	372189
Balance carried forward to next year	323955

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1348
Number of questionnaires returned	611

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	51	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	48	5	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	55	5	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	57	13	4	3
The teaching is good.	33	56	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	46	20	4	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	40	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	27	47	16	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	36	51	2	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	48	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	44	10	2	13

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

23. Results in AVCE, AS- and A-level examinations in 2001 are above average. In 2002, unconfirmed results are less good in AS-level examinations, but higher in A-level. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm that standards are above average. Varying numbers of students taking examinations in different years makes it difficult to compare results, but, in general, the school is maintaining standards somewhat above the national average. Taking account of students' attainment in GCSE examinations just before they enter the sixth form, results in 2001 show that students achieve very well, gaining standards in A-level which are significantly higher than most students with similar GCSE scores. The comparison for 2002 is not yet available.
24. The average points scored in AVCE, AS- and A-level examinations in 2001 are above national averages, taken overall. However, there are significant differences between the average points scored in different subjects at A-level. Average points in design and technology are very high and in business studies they are well above average. Results are above average in art, mathematics and sociology, and average in English literature, French, history, religious studies and general studies. The average points scored in geography and physics are below average, and in biology, chemistry and geology they are well below average. In over half of subjects, all students gained a pass grade at A-level. Results were outstanding in design and technology and home economics, where all 11 students gained the higher A or B grades.
25. When students enter the sixth form, their attainment in GCSE examinations is similar to most new sixth formers. Good teaching and their own very positive attitudes to work enable them to make very good progress over each year, and they achieve very well. The rates of retention of students are good, both within the academic year and from Year 12 to Year 13.
26. Students have skills of literacy and oral expression which are well above average. These skills are well developed in earlier years, and students are provided with good opportunities to continue to develop them in most subjects. Students can express themselves cogently in discussion and enjoy arguing a case. They develop good use of specialist language for different subjects. They make good notes in response to teachers' presentations in class or when reading and researching independently. They write good quality essays and coursework projects. ICT skills support writing and research activities. Thanks to the high quality of mathematics teaching in earlier years, students have the numeracy skills necessary to support learning in other subjects.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

27. At the time of the last inspection attitudes to the school were judged to be very good and this remains the case.
28. Students are extremely supportive of their school and enjoy being in the sixth form. They behave in a mature and responsible fashion, setting an excellent example for younger pupils. Both girls and boys give of their time to provide a successful 'Listeners' service to younger pupils who may need support across a range of

personal issues. Indeed, it was one of the students who suggested that this service be set up. Sixth form students are active in organising the school house events, the school council, and other activities. The school makes significant efforts to consult with students through questionnaires, focus groups and the sixth form council, to give them a chance to voice their views. For example, students have been consulted about improvements to the sixth form accommodation, although some expressed disappointment that the new building would be completed too late for them to enjoy.

29. In class, students are attentive, assertive and articulate, and listen well and sensibly to the views of their peers and the staff. In general they are mature and happy. There is no evident racism, homophobia and sexism amongst these well-adjusted and considerate individuals. They bond well together and appreciate the support that tutors offer them.
30. It is not possible to assess the attendance of students, as the systems for keeping records of attendance are not reliable. Students in Year 13 enter into an agreement with senior staff so that they are not required in school at the start of the day if their lessons begin later in the day, and they are allowed to go into the town or home if they have a lengthy gap between lessons. However, the school's system for recording attendance does not provide a clear idea of which students are present in the sixth form at any one time.
31. A significant number of students feel that they are not always supported well in the development of personal learning skills. Some subjects have a well thought out and organised approach to this, which students appreciate. In psychology, for example, the tutors have established a subject website where students have access to a range of reference materials and ideas for independent study. However, some other subjects do not provide guidance. Sometimes this leads to students wasting time, but most students do learn to work independently.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. Teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The features which characterise teaching are teachers' knowledge and expertise, high expectations, and good planning which often includes a range of activities and methods.
33. As students are very keen to learn, they respond to enthusiastic teaching with their own enthusiasm and respect. Lessons are characterised by a mutual enjoyment of learning and an atmosphere of productive collaboration, which are factors in the high standards attained. Teachers and students both work hard in pursuit of the school's aim of inspiring a love of learning.
34. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects, examination requirements and what students need in order to learn. French teachers have excellent command of the language, which provides a good model for students and enables them to develop very good speaking and listening skills. In an ICT lesson, the teacher's knowledge was evident in very clear explanations of relational databases. One excellent aspect of some teachers' expertise is the way in which they weave into lessons opportunities to reflect on wider considerations. For example, in a history lesson, a debate on the merits of a political leader encouraged students to draw parallels with contemporary politics, as well as forcing them to display courage in defence of their views. Expertise is also evident in the way teachers provide information while sensitively drawing contributions from students, so that they participate effectively from the start of lessons. Often, clear explanations of complex ideas and concepts enable students to

move rapidly on to higher levels. A demonstration of shaping acrylic with precision set a high standard for students to emulate.

35. Teachers have high expectations of the quantity and quality of work which students produce. In many cases, this is shown in the rapid pace set. It is also evident in the uncompromising standards expected, which insist on students making maximum intellectual effort. For example, a starter activity in a biology lesson on inheritance not only reinforced the knowledge of the topic which students gained for GCSE, but made them think very, very hard at a brisk pace. This is also typical of how the best teaching is carefully and imaginatively planned, so that much of the learning is enjoyable and exciting. For example, an imaginative task in a religious studies lesson taught students to understand the concepts of futuristic and realised eschatology in the Gospels. Thanks to the design of the activity, students came to grips with very challenging material, and the teacher's probing questioning extended their understanding.
36. Planning identifies very clear objectives for learning and, in nearly all subjects, provides careful steps to the goal. Teachers also provide good support to individuals as they learn, which usually enables students of all levels of attainment to make good progress. This is seen in detailed and helpful comments on written work, and in the way teachers observe how students are progressing through an activity and intervene with questioning or comment to support, re-direct or extend learning. The best feature of teachers' planning is the fact that it is aimed at enabling students to work their way to knowledge, understanding and solutions to problems, rather than presenting them with an easy path. Teachers know very well how to provide this, and only a few fail to provide the contexts and the activities to make it happen.
37. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection, but a few lessons had some weaker features. In several cases, this was because teachers talked or demonstrated for too long rather than allowing students to take a more active part in the lesson. In some chemistry lessons there was some lack of clarity in the objectives for the lesson, in the contexts in which activities were set and in explanations. Lower attaining students in a physics lesson were not well catered for, as no additional means to help them learn had been devised. A lesson where Year 12 students could prepare English coursework away from the classroom was not well used by all of them, and the teacher did not check on them. There was also one example in a history lesson of the poor attitudes to learning of a few students forcing the teacher to concentrate on questioning them at the expense of others in the group for part of the lesson.

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

38. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory overall. A wide range of subjects is available at AS- and A-level and, although the number of vocational courses is limited, it is adequate considering the school's local circumstances and its proximity to York where there is much wider vocational provision. The school currently has plans to extend the range of vocational courses. The needs of students are taken into account in constructing the curriculum, and most of the courses on offer attract adequate numbers. The course content in most subjects is well structured, and some make good provision for students to learn independently with well-targeted activities. Art is a notable leader in this respect as students are expected to carry out significant amounts of their own research, and opportunities for independent learning are also strong in design and technology and French. The opportunities for work experience in

Belgium and Germany are very valuable. Some departments have made slower progress in developing independent learning strategies, and plans for developing them across the whole of the sixth form are at an early stage. A study skills day for students in Year 12 is a recent positive innovation in teaching good independent study habits. Sixth formers have generally good access to computers, including e-mail and the Internet, but the extent to which the use of ICT is built into courses varies between subject departments.

39. There is no provision for all students to follow a sixth form course in religious education, and the school therefore fails to meet this statutory requirement. All students in Year 12 follow a well-structured course in citizenship. A very good lesson was seen in which role-play was used very effectively to highlight the problems faced by asylum seekers. However, this course does not continue into Year 13.
40. The allocation of time to AS- and A-level subjects is below the recommended minimum for teaching in the sixth form. The allocation of a single period for A-level further mathematics is unsatisfactory. There are very few opportunities for students to follow courses other than those leading to examinations, and none of these, apart from citizenship in Year 12, are compulsory. The take-up of courses of this kind is often small. For example, only a handful of students take the opportunity for recreational physical education, and the GCSE language courses in Spanish and Russian attract only small numbers. There is no specific policy for enriching the curriculum of gifted and talented students. The school expects subject departments to identify opportunities to extend the experience of these students, but there is no evidence that this is monitored.
41. Because the time allocated to examination courses is low, and because there is little other timetabled provision, many sixth formers have a good deal of time available to pursue their own studies, particularly in Year 13. For example, a typical student taking three subjects to A-level, and with no other time-tabled commitments, may have half the week allocated to private study time. Subject areas do not all ensure that students use this time profitably.
42. The school's policy for delivering key skills in the sixth form intends that students may achieve some accreditation in communications and ICT. However, there are no time-tabled lessons, and it is expected that skills be acquired through carrying out accredited work in subject areas. A curriculum map has been drawn up identifying possible contributions from the various subjects. The provision is good in some departments, such as geography, history and psychology. There is, as yet, no adequate system for monitoring the effectiveness of the key skills provision across subject areas, although there are plans to do so.
43. There are some good opportunities for students to take part in activities outside lesson time, such as in drama, English and music. A debating society and a film club have recently been started, and sixth formers organise the annual house drama competition. Sixth formers carry out a good deal of charity work, and all Year 12 students undertake some form of community service. Work in the community also includes the provision of Christmas lunch for local senior citizens. Students form a core of players and singers who take part in overseas music tours at regular intervals. Language students have the opportunity to undertake work experience in Europe. However, there is relatively little for those sixth formers who do not play in bands or choirs or who are not members of school sports teams or drama groups.

44. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory overall. Although there is no whole school policy for this provision, a well-conceived programme of 'Thoughts for the day' has been devised by the recently appointed co-ordinator for spiritual and moral education, intended for use in assemblies and form periods. Some form tutors follow the guidance given by the programme effectively, but its use is inconsistent and form periods do not always have any identifiable spiritual content. Some subject areas succeed in including a spiritual dimension in their work. In history, for example, the seminar style of teaching leads students to an awareness and understanding of the beliefs of their peers and of others. However, not all departments have identified opportunities for developing spiritual awareness to an equal extent. There is no compulsory non-examination course of religious education in the sixth form and no daily act of collective worship.
45. Provision for moral development is good. The citizenship course in Year 12 provides some very good opportunities for developing moral awareness. The lack of a similar Year 13 course is a significant lost opportunity to develop this important area further. However, many subject courses take opportunities arising from subject matter within syllabuses to develop students' moral awareness. For example, Year 12 students engaged in a lively discussion on the origins of morality. In a biology lesson, a keen debate developed on the morality of testing foetuses for genetic defects. The history department promotes an ethos of mutual respect between students in lively discussion, and, in geography, students develop an awareness of how understanding the ways of life of others is important in helping to resolve human and environmental conflicts.
46. Provision for the social development of students is good. Students show a very mature attitude towards each other and towards their teachers. A strong atmosphere of mutual respect pervades the sixth form. Group work features strongly in many subjects. Most lessons are a partnership in which students and teachers work together towards the common goal of achieving and maintaining high standards. Outside the classroom, sixth formers make significant contributions to the life of the school. The school council, made up of sixth formers, takes part in running the year councils in the main school and has a positive role to play in the management of the school. Volunteers take part in the school's 'Listeners' scheme to counsel younger pupils. Sixth form students are good role models for pupils in the rest of the school.
47. Provision for cultural development within the sixth form is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for students to extend their cultural horizons through out-of-school activities and within some subject areas. In music, for example, sixth formers feature strongly in the various musical groups which perform regularly and travel abroad. The annual house drama competition is organised by sixth form students who supervise the entire competition. Opportunities for students to participate in activities such as history conferences, visits to theatres, and the newly formed debating society all contribute to cultural development. However, the school does not adequately prepare all its students for life in a culturally diverse society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

48. In the previous inspection it was judged that there were very good systems for tracking individual and group progress. These standards have been maintained: procedures for assessing the attainment and progress of students, diagnosing their learning needs and tracking their progress throughout their time in Years 12 and 13

are very good overall. There are, however, some subjects where provision and practice are less effective, including chemistry, French and physical education. No evidence of assessment in AVCE travel and tourism was presented for inspection.

49. Students' academic progress is mostly very well tracked and recorded. All subjects complete regular sheets on how each student is doing throughout Years 12 and 13, and the information provided by subject teachers is followed up by form tutors. The quality of these tutorials is partly dependent on the quality of the assessment in individual subjects.
50. Thirty per cent of students who returned a questionnaire before the inspection identified marking of work and immediate feedback as a weakness. The inspection found that, in the majority of subjects, work is carefully marked and there is very good quality feedback to students that helps them to improve. Very good practice, for example, was seen in all mathematics lessons, where careful marking of homework is used to identify and correct misconceptions and refine students' understanding. Advice and guidance for students on how to improve written assignments are similarly very good in English. In French, marking is regular and thorough, and provides very good continual guidance to students on how to improve, but is not linked to examination grading and criteria.
51. The majority of subjects use very well the information they derive from marking work to guide their planning. There is excellent practice in design and technology and mathematics, where a thorough audit of provision and results is used rigorously to identify areas for improvement, and make amendments.

Advice, support and guidance

52. At the time of the last inspection the school's provision for students' welfare generally was satisfactory and for special educational needs it was good. This situation has improved. The educational and personal support offered to students is good overall. Students feel that they are supported well by their tutors both generally and on personal matters. The school offers a very broad programme of information and support to students to guide them into selecting the most appropriate courses. While students are in Year 11, there are two assemblies with a panel of staff and students to question about sixth form courses, and a post-16 courses evening for prospective students and parents with which current students assist. Every student is interviewed individually and can arrange a further meeting if they are unsure of which course to follow. Once GCSE results are published, senior staff are available in school to advise prospective students, and a third of all students take advantage of this useful opportunity.
53. However, some students do not feel that the guidance they receive is sufficiently helpful to assist in the selection of the best courses to suit them. They feel that teachers are keen to encourage students to take up their own course rather than having students' best interests at heart. Some would like to attend some lessons in subjects they are interested in, so that they could gain a more realistic feel for the course. The school is making plans to give this opportunity to Year 10 pupils.
54. The newly appointed head of sixth form is already making some effective changes to provision. There is now a study skills day for all sixth formers at the beginning of the academic year and there are plans for sixth form staff to work with Year 11 tutors so that the latter can more effectively advise their tutor groups on post-16 choices. There

are also lunchtime 'mingles' for Year 11 pupils to get together with current sixth formers.

55. The school's procedures for monitoring students' attendance are poor. The way in which attendance is recorded is unreliable. Many students are not in formal lessons for as much as half the school day across the two-week timetable. Year 13 students are allowed to study independently and are required to be in school only when lessons are due. Many, therefore, do not attend registration and tutors take information from other students present as to the whereabouts of others. A significant minority of students are also late to lessons.
56. The school provides an extensive programme of careers information to students, ranging from employers and university admissions officers visits to a careers fair and higher education conference. The standard of careers advice available is very good, and a programme of response to students' individual requests is outstanding. For example, when a student requested advice on the likelihood of her success in a profession, the requirements of the course were discussed alongside her academic and extra-curricular activities with a view to boosting her confidence in her likely success. When some students expressed interested in careers as commercial pilots, a pilot was invited in. However, in spite of this, a number of sixth form students are not entirely happy with the provision of careers information. Their reasons are that some feel that guidance neglects alternatives to university, and others see the careers advice as more geared to work on graduation rather than work available in a gap year, which is what they feel would be more useful to them at this time.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

57. As at the time of the last inspection, the school works well with parents in many respects. Parents are very positive in their views of the school. They are very pleased, for example, with the good progress that students make, that they are challenged to perform well and with the good behaviour and teaching. They have great confidence in the headteacher. They also feel that there are some areas which need further development.
58. A number of parents raised concerns about the amount of disruption that was caused in some classes by a small number of pupils. Inspectors found that there was no disruption in any of the sixth form classes. A very few students sometimes require skilful handling, and teachers were observed in a couple of lessons doing this in an accomplished manner. Students apply themselves diligently to their studies.
59. Parents do not feel well informed about progress. They are concerned that the information they receive regarding the progress of their children arrives too late in the year for it to be useful in tackling any problems that may be preventing their children from doing their best in their studies. The single report that is sent to parents does not keep parents fully informed about the progress of their children. It concentrates more on general issues and attitudes to study rather than on giving precise information to help students and parents understand what students need to do to gain the best possible grade in examinations.
60. Students agree with the positive views of parents in that they feel they are taught well and are given an appropriate level of challenge. They feel that the school helped them to settle into sixth form life well. They appreciate the accessibility of their tutors, and they enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it to others. A significant number of

students are concerned about the advice they receive about future options. Some are rightly concerned about the help they get to study independently and about the way their work is marked. Although the school consults with students through questionnaires, focus groups and the sixth form council, some students feel that responses take too long or are not helpful.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

61. Leadership is very good and management is good. The headteacher, governors and staff are committed to reaching high academic standards through good teaching and learning, and this aim is realised in the results of examinations in both Years 12 and 13. The sixth form is a hard-working, inclusive community where good relationships are based on mutual respect. There is an emphasis on meeting the needs of all students, which is evident in the wide range of examination courses offered, and in the effective provision made by many subjects for assessing and providing for students' learning needs. The newly appointed head and assistant head of the sixth form have made a good start.
62. Governors are well informed about the sixth form, and together with senior staff in the school, contribute to its ethos and direction. However, the school does not meet the statutory requirement for religious education for all students, and the school's procedures for monitoring sixth form students' attendance are unsatisfactory.
63. Some aspects of the work of the sixth form are monitored well. Data analysis is used effectively to set precise targets for individuals, and to track overall performance in subject areas. Procedures for tracking students' attainment and progress are very good in most subjects and enable form tutors and subject teachers to support students well. However, aspects such as attendance recording and relative cost have not been monitored. The post-16 development plan sets out a large number of objectives, most of which are worthwhile in themselves, but which are not clearly prioritised. The majority of these have no target date for completion, nor identify the resources needed. The plan reflects the school's priorities for improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning, but lacks cohesion. Very few objectives have adequate identified evaluation procedures. Students' views of the quality of their sixth form experience are taken into account through a questionnaire, and through the school council.
64. The leadership and management of post-16 programmes by heads of department are generally good. In some subject courses, such as geography, history, ICT and religious education, they are very good, and there is excellent practice in mathematics and design and technology. Responsibilities for the French course within the modern foreign languages department are not clearly understood. In chemistry, although the subject is run well day to day, students' progress in lessons is not tracked well enough and schemes of work are inadequate. When the school was inspected, no satisfactory interim arrangements for the oversight of the AVCE travel and tourism course had been made in the absence of the course leader on sick leave.
65. In terms of the above average standards achieved in examinations, the sixth form is very cost effective. When financial decisions are being taken, comparisons are made with practice in other local schools, and competitive prices obtained. However, the school does not analyse the income and expenditure related to the sixth form. This analysis shows that the sixth form at present subsidises the earlier years to a

significant extent. This is because of the design of the sixth form curriculum. Although the school offers a very wide choice of examination courses, in order to meet students' requests as far as possible, the time allowed for each course is below average. Also, very few additional courses are offered to enrich students' experience in the sixth form. This means that the costs of staffing are relatively low, even though some courses are run with small numbers of students.

Resources

66. The provision of teaching staff is good overall. There are sufficient specialist staff to meet the requirements of the sixth form curriculum and staff expertise is very good in French, history, and mathematics, and outstanding in design and technology. The school employs two full-time foreign language assistants, which enhances languages teachers' own fluent language skills. There are adequate support staff, and they are organised to work flexibly to provide support where required.
67. Arrangements for professional development are good. Newly qualified staff are well supported by department colleagues and the school's provision. They are given access to examination board information seminars to ensure they are familiar with the requirements of work at sixth form level. Work with initial training students is also well organised. The professional development needs of all staff are identified in departments and passed on to senior staff and governors through the departmental link system. Priorities for improving the quality of teaching and learning are identified through analysis of students' attainment and included in the performance management action plan. The school also has a programme of lesson observation by heads of department and senior staff. The school has launched a major initiative to improve the quality of teaching and learning and has provided information and training events for all staff over the past 18 months. Ideas from the literacy and numeracy strategy have been shared. Teachers who are interested in pursuing an individual research project in this area are encouraged to do so.
68. Provision of administrative staff is good and the school site is well managed and kept in good order by committed staff.
69. Accommodation is good. The school is set on a pleasant campus, and, in response to the previous inspection, new classrooms for mathematics and new science laboratories have been built. The sixth form centre is too small for the current numbers of students, as it was designed for a much smaller sixth form. A new sixth form block is to be built at the end of the term when the school was inspected, and the canteen is also to be refurbished. Accommodation for art, biology, and French is good, as is the drama room for theatre studies. Most subjects are obliged to teach some lessons in rooms in other areas, which makes it hard to create a specialist learning environment and arrange storage for resources. This is a particular disadvantage to the vocational leisure, travel and tourism courses. The library provides a good atmosphere for private study and is well used and efficiently run. The school has no sports hall, which restricts the physical education department to offering courses that are more theory based than practical.
70. The provision of resources is good. Most departments have good levels of books and equipment, and provision is very good in mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. Many departments find it hard to get enough access to computers. The school has more computers for its size than most schools, but these are used for ICT lessons for over two thirds of the timetable. The school plans additional spending on computers to alleviate this situation. The library is well stocked

with fiction and good texts in the literature, mathematics, media and physical education sections, but provision for geography, history and the sciences is inadequate. The reference section contains a comprehensive range of texts covering all areas of the curriculum, and a variety of magazines caters for a wide range of cultural, travel and recreational interests. ICT facilities are good, with software and CD-ROM titles covering various curriculum areas.

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

In the inspection, 13 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
Mathematics	4	75	62	25	15	2.75	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	13	100	87	31	43	6.5	5.8
Chemistry	13	67	91	8	43	2.3	5.9
Biology	17	70	88	6	34	3.2	5.3
Design and technology	8	100	91	100	30	9.8	5.4
Travel and tourism	8	87	84	38	21	10.5	10.1
Art	17	100	96	50	46	6.8	6.6
Geography	18	88	92	6	38	4.3	5.7
History	9	100	88	44	36	5.3	5.5
Religious studies	3	100	93	67	38	8.0	5.9
English literature	13	84	95	46	37	5.9	5.9
French	6	83	89	50	38	5.7	5.6

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Leisure and tourism	5	60	N/a	20	N/a	0	N/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Courses are offered in mathematics, further mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics and geology. Mathematics, chemistry and biology were inspected in depth and the other courses

were sampled. One lesson of both physics and geology was seen. Teaching in the physics lesson was satisfactory, and in the geology lesson it was good. Geology results are a little below average. Physics results, well below average in 2001, improved significantly in 2002. Provision for further mathematics is unsatisfactory. Students take this AS course in Year 13. They complete two thirds of the course within their normal A-level lessons in Year 13 without regular additional lesson time. One third of the course is completed through independent study with very limited teacher support and guidance.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are well above average in Year 13 and achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Excellent detailed auditing and analysis of information are used well to improve provision and performance.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities to use computers to support learning.
- Lesson time is below the recommended level, which affects the standards of attainment in the more difficult modules.

71. A-level results over several years have been consistently above average, although standards on entry to the course are generally average. In both 2001 and 2002, all students taking the course gained pass grades, with about one third gaining A or B grades. The policy of the department to prepare students for some of the harder modules in pure mathematics, so that they are better prepared for university courses containing a mathematical element, has meant that only an average number of students achieved the higher grades. Increasing the proportion of students of higher attainment who gain the highest grades has been rightly identified as an area for development, and teachers are doing all that is possible within the available curriculum time to achieve this goal.
72. AS-level results in 2001 were well above average, with almost all achieving a pass and with a very high proportion of A grades. In 2002 the average grade in the mechanics module was A, and in the statistics module it was B. The number of students taking the subject almost doubled as the requirement for entry to the course was lowered. Students with very modest GCSE results were admitted to the course and achieved very well. Standards of attainment overall are very good in relation to students' previous GCSE results. In all courses boys and girls achieve equally well.
73. In both AS- and A-level, the department recommends the minimum GCSE grades for entry, and students are advised if teachers feel they will find the course very difficult, but they are allowed to try if they are determined. As a result, some leave the courses at an early stage, but no more than would be expected. The students who decide not to continue to A-level are influenced by career choices and are not necessarily those who gain lower AS-level grades.
74. Standards in Year 13 are well above average in all areas of mathematics. Due to the accelerated rate at which students are expected to work in Year 12, and the high demands of the chosen modules, students have very good algebraic skills. This

means that they have no difficulty in manipulating expressions and equations in their optional modules in mechanics and statistics. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course but standards are already above average. Those with lower standards of entry are on target to achieve at least a pass grade, and those with higher prior attainment have already covered a considerable amount of the course. Written work is generally well presented, arguments are clearly communicated and students consistently use correct notation and terminology, following the very good example of their teachers.

75. Teaching is very good overall and hence learning is also very good. In A-level lessons for students in Year 13 with the highest attainment, who are also studying further mathematics, the teaching is excellent and thus students move on at a very rapid pace. Teachers have very good subject expertise. This is used to develop each small stage of learning carefully so that students understand concepts rather than perform tasks and also develop strategies to solve problems. In all lessons, question and answer techniques are used well to make the students think for themselves, and to review their understanding. In one excellent lesson, the students wrote down their answers to challenging questions on individual whiteboards. These were then displayed to the teacher simultaneously. The teacher assessed the students' graph sketching skills and used this information to direct further work and match it to the students' needs. All lessons are carefully planned, and the regular homework and independent study tasks are securely based on learning in the lesson, so that students can reinforce and develop their skills and understanding effectively at home or in study periods.
76. Students say that they choose mathematics courses based on the reputation of the subject for getting good results in public examinations as well as their own personal preference. They feel well informed about their progress, and are confident that marking of work and immediate feedback help them improve. They show a good degree of maturity in their approach to the subject and are sufficiently independent, but also know when to seek help. These very good attitudes contribute to the standards attained.
77. The very good provision is a result of excellent management that has clearly built on very good management of the subject in the past. Very careful and detailed audits of provision and results, and subsequent development plans, are exemplary and the subject manager is constantly seeking ways in which to improve. Since the previous inspection, accommodation has been improved and is now very good. However, the computer room, originally dedicated to mathematics, is no longer easily accessible. Although graphic calculators are used in lessons, greater access to a computer suite is desirable, particularly for statistics courses. The time allocated to the subject is below average, and this has a direct impact on the standards attained in the more difficult modules, in both AS and A-level courses, and thus on the numbers of higher grades.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge supports students well and helps them produce good quality notes.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is infectious and leads to very good learning in some lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Marking and tracking procedures do not always ensure that all students make the best possible progress.
- Lesson planning is not focused sharply enough, and students' efforts are not always directed firmly enough towards the purpose of the lesson.
- Schemes of work and lesson plans do not take enough account of the needs of individual students.

78. When they come into the sixth form, students' attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Most students have gained at least grade B in double award science, though a few may join the course with grade C. On average, students achieve satisfactory grades in AS- and A-level examinations in relation to their starting points, but this includes some who achieve well and others whose achievement is unsatisfactory.
79. A-level grades have been well below the national average for several years, including in 2001, the latest year for which national data is available. A significant minority of students have found the subject difficult, have lost motivation, and have failed to gain a pass. Results in 2002, however, were much better than in 2001: nearly two fifths of a small group of students gained grades A or B and all passed. AS-level results have been much better, and the school reports that the introduction of AS courses has had a markedly beneficial effect on motivation and achievement in chemistry. In 2001, for example, nine students out of 15 gained grades A or B, and only one student did not pass. In 2002, all students passed and nine out of 11 gained grades A or B. AS-level courses have run for only two years, but early signs are that about half of students who take AS choose not to continue with A-level. These include some with high AS-level grades. Standards in the work seen are broadly average; some students' work is above average, but some is below.
80. It is evident from the work seen that most students in Year 12 are slow to adapt to the different demands of sixth form study. Parts of the chemistry curriculum are based on material already covered in earlier years, rather than using new material to inspire students' interest while at the same time developing the skills they need for advanced study. For example, students can calculate amounts of chemical substances using mole calculations, but teachers do not do enough to relate these calculations to the exciting new material appropriate to this part of the course. In contrast, in a good lesson on organic structures, students showed that they understand how the conventional notation describes molecules that we cannot see. In response to good teaching they also showed that they are coming to an appreciation of the concept of a reaction mechanism, even though this was not the primary purpose of the lesson. Overall, achievement in Year 12 is in line with expectation.
81. In Year 13, the best work is above average, and shows that some students have the potential to gain the highest grades, but overall standards are average. Students set up and interpret a Born-Haber cycle using the correct notation, and they can tabulate properties of elements to illustrate periodic trends. They understand the principles for setting up an electrochemical cell and the special nature of the aromatic ring. Their practical skills are good.
82. Teaching is satisfactory. Experienced staff use their knowledge to enthuse students, especially in practical work. In the best lessons, a lively pace and activities well judged to hold students' interest are used to improve their understanding and lessen the need to learn work by heart. Teachers explain chemical ideas clearly, and students

become well involved. When students have difficulties, teachers are most diligent in helping them to understand, either in the lesson or at some other time. This support is of very high quality, and contributes significantly to students' overall progress.

83. However, in lessons which are satisfactory rather than good, the teacher's input is not clear enough, and new information and concepts are not set in contexts which will make it easier for students to understand. In some lessons, too much extraneous information is included, which leads students down blind alleys and leaves them confused. Even in these lessons, students usually achieve what the teacher intended, because they are diligent and keen to learn, but they do not always understand where the lesson is leading, and this lack of clarity slows the pace at which they develop understanding. For example, in a lesson intended to develop students' skills in setting up operational electrochemical cells, the teacher started with a detailed exposition of the underlying theory. This was so unnecessarily detailed that it took up valuable time needed for the practical activity, and left students in some uncertainty about how the theory related to the cell they had constructed. In these circumstances, some students lose heart and are not fully involved. Much clearer and more rigorous thought is needed to plan such lessons so that students know exactly what they are to achieve, and so that the structure and content of lessons enable students to reach better understanding.
84. The department is well organised day to day, but management is unsatisfactory. Results improved in 2002, but performance has been below average, and students have not achieved satisfactorily for some time. The head of department tracks examination results effectively, but does not keep track of students' progress in lessons well enough to identify problems before it is too late to solve them. Not enough note is taken of what students think, or of how they are getting on, to help plan for better learning. The new schemes of work lack a clearly defined approach to each topic, and do not adequately set out how all students, including the most able, can be helped to make the best possible progress. The time allocated is low, and students' late arrival to lessons often further diminishes the time available. Homework is regularly set, but the activities given do not take enough account of the private study time students have. Use of ICT is inadequate.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject inspire their students.
- The high quality of teaching stimulates students' interest and leads to very good learning.
- Careful lesson planning helps students learn very well.

Areas for improvement

- Better subject documentation would help teachers define learning objectives clearly.
- Sharing learning objectives would provide a better focus in lessons.
- Short-term tracking of progress would help teachers to identify problems as soon as they arise, and provide appropriate advice

85. When they come into the sixth form, students' attainment is broadly average: most students have achieved at least grade B in double award science. A few may have achieved grade C on the foundation paper.

86. In comparison with national figures, A-level results fell for several years to 2001, when they were well below average. However, results improved considerably in 2002 when more than a third of students gained A grades, and no students failed. There is a similar pattern in AS-level results. However, whilst most students in the very large group in 2002 met the grades which were predicted on the basis of their GCSE grade, several students failed to gain a pass. The department rightly sees it as a priority to ensure that students are better advised so that no one takes a course in which he or she is unlikely to succeed.
87. Work seen during the inspection gives more evidence for this improvement, and standards overall are good. Most Year 12 students have picked up the standards needed for sixth form work very quickly. They use their knowledge from GCSE well to interpret data at a higher level than in Year 11, and they are better at making connections to other parts of the course than is normal at this stage, for example in a lesson on electron microscopy. For the most part, students are responsible for writing and composing their own notes, and these show the real progress made through the sixth form. They show that students quickly gain a good understanding of the inter-relationships within the subject, for example using quite complex biochemistry to explain the processes involved in digestion, which they first studied much lower down the school. Teachers regularly review these notes and give excellent feedback to students with suggestions on how to improve,. All this evidence suggests that achievement through the sixth form is now satisfactory, and that more students are on track to achieve their predicted grades.
88. At AS-level , taken at the end of Year 12, most students again met their predictions in 2002, showing a considerable improvement over 2001.
89. Students take part in lessons with interest, and so they make good progress in understanding biological ideas. Their knowledge is sometimes less secure, but teachers find good ways to ensure that the facts become familiar. Careful planning and high expectations draw students into the lesson, and play a big part in helping them to learn as well as possible. Students develop the ability to make links between different parts of the course at an early stage. This was illustrated in a Year 13 lesson on interpreting electron microscope images when they had to recall GCSE work, as well as other sixth form biology, in order to make sense of the micrographs.
90. Teaching is very good overall. One of the five lessons seen was excellent and all were good at least. It is this high quality teaching which is ratcheting up standards and improving achievement. All teachers make very good use of starter activities. In a lesson on inheritance, for example, students had to match technical terms and their definitions before starting the main part of the lesson, which included a good discussion on the morality of detecting inherited diseases before birth.
91. Learning matches the quality of teaching, and in one lesson excellent learning took place. This resulted from an exceptionally well-structured lesson in which all students were challenged throughout by a variety of well-judged activities, all of which led directly towards the desired outcome. By the end of the lesson, from a negligible base, all students understood the principles and importance of the carbon cycle so well that they could construct and interpret such a cycle by association of ideas, rather than by learning its detail. In doing so, they developed their own personal and study skills well, and learned how to organise their study most efficiently. A feature of many sixth form biology lessons is that they make a story complete in itself, so that students have a clear message to take away from the lesson.

92. The short length of lessons sometimes prevents adequate summing up at the end, and, in one case, did not give enough time for the teacher to develop further skills in the most able students. Teachers set good homework, and mark it constructively, so that they understand well how their students are progressing. However, they do not always make good use of the considerable amount of free time which students have during the school day. Students' work is assessed in a test at the end of each topic. The tests provide a good record of progress, rooted in national standards. However, the free time available to students might usefully be used for more tasks designed to help them to learn independently, and to give teachers a more immediate measure of how students are progressing.
93. The department is well managed by an experienced head of department who, with three other teachers, has promoted a good ethos for learning in the department. The head of department keeps track of the performance of staff and students effectively. It is well run day to day, with the support of very good laboratory staff. The allocation of time for biology is low. The library has few books suitable for advanced work. There is no opportunity to use ICT in the department. This prevents certain types of practical work being undertaken and limits opportunities for individual research during lessons, but teachers work hard to lessen the effects of these limitations. Since the last inspection, results had been steadily falling, but students did well in 2002, and the very good teaching suggests that the subject is now well placed for further improvement.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

There are courses in design and technology, and home economics. AS- and A-level courses in graphics product design and three-dimensional product design were inspected in depth, and are reported as design and technology, and home economics was sampled. One lesson was seen, which illustrated how well key skills are developed in this subject. Results in home economics are consistently high.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well; results are very high and a high proportion of students gain A or B grades.
- Standards of work are very high; students have an excellent understanding of design practice.
- Students are mature, articulate and highly motivated.
- Teaching is consistently excellent.
- Leadership and management of the courses are excellent.

Area for improvement

- ICT facilities for product design graphics and three-dimensional activities are very limited.

94. Standards are very high. Examination results are very high, and these high standards have been maintained over the previous three years. In recent years all students have achieved at least a pass grade, and a high proportion have gained A or B grades. In 2001, all students gained these higher grades, compared to the national average of 30 per cent, and their average points score was therefore very high indeed. Results in 2002 were a little lower. All students passed and 50 per cent gained A or B grades. AS-level results in 2002 were high: all students passed and 80 per cent gained the

higher grades. Boys and girls do equally well, and only one student has failed to complete a course.

95. Attainment in work seen is very high and matches recent examination results. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection. All students make substantial gains in knowledge, understanding and skills during the early stages of the course. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students preparing fob casings carried out computer-aided design and vacuum forming activities with great confidence. Their understanding of design and manufacturing practice is very well developed. The students are only a little way into their course, but they are successfully moving on from GCSE work into new and more challenging areas.
96. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of portfolio work. This is of impressive quality. In Year 13, students' independent work is of a high order. Folders show a mature approach to assignments, as well as, for example, freedom in sketching, skilfully executed annotation and very strong research skills. The standard of model making is equally outstanding, such as the Tee-shirt and Boutique Bag projects in Year 12. Accompanying design sheets show a very good understanding of product design and good thinking on paper. Students' key skills are very good. Planning is complex and well executed, and critical analysis is carried out very well. Many students use home computers very effectively to develop their design ideas.
97. Both male and female students make very substantial gains through Years 12 and 13 and consequently achievement is excellent. All students make very considerable advances in their ability to solve problems and in working together to arrive at informed choices of materials. Students with a special educational need are well catered for. They reach equally high standards in their coursework as others, and achieve outstandingly well.
98. This outstanding achievement is possible because students learn quickly in response to consistently very high quality teaching which drives students to produce work of an excellent standard. Students respect their teachers' depth of knowledge and the way in which this knowledge is shared with them. This has a considerable impact on the students' desire to learn. They make very rapid progress, concentrating very hard and taking great pride in producing high quality work under pressure of time. Teachers expect students to work very hard, and time is used very effectively in the drive for high standards. Teaching is rigorous in encouraging a mature approach to work, particularly in Year 13. Students enjoy the challenge and are keen to work hard. They support and help each other generously and, in small groups, talk and listen to each other maturely as part of their learning. Teachers keep a very close eye on how students are doing, and take immediate action when it is required. There is a high level of individual support at all times, which includes very challenging questions asked of students, another significant factor contributing to their excellent progress.
99. The leadership and management are excellent. The department is constantly seeking to build even further on what has already been achieved, and has fostered the excellent teaching and resulting learning. Students' performance over time is carefully analysed in order to keep track of how they are doing, as well as to set them the challenging targets which help to drive them towards the outstanding standards achieved. This information is shared with the students very effectively. The reasons why the department's students achieved fewer higher grades in 2002 have been investigated and identified, and the department has taken action to address the issue.

BUSINESS

AS- and A-level business studies are offered and were sampled. One good lesson was seen, where the teacher's expertise in using knowledge of the locality emphasised the relevance of the topic. Results are well above average.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Advanced vocational courses (AVCE) in ICT are offered and were inspected in depth.

ICT

Overall the quality of provision in ICT is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management of the subject ensure good standards.
- Very good teaching and marking enable students to achieve well.
- Students' positive attitudes towards the subject and good relationships between teachers and students help students to do well.

Areas for improvement

- There are no identified areas for improvement

100. The first cohort of students took the AVCE ICT course in 2001, and all students gained a pass, which was above the national average. One fifth of these students gained A-B grades, again above the national average. Only two students did not continue with the A2 course and of the eight students taking the A-level exam in 2002, over one third gained A-B grades. Results in AS in 2002 are better than the previous year, with over 70 per cent of students scoring A-B grades. Achievement is good.
101. Standards of work seen during the inspection are also above average in both AS and A2 courses. Year 12 students use word processing software well to create a booklet in the 'presenting information' unit. They are able to import images effectively from the Internet, use a wide range of fonts, and make good use of tables. Students also make good use of 'watermarks' to create professional looking booklets. All students redraft their work extensively to improve its quality in response to teachers' guidance. A-level students build on the good knowledge and understanding which they gained in Year 12. All students have done initial planning for their major project, and, when the school was inspected, were working on advanced database construction. They have a good knowledge of databases, understanding technical aspects such as attributes and entities. There are many higher attaining students in the group who have a good understanding of relational databases. All students make effective use of a software program, more advanced than they used in GCSE, to create databases. Students in both years are confident users of computers and software, and many students email their work home so that they can continue their work there.
102. Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which gives students the essential information they need to make good progress. The working atmosphere in classrooms is good, lessons are purposeful, and students contribute to their own learning by their very positive attitudes. There are high expectations of students to produce good quality work. Very good use is made of technology, including effective use of equipment for demonstration, such as interactive whiteboards and data projectors, which clearly shows students the processes in using programs. The well-prepared work on the school intranet enables students to select practice exercises and technical help for their projects, and allows them to

work at their own levels. Students' work is accurately and thoroughly marked, and this helps students to make good progress, as they are given clear indications of their strengths and weaknesses, and what they need to do to gain good results in their examinations.

103. Students of all attainment levels are making very good progress. Those with good GCSE results achieve well, and those who did not follow a GCSE ICT course achieve very well as they learn to use more advanced software of which they have no previous experience. Students make use of a wide range of skills which they needed for GCSE ICT, such as advanced word processing, using spreadsheets and constructing and searching databases. Students who did not follow the GCSE course show much initiative in developing their personal skills by making use of the help provided by the department on the school intranet.
104. The leadership and management of the subject are very good, with a clear vision and direction to the department. Courses are well managed, ICT rooms are attractive and there is good provision of up-to-date computers. Each ICT room is equipped with a large screen monitor to help visually impaired students, as well as computer-linked equipment for demonstration. The network manager and the ICT technician provide valuable support to teachers and students by maintaining the school intranet and the computer hardware.
105. There has been very good progress since the last inspection. The new AVCE ICT courses are popular with students, with good retention rates from AS to A2. There are over 20 students on each of the AS and A2 courses. Results show steady improvement since the start of the AVCE ICT courses in the school.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The courses offered are AS- and A-level physical education, intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism and AVCE travel and tourism.

Physical education

Overall the provision for physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- Results in examinations are good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and explanations help students to learn well.
- Students' positive attitudes towards physical education and the good relationships between teachers and students also help learning.

Areas for improvement

- A wider range of teaching styles would allow students to participate more in lessons.
- Students need more personal work in their files rather than commercially produced notes.

106. This course was only introduced three years ago. Since then results in A-level courses have been good and show consistent improvement, building on already high GCSE results. Half the students who took AS-level examinations in 2001 gained A or B grades, double the national average, and all students passed. All but two of these students continued with the A2 course and two fifths of them gained A or B grades at

A-level in 2002. AS results showed improvement on the previous year, with over three quarters of the students gaining A or B grades.

107. The standard of work seen during the inspection indicates that attainment in both AS and A2 courses are above average. In the AS course, students have a satisfactory understanding of training methods, and they are making good use of this as they start on their first major project of a personal exercise plan. Students understand the training requirements for specific sports, such as the development of power and flexibility for badminton and of upper body strength for rugby, and are able to incorporate these into circuit training plans. In contemporary issues, students have a satisfactory understanding of recreation, play and outdoor education. They are able to identify the key elements that distinguish sport from recreation activities. A-level students understand the importance of arousal in sporting activities and the concept of the 'Inverted U theory'. In biomechanics, students have learned Newton's Laws, and can give examples of how these apply to specific sports. They can distinguish between the different trajectories of long and high jump, and can identify the forces acting on the athlete in these events. However, apart from their personal exercise plans, students produce very little of their own work for their folders.
108. Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and give clear explanations, which help students make progress in their understanding of the subject. Sometimes, however, complex topics are not always explained. In biomechanics, more extended use could be made of the good video to help students have a clearer understanding of angular motion. In practical sessions, where students are developing their personal exercise plans, teachers provide valuable advice and constructive evaluations. However, in some theory lessons there is little student involvement, apart from answering questions. For example, students do not make any notes, because comprehensive commercial notes are supplied. Whilst these are of good quality, taking their own notes would reinforce students' learning. Students' positive attitudes are a significant factor in lessons. They are very interested in the subject, respond well in question and answer sessions and are keen to increase their understanding of the subject. Many have selected physical education as a career pathway.
109. Students are making good progress in the subject, as they increase their knowledge and understanding, building on their GCSE work. This is particularly well done in the projects students have to complete for both AS- and A-level examinations. Students show increasing understanding of theoretical aspects such as biomechanics and psychology. Many students enter Year 12 with high GCSE grades. They attain higher results than their GCSE results would predict and their achievement is good. In both AS and A2, many students gain better grades than in the other subjects they take.
110. The subject is well led and managed. The curriculum is well planned and meets the requirements of the examination syllabus. Most students continue from AS- to A-level courses, although fewer students have opted for AS this year than in previous years. Although the accommodation for the subject is satisfactory, the lack of a sports hall means that the school cannot offer a sports studies course at A-level, so students cannot make full use of their good sports performances in their A-level courses. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, in that A-level courses have been successfully introduced.

Leisure and tourism; Travel and tourism

Overall, the quality of provision in GNVQ leisure and tourism is **good**, and in AVCE travel and tourism it is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Attainment in AVCE is above average.
- Intermediate GNVQ teaching is good and enables students to achieve well.
- GNVQ is very well managed and great care is taken to encourage students to complete the course.

Areas for improvement

- There is no arrangement for interim management of AVCE during the long-term absence of the co-ordinator.
- The accommodation for AVCE does not provide sufficient access to appropriate resources for learning.
- There is a high drop-out rate in both courses.

111. In 2001, students who had followed the advanced GNVQ course in travel and tourism gained results above the national average. In recent years, almost all students have gained a pass. Girls generally gained merit or distinction, which was usually better than boys' results. However, the trend in results has been downwards. In 2002, students were entered for AVCE travel and tourism for the first time. Their results are similar to the previous year. One third of students in 2002 attained a B grade and all the others gained at least a pass. Half of the students who took AS-level examinations in 2002 left the course afterwards.

112. No completed and marked student assignments were available for inspection. The relatively small amount of work seen reflects average standards. Year 12 students are making a reasonable start. They make comprehensive notes, and use the Internet well for research. They use their local environment as an effective basis for understanding when discussing the impact of tourism on house prices and other facilities available to the general public. In Year 13, students use their own experience to develop an understanding through discussion with their teacher on how the positive and negative impacts of various forms of communication affect customer service. Work on worldwide travel destinations shows comprehensive research, but written work is often too descriptive. Higher attaining students are starting to use statistics to analyse trends in the popularity of a number of different tourist destinations. Current students' achievement is satisfactory; past results indicate better achievement.

113. The results of those students who completed the intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism course in 2001 were above average. About half of the students taking this course left during the year, but the remainder all achieved at least a pass, and one student gained a merit. In 2002, results were similar. This year, intermediate GNVQ course students have higher prior attainment in GCSE than previous cohorts, and the majority are expected to achieve merit or distinction grades. Scrutiny of their work shows that folders are well organised and students present notes from a range of sources. In lessons, students collaborate well in discussions; they generate and share ideas in, for example, comparing the factors involved in the location of sports retail outlets in a small market town and a nearby city. Standards are above average and achievement is good, thanks to teachers setting high expectations, to which students readily respond.

114. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned with a range of activities. Specialist business studies teachers have very good subject knowledge which is

used well, for example in aiding GNVQ students to understand the theoretical basis of business location behind decisions affecting provision for leisure and tourism. All teachers use the local area effectively to enable students to build on their own experience, and this develops students' confidence in applying learning to the national and international context. For example, Year 12 students use knowledge of the impact of tourism in their area in order to consider the economic and environmental implications of building a new runway at an airport.

115. Non-specialist teachers have had insufficient preparation for teaching the course, but they benefit from a good level of support from other teaching staff for the preparation of lessons and resources, which enables them to meet the needs of advanced level students. Many students on both courses are rather passive at the start of lessons, but teachers use question and answer techniques to encourage students to take part in discussions and most join in. However, teachers do not target questions precisely in order to challenge students to think harder, in particular higher attainers. Some advanced course activities allow students to apply communication skills, for example in re-presenting holiday information for a different age range. However, sometimes students are not given enough time to complete a task, so there is no review of what they have learned and their progress is not checked and consolidated.
116. The intermediate leisure and tourism, and advanced travel and tourism courses are co-ordinated by different managers. Management of the intermediate GNVQ course is very good. To address low retention of students in the past a system has been devised for teachers to keep track of students' attendance, attainment and progress. The co-ordinator regularly reviews progress with each student and involves parents where progress is insufficient, and this is encouraging and supporting students to keep on making an effort. Management of the advanced course is unsatisfactory, because the co-ordinator is on long-term sick leave and responsibility for this course has not been re-allocated. No departmental documentation was available for inspection. Plans to observe lessons have not been put into action, and there are no plans to address the training needs of non-specialist staff.
117. Planning is not written in a consistent way, and some units do not give enough detail about teaching methods. Plans to incorporate key skills are limited to identifying opportunities where this might be done, rather than definite activities in work units. All teachers on both courses have commitments in other subjects, including attending their meetings, which makes it hard to hold meetings for the vocational teams.
118. Accommodation for the advanced course is unsatisfactory: students are taught in a number of different rooms where there is insufficient access to a range of resources or to computers. There are not enough textbooks to support independent learning for advanced students in Year 12. However, intermediate GNVQ has good resources and access to computers.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No courses are offered in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

There are courses in unendorsed art and design, music technology, theatre studies and media studies. Art was inspected in depth and the others were sampled. Numbers in music are small, but students achieved well in the lesson seen. Very good teaching in both the theatre studies and media studies lessons seen led to very good and enjoyable learning. The

school's first A-level media studies results are above average overall, and theatre studies results are above average, and rose in 2002.

Art

Overall, provision in art and design is **good**.

Strengths

- Attainment has improved; standards are above average.
- Students are articulate and confident, and work together supportively.
- Teaching is good; individualised support and guidance enable students to develop confident independent work.
- Leadership is good. Long-term planning has brought about improvement in the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Students' technical skills are not as well developed as their research skills and some drawing work is weak.
- Some students, who have not fully understood the demands of the individualised and independent mode of working, progress too slowly.
- Students still have very limited opportunities to use ICT in creative work.

119. Attainment in art is above average. In 2001, A-level results were above the national average. All students passed the examination, and half gained grades A or B. AS-level results were also high. Results in 2002 were similar. Boys do less well than girls, but numbers are too small to make valid judgements. Since the last inspection, the department has moved from a technically-oriented endorsed art course to an unendorsed course which concentrates more on ideas and processes. This has been effective in improving standards, which were then below average. All students complete AS-level courses and the majority continue to A-level.
120. Year 12 students' sketchbooks include a good range of work relating to three-dimensional and relief studies, printmaking, mosaic work, and textiles, as well as drawing and painting. Year 13 students produce good quality journals and sketchbooks, elaborating their projects with a broad base of sketches, diagrams, gathered imagery, colour analyses, annotated drawings and extended text. They make good quality visual analyses of artists' work, and the carefully selected and compiled imagery illustrates clear themes. Students annotate their sketches and studies in a thorough manner and are able to make relevant and fruitful links between their own work and the work of artists. Students display a good range of creative strategies to drive their work forward and successfully circumnavigate any shortfalls in their technical skills. These are not as advanced as their research skills, and drawing is sometimes weak. The maturity of approach and the reflective nature of students' AS-level work show good progression on from GCSE. Achievement is also good in Year 13: students use a range of media with increasing assurance, and learn to present their ideas clearly and confidently. This course allows students to pursue areas of interest of their choice, providing for good individualised learning through supportive and focused teaching. It gives students the range and opportunity to explore and establish their own creative interests with confidence and maturity.
121. The quality of teaching is good. The sensitive and supportive teaching, backed by good subject knowledge, enables students to draw together the elements of their ideas and projects to create an individual direction of work, and to make pertinent historical and contextual art references. Teachers provide relevant books and checklists to guide students through the independent study process. Teachers keep a

Careful eye on students' progress and know exactly how well they are doing, and then intervene to move students on. The way teachers encourage and value students' thoughts and responses makes students feel able to discuss their ideas and refocus their effort when they come across difficulties. Students enjoy the relaxed yet studious atmosphere of co-operative working, as well as the responsibility for and control of the content and direction of their own work. This mode of teaching enables students to learn to be articulate and confident, and requires them to apply much intellectual effort. However, when students do not appreciate the demands of this method, they work too slowly. The teaching of technical skills is not a priority, and the quality of some drawing work is low, because students do not receive enough tuition in these skills. Students do not have enough chances to use ICT for creative work.

122. The department is well led, and teachers share a clear approach to teaching. Staff expertise is deployed skilfully to make the most of each teacher's strengths. The system for tracking individual students' progress through regular formal critical review sessions and tutorials is thorough and effective. However, not enough use is made of data to analyse the progress each year group makes in relation to their prior attainment. ICT is not used enough for creative work.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and religious education were inspected in depth. Sociology and psychology were sampled. In these two subjects, good teaching encourages students to develop the ability to work effectively independently. Attainment is above average.

Geography

Overall provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Tracking and analysis of progress support good target setting and have led to changes in the examination syllabus that have improved overall standards.
- Spiritual values are developed by respectful interchange of views, enabling students to form their own moral standpoints.
- Thorough, varied fieldwork is incorporated into teaching as a source of primary evidence.

Area for improvement

- Use ICT to better effect in developing further higher levels of research skills, presenting findings and interrogating statistical information.

123. In most years some 30 to 35 students study geography in the sixth form. The vast majority of them have taken the subject before, but there are also opportunities for new students who have shown a good level of attainment in other subjects.

124. Over the last five years A-level results are average, although 2001 results were below average. In that year the department had some staffing difficulties. Following a review of the modules, the curriculum was changed, and, in 2002, there are indications of a substantial improvement, with over 40 per cent of students gaining grades A or B. Geography is a popular choice at age 14 and in the sixth form, and most sixth form students finish the course: fewer than five per cent drop out. Differences in attainment between girls and boys are monitored. The analyses show that, although there are variations, they are between modules and there is no significant, consistent trend.

125. Work seen during the inspection was above average. This confirms the recent trend of higher standards, and indicates good progress on from GCSE. Achievement is good. Students show a good grasp of human and physical geography. Their approach to more complex study matures into good concentration and increasing confidence in their own learning throughout their two years in the sixth form. Fieldwork is at the heart of their studies and underpins good practical skills in the use of primary and secondary sources. Students interpret maps and photographs well, use data gathered from both local and international field visits skilfully, and transfer their understanding to their individual projects. Work on such areas as the Dalby Forest and the Alps, where most students participate, is the basis of the high standards produced in the more individual work, for example a study of coastal erosion in the East Riding, and work on the urban-rural fringe areas of York. Students use word processing to finish their projects, and some Internet material is downloaded, but they do not use ICT enough to develop higher research skills, such as the interrogation of data.
126. Teaching is good. All teachers have good subject knowledge and are constantly used as an ever-present source of information and wisdom. Students' attitudes to their work are good. Their rapt attention and concentration on learning in all of its aspects ensure a high attainment rate in each lesson and in each piece of individual work. Good relationships promote free-flowing discussion and debate. Lessons, whether theoretical or practical, are clearly structured, and sources are used well. For example, in a lesson which developed understanding of economic differences among countries, students used simple statistics to produce a rank order of development. This was followed by discussion in groups and as a class about the importance of the elements, such as infant mortality as an indicator of health facilities, and adult literacy relating to higher skill levels. The students' contributions were skilfully used and their ideas challenged to clarify their understanding of concepts in the growth of newly industrialised countries. This aspect of learning in geography makes an important contribution to students' personal development, where independent thinking and drawing of conclusions lead to the formation of their own moral standpoint. Students' work is thoroughly marked so that they know how well they are doing. In a lesson following fieldwork in physical geography, students were challenged by individual questions to ensure that they understood the relevance of their activities. They particularly value the opportunity to gather primary source material in the field, and they widen their social as well as their academic skills when undertaking the organisation of their own field study. Many use the Internet for information, and some students have ICT skills which they are not given the chance to use in geography.
127. The department is well led and managed. There are clear objectives to guide all members of the department, who collectively make contributions to its development. Marking and tracking of students are very strong elements in the work that enable staff and pupils to set targets which are both realistic and challenging. Analysis of modular tests has led, for example, to the changes that were instrumental in raising attainment levels in 2002 examinations by a good margin, and ensures that there are no detrimental imbalances in the attainment of different groups. There is not enough use of ICT as a tool for higher research skills as well as to enable work to be quicker, more accurate and better presented. Students would benefit from having to decide whether manual or technological processes of data use and manipulation are better suited for a project in hand.

History

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

Strengths

- Students' attainment has gradually improved since 1999 and standards are now above average.
- Teaching is very good and provides opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The marking of students' assignments is outstanding; teachers give students detailed feedback on how they can make improvements to their work.
- Leadership and management are very good and lead to a sophisticated evaluation of departmental performance.

Area for improvement

- The resources for students' personal research in the library.

128. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and, because teachers challenge students relentlessly yet realistically, achievement is very good. Students use historical terminology naturally and in context, and display good background knowledge of the topics under consideration, often comparing the past to contemporary issues. A minority of students find it difficult to elaborate on their views, but most can defend their opinions confidently. They have a secure grasp of the nature of evidence and are adept at asking quite perceptive questions of the sources available to them. Students' good progress across Years 12 and 13 is illustrated by the high quality of essays produced by the majority of A-level candidates.
129. Students' attainment in A-level examinations has shown a steady increase since 1999, and the proportions of those reaching grades A or B and also pass grades were above average in 2001. Results in 2002 were even better and the percentages of students attaining the higher grades increased again. Results in the AS examinations are not as good. Students in Year 13 are demonstrating the potential to perform well in examinations at the end of this academic year.
130. Teaching is very good. Students benefit from a wide range of teaching methods and they speak highly of the opportunities they are given for personal research, collaborative work and class discussion. They have the utmost regard for the very good subject knowledge of their teachers. Intellectual challenge is ever present. Relationships are very good and teachers have high expectations of what students can do. The willingness of students to take part in historical debate is a strong feature of learning in the department. Students enjoy the cut and thrust of such activities, act as devil's advocate with aplomb and also show courage in defence of their views. For example, the quality of debate in Year 12 lessons on the nature of absolutism in early modern France, and also on the political skills of Giovanni Giolitti before Mussolini's access to power, was very high and owed much to the very effective questioning techniques of the teachers. Students in Year 13 are able to build on their experience of working in this way in Year 12. They were seen learning from each other as they worked in pairs to deliver presentations on English Tudor history and also on aspects of Italian fascism. Teachers trust and expect their students to read extensively and to take real responsibility for their own research and for their own learning. Students respond to these demands by producing presentations of a high quality, which would not be out of place in an undergraduate seminar. Indeed students often surprise themselves at what they can do. This style of teaching, which promotes very active learning, is a significant feature in rising standards and the increasing numbers of students choosing history. The quality of teaching is, therefore, a major strength of the department. It is never less than satisfactory and in three-fifths of lessons it is very good or excellent.

131. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and high levels of co-operation between members of staff are very much in evidence. Teachers spend considerable time analysing and taking stock of the performance of the department and, as a consequence, have put well-founded strategies for improvement in place. Furthermore, they know their students very well and give them detailed advice, often on an individual basis, on how to improve their work. The marking of students' essays and assignments is outstanding and students pay particular tribute to the sensitive support they receive from their teachers. This is another factor in history's popularity.
132. Resources are adequate and are augmented by teachers, who produce a range of notes, worksheets and source anthologies to support their students in their quest for objectivity. However, there are not enough relevant textbooks in the school library to facilitate personal research.

Religious studies

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

Strengths

- Results are good and improving.
- Teaching is very good; teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Marking is thorough and helps students to progress very effectively.
- Good leadership and management ensure a coherent approach.

Areas for improvement

- Recruiting more students to a strong area of school provision.
- Ensuring students redraft essays as part of the writing process.

133. The number of students choosing religious studies is small. In 2001, there were three candidates for A-level, all of whom passed and two gained A grades, which is above average. The five students entered in 2002 also all passed, and three gained grades A or B. In fact, all students have passed this examination for the past six years. The results in AS-level are similarly strong. In 2001, six candidates gained grades A to D, including three at grade A, while the most recent results in 2002 saw four candidates gaining grade A, and a fifth at D. Although the small numbers make national comparisons difficult, results in AS- and A-level examinations are clearly well above average and improving.
134. In relation to their GCSE results, most students in 2001 and 2002 did a little better than expected in both examinations. Most either exceeded the grade predicted for them, or they matched the predicted A grade by gaining A and so could not do better. Achievement is therefore good. Most students who take religious studies in the sixth form have gained the higher grades in this subject at GCSE, but several students with modest GCSE results have done well in recent years, and the occasional student who has not followed GCSE religious studies does not find this a barrier to success and is well supported. Few male students follow the course, and it is not possible to discern any significant difference between the achievement of male and female students.
135. All the students who began the AS-level course completed it in 2001 and 2002, and a high proportion continues to A-level. In recent years, several students have progressed to university courses with elements of ethics or philosophy. Students

value the preparation in advanced thinking skills developed by the philosophical aspects of the subject's content.

136. The standards of work seen were also above average. The fundamental reason for this is the productive partnership between skilled teachers and highly co-operative students. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they made rapid progress in assimilating the difference between types of eschatological theology, and in understanding key Augustinian concepts on the nature of God and the nature of evil. Well-organised notes and essays show students' skills in selecting what is salient for each topic, and in writing focused answers. Their achievement is good overall, and is very good in relation to many aspects of their key skills. Their oral fluency and confidence are matched by well-developed literacy skills. They are also competent independent users of ICT for research and for word processing.
137. Students in Year 12, only a little way into their course, are making satisfactory progress. They already have a sound knowledge and understanding of some complex philosophical and religious concepts. They show a mature understanding of Biblical parable and allegory, building on GCSE experience very well. Although still in their first term of study, students have made good progress in developing literacy skills, their range of vocabulary in particular. Sometimes they take short cuts in essay writing and do not redraft as much as they should. They use ICT competently. They are gaining in confidence and independence. In class discussion, they are able to disagree with the teacher and justify their position, and, in their files, the themes introduced in lessons are followed up with independent notes and essay preparation.
138. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers all have very good expertise. Their enthusiasm communicates to the students, so that they sustain their efforts and concentration well during challenging sessions. Teachers are approachable and ready to help, so relationships are warm and full of mutual respect. Teachers provide a careful balance between explaining new ideas, and drawing out students' response in dialogue. Marking is very good. It is regular and gives good guidance on how to improve. Students appreciate it, particularly the essay feedback forms, which carry very detailed information and involve students in evaluating their own work. Teachers take note of what students write here and use it to plan future lessons. Lessons are generally challenging and well paced. The demands to think hard about difficult philosophical concepts make a significant contribution to students' good personal development. In the one weaker lesson observed, the pace was not as brisk.
139. The department is led and managed well. Checks on teaching and marking ensure a coherent departmental approach, evident in the uniformly high expectations and the common good practice in setting targets for students which are challenging and encouraging. The teachers work very well as a team.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature and French were inspected in depth. The other courses, English language and German, were sampled. Attainment in both is above average. One lesson of each was seen. Good teaching in English language focused students' attention on the changes in the sounds of the language. In German, very good teaching which was enthusiastic and brisk enabled students to make good progress. The school also offers GCSE courses in Russian and Spanish.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Attainment is rising and is now above average.
- Teaching is good.
- Students' attitudes are positive; they are eager to succeed and co-operate well with one another.
- Teachers' relationships with students are very good.
- The subject is well led and efficiently managed.

Area for improvement

- Providing a strategy to help students use their private study time well.

140. In 2001, results in A-level English literature were above average. The proportion of students gaining grades A or B, and students' average points score were above the national averages. However, the pass rate of 85 per cent is below average, and two borderline candidates did not do as well as expected. Over the past four years, results have fluctuated from well below average in 1999 to well above it in 2000, with no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. In 2002, 44 per cent of students gained higher grades and the average points score improved significantly. All students passed. In AS-level examinations, all students passed with grades reflecting the broad range of capability, with 25 per cent grades A-B. Achievement is good, and nearly all students complete the course.
141. Year 12 AS-level students were in the first term of their course at the time of the inspection. Although the majority are building well upon their achievement at GCSE, they have not all yet formed the habit of making best use of their time for independent study and research. However, attainment is good. For example, students show a lively intellectual response to the rhythms, sounds, images and verbal felicities of poetry. With skilful guidance from their teacher, they appreciate the subtlety and precision of the experiences of love which poetry conveys, and how a poet's choice of form and structure shapes meaning. They use their 'listening ear' when reading aloud to detect the correct rhythm of a poem. In coursework, for example on Wordsworth, they apply appropriate critical tenets; they make perceptive reference to the place of Wordsworth's poems in the history of literature and provide reasons and evidence for their judgements.
142. Attainment in Year 13 is above average, and students achieve well in relation to their earlier work at AS-level. Students understand the cultural and historical contexts of their reading. They are disciplined in their thinking and show a discriminating appreciation of great literature. They are critically appreciative of imagery and of symbolism. For example, their approach to the study of Chaucer is scholarly; they respond appropriately to the mood and tone of the narrator and understand how imagery makes imaginary facts in the tale precisely realisable. They are sensitive to nuances of meaning in their observation of character and events in the modern American novel, and they draw on a knowledge of diverse texts to illuminate and support judgements. Coursework shows a developing maturity of thought; most students are becoming autonomous readers and show insight into complex texts. They make effective use of ICT facilities in their studies.
143. Teaching is good and is matched by students' attitudes. Students show an eager receptiveness and co-operate well with the teacher and with each other. This all makes for good learning. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and skilful in the art

of conveying it. For example, the teacher's knowledge of Chaucer's language and literary devices, as well as of the historical context, supported students reading *'The Pardoner's Tale'*. Teachers appreciate the value of good literature in the mental development and outlook of their students. The department makes a very good contribution to students' personal development through its choice of texts, use of discussions and extra-curricular activities. Teachers have high expectations, and often the activities planned for lessons sharpen students' perception. For example, in an excellent lesson on the modern American novel, students built up a body of information by identifying and linking themes from different texts. Skilful guidance through a confusion of ideas led students over a series of secure stepping-stones of thought to a firm understanding. In a very good Year 12 lesson on Duffy's startling poem 'Valentine', the teacher enabled students to understand how poets use pictorial imagery by first having them visualise themselves in terms of colours, creatures, or plants representing abstract qualities of their own personality, so that, when the poem was discussed, students realised that they had used pictorial imagery just as poets do. Skilful questioning often illuminates meaning and refines students' thinking. Students' coursework demonstrates ordered and crystallised thought. Marking is thorough and encouraging.

144. The leadership of the recently appointed acting head of department is good and his management is efficient and effective. The department now offers a wide choice of options and a growing number of teachers take part in sixth form teaching. A close check is kept on how students are progressing. Detailed evaluation of learning has resulted in a clearer understanding of students' work rates, and programmes of study have been refined accordingly. However, students, who represent a wide range of capability, do not always receive sufficient direction or appropriate support for tasks undertaken in their independent study time.

French

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

Strengths

- Examination results which are consistently above average.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, and their very good use of the foreign language in lessons, which helps to develop students' well above average speaking skills.
- Teachers' very strong commitment to their work and students' very good attitudes to learning French.
- The excellent promotion of the French language and culture through displays.

Area for improvement

- Combining the separate schemes of work for French into one overall document.
- Linking marking schemes to examination grades and criteria, and supporting this with target setting in all four language skills.
- Recruiting boys to post-16 French courses.

145. A-level results in French in 2001 were above average, with an above average percentage of students obtaining A-B grades. Provisional 2002 results are similar. This continues a trend of above average results over the past three years, including at the higher grades. These results generally indicate satisfactory achievement. AS-level results in 2001 were above average for both the percentage of passes and of higher grades. Provisional results in 2002 show a high pass rate but a fall in the percentage of A-B grades. These results fell below the teachers' high expectations for the group

and some examination papers were being re-marked when the inspection took place. All students have completed the AS- and A-level courses over the last two years, and the number of students choosing not to continue after AS is diminishing. Student numbers in French have increased significantly over the last two years, but reflect the national pattern of low numbers of boys.

146. In both Years 12 and 13, standards are above average, and achievement is good. Most students enter the sixth form with good GCSE grades, and they make good progress in both years to maintain above average standards. In both years, the small numbers of students with average GCSE grades make very good progress, because of the teachers' high expectations and the very good personal support they provide.
147. Standards in listening, reading and writing are above average. Students understand teachers' rapid French, and the well-structured independent listening and reading courses enable students to consolidate and extend the higher register language of examination topics. In both years, students scan a range of texts for information and gradually gain confidence in deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words. Most students incorporate authentic language and specialist vocabulary in writing in Year 12, progressing in Year 13 to expressing opinions in more complex language on topics such as racism, crime and the distribution of wealth. Students extend the basic GCSE grammar, progressing to confidently use a range of verb tenses and grammatical structures. The few lower attaining students continue to make basic errors.
148. Standards in speaking are well above average. Most students have good accents and handle the language of argument well on a range of topics. For example, in a very good Year 12 lesson, students discussed the differences between French and English eating habits and communicated their arguments naturally and quickly. The boys were particularly confident.
149. The course contributes substantially to the development of students' skills. Good grammar teaching and insistence on accuracy develop literacy. Study skills are very well developed through taking notes in French in lessons. All students in Year 13 substantially develop their ability to work with others through work experience in Belgium.
150. Teaching and learning are very good. One Year 12 and two Year 13 lessons were seen, of which two lessons were very good and one was excellent. Work in students' files shows that teachers support learning very well by giving clear information about examination requirements and through providing a wide range of learning tasks. The teachers and the language assistant are all native or fluent speakers of French, which gives students an excellent model to understand and copy. Teachers' efficient use of lesson time, good pace and clear objectives enable all students to make very good progress over time. Students are well motivated and appreciate teachers' commitment to their examination success, which makes for good relationships. However, sometimes teachers do not give lower attaining students enough opportunities to quietly consolidate what they have learned, or work in pairs to prepare texts, to enable them to maintain confidence in groups of predominantly able students. Marking is regular and thorough, and provides very good continual guidance to students on how to improve. However, marking is not linked to examination grading and criteria, so students do not know how the standard of their work relates to examination grades.

151. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is a particularly strong and shared commitment to students' success. The teacher responsible for French leads by example in enthusiasm and very good teaching practice, but is not given enough direction in managing the subject. Teachers benefit from the departmental policy of enabling them to construct and take responsibility for the component of the French syllabus which they teach. However, as these separate schemes of work are not combined into a single document, the teacher in charge of her staff have no overview of practice, and it is more difficult to keep track of the work of the subject. The department is aware of deficiencies in marking procedures and work has started on restructuring how the four language skills are assessed, using examination criteria. At present, targets are not routinely set for each skill to help students progress towards, and possibly exceed, their target examination grades. The high standards reported by the last inspection have been maintained.