

INSPECTION REPORT

CHASE TERRACE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Burntwood

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124443

Headteacher: Mrs Heather Bowman

Reporting inspector: Mr Thomas Comer
15109

Dates of inspection: 3 – 7 March 2003

Inspection number: 252565

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L. Jones
Date of previous inspection:	11 November 1996

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32113	Mrs J Byrom	Team inspector		Leadership & Management
4193	Mr C Radley	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
12003	Dr A Marfleet	Team inspector	English	
18676	Mr R Meakin	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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31680	Mr P Redican	Team inspector	Art & Design	
31779	Mr V Harrison	Team inspector	Design & Technology	
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32122	Mrs J Straw	Team inspector	History	
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3793	Mr J Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern languages	
27665	Mrs A Lees	Team inspector	Music	
19452	Mr A Pearson	Team inspector	Physical education	
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12825	Dr N Carr	Team inspector	Business education Psychology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Chase Terrace Technology College is a large secondary school with 1327 pupils on roll, including 169 in the sixth form. The school serves a mixed area which has an above average degree of social and economic deprivation. It is a former mining district which is affected by unemployment and a considerable proportion of the children are from low income families. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal is below average but many parents do not claim. The vast majority of pupils are of ethnic white UK origin and very few pupils come from homes where English is not the main language and all are fluent in English. The overall attainment of intakes of pupils to Year 7 is broadly average. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is also average. A large number of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and the proportion of pupils who have formal statements is well above average. Most of these pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties but a small number have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The school is designated by the local authority as a *Pathway School* for physically handicapped pupils. The school was severely damaged by fire in August, 2002, which completely destroyed the main school building. A new headteacher took up her post immediately after the time of the fire. A new building programme will begin later this year. Meanwhile, the school is using mobile cabins as temporary teaching accommodation for many subjects.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and pupils achieve above average standards. In Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, teaching is satisfactory and standards are average overall. GCSE and sixth-form examination results vary considerably between subjects. The school benefits from the energetic leadership of the new headteacher. The school adds very good value to pupils' personal development and looks after its pupils well. The pupils are very well behaved and have very good attitudes to school. The school gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

In the main school

- Good teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are above average.
- The strongest subjects are art and design and religious education.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and make good progress.
- Good teaching of English, mathematics, history, music, physical education, PSHE and citizenship.
- Very good links with the community.
- Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development.
- Very good extra-curricular provision.
- The very clear vision and purposeful leadership of the headteacher.

In the sixth form

- Examination results are highest in art, history, geography, and government and politics.

What could be improved

In the main school

- GCSE results, especially in science, modern languages, geography and design and technology.
- Standards in ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to raise standards.

In the sixth form

- Examination results generally.
- Independent learning and use of ICT.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to raise standards.

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 inspected previously in November 1996 and has made a satisfactory overall Improvement since then. The school has achieved technology college status and has made a good improvement with most of the key issues for action set out in the previous inspection report. However, GCSE examination results have not improved in line with the national trend.

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	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	B	*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

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

The attainment of annual intakes of pupils to Year 7 is average. Standards rise to above average in Year 9 and are again average in Year 11. Standards are average in the sixth form. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school.

Years 7,8 and 9

Standards are rising. The national test results of Year 9 were above average in 2002 and have risen over the past years in line with the national trend. The results of the national tests were above average in each of the three subjects, English, mathematics and science. The standards of work of the pupils presently in Year 9 are above average overall and above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils have good basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The strongest subject is religious education. The weakest is information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils are underachieving in this subject.

Years 10 and 11

The GCSE results were average overall in 2002, as they have been for some years, but the governors' realistic targets were not met. The standards of the present Year 11 pupils are average. The pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall but standards vary considerably between subjects. Standards are above average in English and mathematics and underpin the pupils' work effectively in other subjects. Standards in science are average and lower than in English and mathematics. Amongst other subjects, standards are highest in religious education and in art and design, in which subjects the examination results are usually well above average. Standards are above average in citizenship and physical education. Standards are average in all other subjects. The GCSE results could be better in science, modern languages, geography and design and technology.

The sixth form

Course completion rates are good. Standards are average overall and students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their GSCE results on entry to the sixth form. However, there is room for improvement in the examination results. The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) results were below average in 2001 and declined further in 2002. The General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate level results were above average in 2001 and improved further in 2002. A-level results were above average in 2001 but declined in 2002. In the nine advanced level subjects inspected in depth, current standards are average overall. They are above average in art and design and history and average in biology, business studies, design and technology, English literature, mathematics, physics and psychology. The best results in 2002 at A-level were in art and design, geography, government and politics and history.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes towards the school and their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The school is calm and orderly. Pupils behave very well and are attentive in class. The exclusion rate is low. Pupils are responsible and sensible in their movement around the school's temporary buildings.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils are reliable, pleasant and polite. They show courtesy to one another and to visitors. Older pupils bear significant responsibilities and present a very good example for

	younger pupils to follow. Pupils play a significant part in the making of important decisions affecting the whole school community. Relationships are very good between pupils and between pupils and teachers. Pupils are proud of their school and show a strong sense of ownership of it.
Attendance	Attendance has improved and is now above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The main school

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and generally meets the needs of all pupils. The quality of pupils' learning is also satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Teaching is good in English and mathematics throughout Years 7 – 11. In science, teaching is good in Years 7 – 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and pupils' good skills effectively underpin their work in other subjects. An important strength is the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, which is generally good. Teachers plan their lessons and manage their pupils well. Pupils work hard and have a good understanding of their own progress. Weaker points are that some teachers find it difficult to maintain pace in the long lessons and this often results in loss of pupils' concentration towards the end. Some teachers spend too much time imparting knowledge rather than expecting the pupils to think and find out for themselves. The teaching is good in art and design, history, music, physical education, citizenship, PHSE and religious education. Teaching is satisfactory in science, geography, design and technology and modern languages and can, therefore, be improved in these subjects. The weakest teaching is in ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9.

The sixth form

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Of the subjects inspected in depth, teaching is good in art, business studies and history; it is satisfactory in mathematics, biology, physics, design and technology, psychology and English literature.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory and has some very good features. There is a significant contribution from the community and relationships with partner institutions are very strong ensuring continuity of learning from Year 6 to Year 7. Pupils enjoy equality of opportunity with access to courses. ICT provision is unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 because statutory requirements are not fully met. This is also the case for religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils make good progress, because their needs are well known to all staff and well planned for.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils are taught to become 'active citizens'. The provision for moral and spiritual development is good and for social and cultural development very good. This has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and on the high quality of relationships throughout the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school cares for its pupils very well and monitors personal development very effectively. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is generally good but unsatisfactory in information and communication technology. There is a wide range of counselling and support available to pupils. The school has a very good partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very effective leadership by the headteacher is providing the clear vision and direction that the school needs. The management of the school is satisfactory but needs to become more rigorous in its approach to raising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are committed and support the school well but the curriculum does not fully comply with legal requirements. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitor the finances rigorously.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation of subject performance are patchy. A more consistent and rigorous approach to departmental review, followed by clear action planning and evaluation are needed to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	The school's strategic use of resources is good. Money is spent wisely to meet the needs of the curriculum.

Staffing is good and resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is satisfactory but only as a temporary measure. Financial management is effective and the school applies the principles of best value. It sets realistic targets but needs to take more effective action to meet them.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children behave well. • The children make good progress. • The school is well managed and approachable. • The school helps their children to become mature and sensible. • The children enjoy school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority of parents say they would like better information about their children's progress. • Some parents would like to see homework set more consistently. • A minority of parents would like a closer partnership with the school.

The inspectors agree with most of the positive opinions expressed by parents though pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good. The inspectors agree that homework is not always set according to the timetable in some subjects. Some parents would like to discuss their children's progress with the subject teachers at parents' evenings, as previously, but the school changed to the present system after consultation and agreement with the majority of parents. The school's partnership with parents is very good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

With 169 students on roll the sixth form is of an average size and has grown since the previous inspection. There are more girls than boys especially in Year 12. Four students are from ethnic minority backgrounds but all are fluent in English. A few students have learning or behavioural difficulties. In association with a local college of further education the school provides a very wide range of academic and vocational subjects at various levels supplemented by a range of enrichment activities. Almost half of all Year 11 pupils continue their education in the sixth form and a very small number of students join from other schools. The sixth form is open-access but students are expected to have a minimum of five C grades at GCSE in order to begin advanced courses. The attainment of the annual intakes of students to Year 12 is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education for its students and has some good features. The sixth form is led very effectively and is cost-effective. Students enjoy school, apply themselves to their work and benefit from the very good help, support and advice of committed and well-qualified teachers. As a result, most students complete their courses and move into higher education or find employment. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Standards of students' work and examination results are average and students' achievement is also satisfactory but there is considerable room for improvement. The management is aware of this and is working to raise standards but needs to monitor lessons more rigorously to identify clearly how to make the desired improvements.

Strengths

- Standards and results are highest in art and design, geography, government and politics and history.
- The range of courses is extensive and ensures equality of opportunity.
- Students have very good attitudes and make a good contribution to the school and the community.
- Leadership is very good and there is a clear vision and determination to raise standards.
- Students respond well to being treated as young adults and their personal development is very good.
- Effective advice, support and guidance prepare students very well for the next stage of their careers.

What could be improved

- The examination results generally.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in order to raise standards.
- Students' independent learning and use of their private study time.
- The students' use of information and communication technology.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Results are average and teaching is satisfactory. There is insufficient use of ICT in teaching and learning.
Biology	Satisfactory. In 2001 results were well below average but they improved last year. Current standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Physics	Satisfactory. Standards are now above average in Year 13 and average in Year 12. The results in 2001 were below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Results were above average in 2001 but declined slightly last year. Teaching is good and learning has improved through the use of the internet. Standards are average.
Design & technology	Satisfactory. In 2001 results were average but they declined in 2002. At present teaching and learning are satisfactory and standards are average. Independent learning is weak.
Art & design	Good. Teaching and learning are good and the students achieve well. Standards are above average in Year 13 and well above average in Year 12, However, independent research is underdeveloped.
History	Good. Results were well above average in 2001 and were sustained in 2002. Standards are above average and students achieve well in response to good teaching.
Psychology	Satisfactory. Results are well below average. Currently, standards are average and

	teaching is satisfactory. The use of ICT is limited.
English literature	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are average.

Aside from the in-depth inspection of the above nine subjects, 15 lessons were seen in 13 other subjects to provide the inspection team with a broad view of the sixth form provision. In those lessons, the teaching was very good in government and politics and good in economics, geography, health and social care, media studies, music, sociology and theatre studies. It was satisfactory in chemistry, environmental science, German, information and communication technology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Advice, support and guidance are very good. The high quality of guidance for future courses in higher education ensures that most students realise their first choices.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership is very good and shows a clear intention to raise standards and improve examination results. Management is satisfactory; however, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough: although individual students have targets there are no overall targets for most subjects.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoy the recreational and social activities and visits. • They appreciate the very good relationships they have with teachers who treat them as adults. • The wide range of courses meets their needs. • They value the accessibility of teachers and the advice and guidance they receive throughout the sixth form. • They like the friendly atmosphere and sense of community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sixth-form accommodation and the facilities for independent study and research. • A few would like more help with making choices about their careers. • Some would like more enrichment activities. • A number would like more information about their progress.

Students are very supportive of the sixth form and the inspectors feel that the students' positive views are fully justified. The inspectors agree that private study facilities are inadequate but this situation is temporary. The inspectors judge the quality of careers advice to be good; they find that students have many opportunities to take part in recreational activities but agree that some other enrichment activities have been curtailed owing to the fire. The inspectors consider that students are well informed of their progress.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The overall attainment of annual intakes of pupils to Year 7 is average. Standards rise to above average in Year 9 and are again average in Year 11. Overall standards are average in the sixth form. Pupils' overall achievement is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

Results and achievements in Years 7, 8 and 9

2. Standards are rising in Years 7, 8 and 9, at least in part because of effective implementation of national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The national test results of Year 9 pupils show this rising trend in standards and were above average in 2002. The girls tend to outperform boys but to a lesser degree than found nationally. The overall movement in results over the past five-year was broadly in line with the national trend.

3. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in English throughout Years 7, 8 and 9. The standards of the present Year 9 pupils' work are above average. Similar standards were achieved by the previous Year 9, as shown in their results of the national tests in 2002, which were above average. Girls tend to better than boys but the difference is smaller than found nationally and boys do well in English in comparison with their counterparts, nationally. The strengths of their work lie in reading, speaking and listening skills which, overall are better than their writing. Pupils talk expressively, for example, about literature from earlier times such as Shakespeare's plays or Victorian poetry. Written work is generally well presented and many pupils use word-processing effectively in their extended work. The school is implementing the National Strategy for literacy effectively and has identified as a matter for improvement the writing of lower attaining pupils.

4. In mathematics, the standards of the present Year 9 pupils' work are above average and the pupils are achieving well in relation to their starting points in Year 7. The results of the national tests of the previous Year 9 in mathematics were also above average in 2002. Boys slightly outperform girls in this subject. The standard of work produced by pupils currently in Year 9 is above average. Pupils' numeracy skills are improving as a result of the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy in mathematics, though these skills could be used to better effect to raise standards more widely in other subjects.

5. In science, the standards of the present Year 9 pupils' work are above average. Pupils achieve well in this subject and this is reflected in the results of the national tests, which were above average in 2002. Boys did slightly better in the tests than girls in this subject.

6. Pupils achieve well in most other subjects. Standards are above average in art and design, history, French, German, music, religious education and citizenship. They are average in design and technology, geography and physical education. However, standards are below average in information and communication technology (ICT) and the pupils are underachieving in this subject.

7. Standards are average in some aspects of ICT, such as word-processing, desk-top publishing and communicating information. However, pupils are underachieving overall because they are not being taught the full requirements of the National Curriculum for the subject. They have a poor understanding of how computers can be used to handle information. Pupils' ability to use ICT for research, for example, the Internet, is weak and they have very little understanding of the ways that microprocessors can be made to control objects and events.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. In art, modern languages, music and religious education they make very good progress, good progress in English, mathematics, science, history and physical education, and satisfactory progress in the other subjects. They also achieve success in GCSE examinations.

Results and achievements in Years 10 and 11

9. The standards of the present Year 11 pupils are average overall and this is reflected in the pattern of the GCSE results over time. The GCSE results were average in 2002 and have remained broadly the same for some years. The governors' targets, which were realistic, were not met in 2002. Girls perform better in the examinations than boys but the difference is less than found nationally. The pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall but there is considerable variation between subjects. Pupils achieve well in some subjects and, in these subjects, standards are above average or well above average. However, it is important for the school to take action to raise standards in a number of subjects in which the GCSE results are no better than average and to set the course of the examination results onto a rising trend. The pupils' achieve well above average standards in art and design and religious education. Standards are above average in English and mathematics and underpin pupils' achievement across all other subjects. They are also above average in citizenship and physical education. Standards are average in all other subjects and it is important for the school to raise standards in these subjects, particularly science, modern languages, geography and design and technology.

10. Standards of the present Year 11 pupils in English are above average. Pupils build on good foundations and maintain good progress in Years 10 and 11. The strength of the pupils' work lies in their well developed speaking and listening skills. Pupils of all abilities confidently join in discussions, for example, about moral and social questions of importance to young people. The standard of work in literature, for example, Shakespeare, is above average. Pupils' reading and writing are also good and the more advanced pupils write confidently reaching very high standard standards consistent with the highest GCSE grade.

11. Standards of the present Year 11 pupils in mathematics are above average and similar to that indicated by recent GCSE results which were above average in 2002. Pupils maintain good progress, and achieve well. At all levels there is a good balance between consolidation and acquisition of new knowledge and skills. However, the presentation of written work needs improvement and is often untidy.

12. Standards of the present Year 11 pupils in science are average and represent a satisfactory achievement for these pupils. GCSE results for the year 2002 were average and were similar to those in 2001. The results were not as good as those for English or mathematics. Pupils carry out practical work confidently and safely.

13. The pupils' achieve well above average standards in art and design, and religious education and these subjects are particular strengths of the school at this level. The GCSE results in music are usually well above average and were so in 2002, but the standards of the current Year 11 pupils' work are only average.

Sixth form

Results and achievements in Years 12 and 13

14. Course completion rates are high and three quarters of students move into higher education. Standards are average overall and students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their GSCE results on entry to the sixth form. However, there are considerable differences between subjects. In the nine subjects inspected in depth standards were above average in art and design and history and average in biology, business studies, design and technology, English literature, mathematics, physics and psychology. Although standards are average they are not as high as they could be in many subjects.

15. Advanced level results have been either above or at the national average since the previous inspection. They were above average in 2001 but the students' average points scores declined in 2002. This was because of curriculum changes which resulted in the students taking fewer subjects than was the case earlier. The best results in 2002 at A-level were in art and design, geography, government and politics and history. In 2001 the results in art and design were in the top five per cent of the country. The lowest results were in biology, chemistry, environmental science, design and technology, German, ICT, media studies, music and psychology. The pass rate per entry has improved but the proportion of the higher A and B grades is relatively low.

16. The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) results were below average in 2001. The General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate level results were above average in 2001. They improved further in 2002 and all six students achieved the qualification; one student was awarded a distinction and one a merit.

17. The few students with learning difficulties and the small number from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve satisfactorily overall and some do very well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Pupils have very good attitudes towards the school and their work. Pupils have adjusted sensibly to the difficulties caused by the fire. In the vast majority of lessons they are respectful and attentive and comply with their teachers' expectations. Pupils say that the teachers are friendly and encourage them to do their best. Pupils appreciate the range of lunchtime and after school clubs which the teachers provide for them, and are very keen to take part in them. Most of the school visits and trips are oversubscribed.

19. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. Exclusion is rare. Pupils are friendly and helpful to one another and to visitors. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that any such incidents would be swiftly dealt with.

20. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school, work hard, are highly focused and have an interest in and enjoy their work. Consequently, they are keen to learn and always attentive in lessons and in other sessions provided for them in registration periods, breaks and lunchtime. Their behaviour, too, is of a very high standard.

21. Pupils take an active part in school life, such as membership of the school council. Several Year 10 pupils are mentors for Year 7 pupils. Pupils' ideas for their new school buildings have been incorporated into the plans. During the inspection week, a group of Year 10 pupils presented some of their suggestions for their new building to be to an audience of their peers in the presence of the architect.

22. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, from satisfactory to good and it is now above the national average. Although there are inevitable delays to the start of lessons whilst all pupils arrive from distant parts of the temporary campus, pupils try hard to arrive promptly.

Sixth form

23. Students in the sixth form have very positive attitudes to school and their work. Students have a high regard for their teachers and relationships between students and with teachers are very good. The students mix together well, both socially and academically. Attendance is satisfactory although erratic in some subjects.

24. Students enjoy the sixth form and say that it has a very friendly atmosphere. Students participate enthusiastically in organised activities outside of lessons, particularly team games and sports. Students' success in other activities is also impressive; for example, the school's Young Enterprise group went

through to the national final in 2002 with their well-run business enterprise. The public speaking team was successful in the local area debating competition.

25. Students contribute effectively to the life of the school. For example, several of them have been trained as counsellors and help their peers and the younger children when they have problems. The students' participation in the school council makes a very effective contribution to decision making by the school as a whole.

26. Most students consider that the teachers and tutors are very helpful and keep a close watch on their progress. Generally, students are very pleased with the choices of courses available to them, feel they were given appropriate advice in Year 11 and that induction into the sixth form was good. They feel constructively involved in the school and are confident that their views are listened to.

27. In a questionnaire given to them before the inspection a significant number of students indicated that they would like additional help with careers' information in order to make their choices. By contrast, students spoken to during the inspection felt that the information was satisfactory. Some students indicated in the questionnaire that they would like more indication of how they were doing in relation to the qualifications they hoped to achieve. By contrast, students spoken to during the inspection were satisfied that they did know their progress and how to improve.

28. Students appreciate their opportunities for trips and visits and say that these are very well organised and enjoyable. Some would like even more such opportunities and other worthwhile activities outside of lessons. Regrettably, some of the planned indoor activities have been curtailed owing to the temporary accommodation.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The teaching is more effective, overall, in Years 7, 8 and 9 than in the GCSE courses because the effectiveness of the teaching of literacy skills in the early years enables the pupils to make good progress and to do well in the national tests. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. The strengths of the teaching are good subject knowledge, good lesson planning and good management of the pupils. The strengths of the pupils' learning are their willingness to work hard and their knowledge of their own progress. Weaker points are that some teachers find it difficult to maintain pace in the long lessons (up to 75 minutes) and this often results in a loss of concentration towards the end. This was noted particularly in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and religious education. Some teachers tend to spend too much time imparting knowledge rather than expecting the pupils to think for themselves.

30. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants work very closely with subject teachers and employ strategies geared to meet pupils' needs. All teachers are fully aware of the pupils' individual needs, which are clearly set out in individual education plans, and are used effectively in lessons. For example, in religious education the use of carefully constructed guidelines for these pupils gives them the confidence to structure their written responses effectively. In mathematics, pupils make written evaluations of their own work in their books, which heightens their understanding of what they are doing and how they are progressing.

31. The teaching of English and mathematics is good throughout Years 7 – 11. The teaching of science is good in Years 7 – 9 but satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Amongst other subjects, the best teaching is in religious education, art and design, history, music and physical education. The teaching of citizenship and PHSE is also good.

32. Religious education is a strength of the school. Lessons are very carefully planned with a variety of learning activities, and homework plays a strategic part in consolidating the work of the lesson, as parents

said during their meeting with the registered inspector. The religious education teachers also place great importance on developing the pupils' research skills.

33. Art and design and history teachers have high expectations of the pupils and set them difficult and challenging tasks. The music teachers are very good at their subject and provide a good variety of activities which interest and enthuse the pupils and are designed to enable each pupil to make good progress. Pupils enjoy their music lessons, particularly when playing instruments.

34. The weakest subject in Years 7, 8 and 9 is information and communication technology. The school's plans to teach ICT through the other subjects of the curriculum are not successful and pupils are, therefore, underachieving. In Years 10 and 11, some teachers need further training to teach the subject in the depth required. The teachers of Year 11 pupils do not have sufficient data on pupils' progress to be aware of whether pupils are underachieving. The nature of the GCSE course (on-line) compels the pupils to become independent in their learning and this is a strength of their work.

35. The teaching of English is good throughout Years 7 – 11 and pupils learn effectively and make good progress. The teachers have very good experience and are well qualified. English lessons are well organised, varied, interesting and imaginative. Pupils respond well to their teachers and participate actively and enthusiastically. Teachers constantly look for opportunities to develop literacy skills. They have high expectations of their pupils and pupils tackle difficult tasks. The pace of lessons is brisk. Homework is set regularly and pupils' work is marked well.

36. The teaching of literacy skills is effective, especially in the early years. As a result, the pupils make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 especially those targeted for special support. Most pupils' literacy levels are improving and this is reflected in the improving results of national curriculum tests of Year 9 pupils in English over the past two or three years.

37. The overall quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The teachers know their subject well and their infectious enthusiasm for the subject helps to motivate the pupils. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils ensures that lessons are conducted in a purposeful atmosphere. Teachers plan lessons well and work is well matched to pupils' needs. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace with tight deadlines.

38. The strategy for teaching of numeracy skills is less formal than the one for literacy. For example, there is no policy for numeracy across the subjects of the curriculum. However, numerical competence is developed well in mathematics and is applied effectively in other subjects, particularly geography, design and technology and science. The national numeracy strategy has had a positive effect on standards in mathematics and pupils' fluency with mental and paper-and-pencil arithmetic and number work has improved. Overall, pupils' good numeracy skills are an asset and make a positive contribution to their work in other subjects.

39. The teaching of science is good in years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The teachers know their subject well and plan lessons effectively. Discipline is firm but friendly. Pupils enjoy science lessons and the aims of lessons are clear to them. The pupils make better progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 than in the GCSE course. In the early years, pupils work at a good pace, concentrate well and develop their ability to learn independently. Occasionally the teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough, so that they are insufficiently challenged. Insufficient use is made of ICT in lessons because of the present difficulty of access to computers.

40. Citizenship is a new subject in the National Curriculum. It has made a good beginning and is well taught. The planning of lessons is very effective and imaginative, and pupils are challenged to work in different ways to solve practical problems. This approach ensures that pupils are interested and enjoy lessons. On occasions, teaching concentrates too much on imparting knowledge and not enough on developing pupils' understanding and thinking.

41. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory. Pupils generally know what standards they are achieving, usually by reference to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. There is a whole-school marking policy that provides a helpful framework for subjects' own marking procedures. However, this is not consistently adhered to, for example in information and communication technology. Marking is effective and helpful to pupils in English and religious education. However, in mathematics, geography and information and communication technology, marking of written work varies in the quality of guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. In design and technology, marking tends to be over-generous and spelling errors are not always corrected. Work in this subject is sometimes not completed. This is also the case in history: marking is usually thorough and helpful but there is no attempt to follow up work which is incomplete.

42. A significant number of parents find the setting of homework inconsistent across the subjects. The inspectors agree that this is the case. However, homework is very effective in English and religious education.

Sixth form

43. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory though there is room for improvement. In the subjects inspected in depth, the teaching is good in art and design, business studies and history. It is satisfactory in mathematics, biology, physics, design and technology, psychology and English literature.

44. The strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good knowledge of their subjects and the good working relationships with their students. These qualities ensure that the students have confidence in their teachers, and are motivated to learn. In history, for example, the teachers' excellent and wide-ranging knowledge of the subject enables them to present interesting lessons which bring the subject to life, and fascinate the students. The strengths of the students' learning lie in their interest in their subjects, their compliance with the teachers' expectations of them and in their ability to concentrate on their work.

45. An important weaknesses in teaching is that independent learning is not sufficiently developed in most subjects; particularly the ability to extract information from a wide range of sources and this is bound to affect the students' performance, both at sixth-form level and beyond. The teachers tend to do too much for the students. The students, in turn, are content to allow this. In some subjects the teachers devise safe structures for the students, such as 'writing frames' for poetry. Although these devices enable the students to do what is required of them, they fail to stimulate and develop the students' original thinking and, as a result, the students' overall progress is no better than satisfactory. Linked with the students' lack of independence in their learning is a neglect of the potential of ICT to develop the students' analytical and research skills in most subjects.

46. Homework is set regularly. In general, students' work is well and regularly marked and assessed. Detailed analysis and evaluation of the students' written work and correction of errors are supported by valuable written comments and guidance on what action is needed for the students to improve.

47. The effect of 75-minute lessons is to slow the pace of the lesson down so that less ground is covered in a typical week than would be the case with more but shorter lessons. The loss of pace restricts the students' progress, even in art.

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

48. The curriculum is satisfactory and has a number of very good features and a few areas for improvement. The sixth-form provision is good overall. The school's programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), which the school calls life studies, is very good. The large range of extra-

curricular activities is also a strength. Community links, including relationships with primary schools and colleges of further education, are also very effective. However, the curriculum does not meet the statutory requirement to teach the full national course in ICT to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and, in the sixth form, the requirement to teach religious education to all students is also not met.

49. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for boys and girls of all abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds. The loss of teaching time due to movement across the widespread site and the occasional problems with the use of time in the long lessons will be solved with the new building.

50. The school's strategy for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is successful, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. Good basic skills underpin pupils' progress in all subjects.

51. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. It includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education and life studies. Pupils take either French or German but may not take both languages at this stage. Pupils do not have ICT lessons and this subject is taught through the full range of subjects: generally speaking this is not proving successful.

52. The quality and range of learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11 are good. Pupils can take up to 11 GCSE subjects including English literature, a modern foreign language, the double science award, religious education and vocational ICT, and choose one of four design and technology courses. This very well organised curriculum enables all pupils to study a range of subjects suited to their needs and aspirations. They receive very good advice to follow a broad curriculum. However, this imaginative programme allows pupils to take either or both of two foreign languages, two design technology subjects, two humanities or two expressive arts subjects. Apart from ICT there are no vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and this is a missed opportunity to provide progression in the 14 –19 curriculum.

53. Another very successful feature of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is the work-related course for a few pupils who might otherwise not attend school regularly. This has improved since the previous inspection. National awards are provided in learning skills, job-seeking skills and preparation for employment in addition to the Youth Awards. Pupils have a day each week in a work placement.

54. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities and virtually all pupils take part. Pupils appreciate the time teachers give to these activities as this work does much to extend their learning experiences. The contribution of the performing arts subjects is extensive. There are many concerts that involve five musical groups and a choir. Pupils from local primary schools play in the junior band. Visiting musicians provide individual lessons on a range of instruments. Pupils produce and perform their own plays and take part in the Lichfield Mysteries and Festival. In addition to theatre, museum and art gallery visits there is a wide range of overseas residential experiences.

55. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular sports and participation rates are high. Those who attend are very committed and pupils have regularly gained success at local and regional level.

56. The life studies programme is very well planned and includes drugs, sex and relationships education as well as many aspects of citizenship. Statutory policies have been adopted by the governors and are in place. The programme also includes health education, environmental and careers education. The majority of form tutors are confident with the content and the methods of teaching. They are provided with training and are involved in evaluating and revising the flexible programme. The subject is well supported by visiting speakers who make a significant input. Imaginative features include Year 7 visits to the Forestry Commission on Cannock Chase, all Year 8 pupils following the St. John Ambulance Young Lifesavers Award Scheme.

57. Careers education, guidance and work experience are good. The school has developed effective careers guidance and has been awarded the Staffordshire Quality Standard for careers education and guidance. A well-structured careers programme is taught as part of the life studies course. It is well taught by the form tutors and benefits from effective contributions by visiting external specialists. The

taught programme is constantly evaluated and refined appropriately. There is some informal monitoring of the delivery of the course, but this is not yet rigorous.

58. Careers guidance starts early in Year 7 with an imaginative environmental project about the employment structure of the Forestry Commission. Year 8 pupils take part in an industrial simulation project called 'The Real Game'. Year 9 pupils have an annual day to investigate the world of work, which effectively paves the way for their choice of options. The careers' convention organised between local high schools enables pupils and parents to find out about a range of employment and education prospects. Year 11 pupils have individual careers interviews to help them to plan their sixth-form subject choices or to prepare for employment.

59. Links with partner institutions and the contribution of the community to pupils' learning are very good. Regular meetings with teachers from the primary schools initiate many learning projects and, as part of these, the staff from Chase Terrace Technology College work with Year 6 pupils at certain times during the year. These links ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. As a result, there is little unnecessary repetition of earlier work and Year 7 pupils adapt well and settle into their new school. Members of the community, such as the police, contribute to the life studies programme; the vicar and the local Youth for Christ group make valuable contributions to school assemblies. Local industries provide work experience for all Year 10 pupils and regular work placements for pupils and students on vocational courses. One such company has made a substantial donation of materials to the design and technology department.

60. The identification of gifted and talented pupils is still in its very earliest stages. Last year a focus on learning strategies with a group of Year 11 pupils resulted in 16 pupils exceeding predictions by at least two grades in several subjects at GCSE. At the same time in Year 7 an after-school group was formed to extend more able pupils in a Jubilee Year Project, which resulted in an interesting piece of detailed research on the local area over the last 50 years.

61. Currently, there are only 10 pupils on roll whose first language is not English. None of them is at an early stage of acquisition of English, and, consequently, no special help is needed for them.

62. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is now good and they have full access to the National Curriculum. These pupils follow the full National Curriculum and enjoy the same opportunities as other pupils. In Years 10 and 11, they have the option to follow an alternative curriculum which allows them, as an alternative to modern languages and double science, to follow a range of GCSE courses in major subjects linked to work in basic skills, Youth Award Programme of the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), off-site visits and employment based learning.

63. The Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs is well understood and fully implemented to ensure that the pupils are afforded every opportunity to make progress and to be successful. Additionally, opportunities are made available for younger pupils to develop their basic skills through skills clubs, homework clubs, and appropriate resources.

64. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school is very successful in creating a community where pupils' personal development and a respect for the individual are actively encouraged. Art and music, sport and extra-curricular activities make a distinctive contribution to the life of the school, and pupils benefit from a wide variety of opportunities which enrich their experience.

65. The development of pupils' spiritual awareness is good and is reflected in the high quality of relationships, pupils' very positive attitudes towards the school, and their good co-operation at a time of great practical difficulties. Pupils' understanding of the spiritual side of life is sustained and strengthened through the links with the local churches, some of whose members take part in assemblies and special services, such as those at Remembrance Day and Christmas. Assemblies do not always include an act of worship but the chosen themes enable pupils to reflect on spiritual matters and there are weekly prayer

meetings and an active Christian Union. In lessons, pupils have some very good opportunities to extend their spiritual awareness through creative work in art, music and dance, the study of literature and visits to different places of worship such as neighbourhood churches, the mosque at Walsall and the Buddhist centre near Derby.

66. The school's provision for moral education is good. Pupils respond positively to teachers' expectations of high standards in work and behaviour, and there is a clear code of conduct that pupils understand and accept. Pupils value the merit system, and achievements in all areas of school life are regularly celebrated. Pupils learn about the difference between right and wrong in assemblies and mentoring sessions as well as in the daily routines of school life. Problems of current concern such as drugs abuse are explored very effectively in the programme for personal, social and health education and also in English where pupils encounter themes of racial hatred, violence and the horrors of war in the texts for study. Most subjects of the curriculum make a good contribution to pupils' understanding of moral issues. In history, for example, pupils focus on the morality of war and reflect on the courage of those who spoke out against the Nazi regime in Germany. Genetics issues are discussed in science, and in religious education pupils become aware of ways in which decision-making can be affected by prejudice and discrimination.

67. Provision for social development is very good. In lessons and in extra-curricular activities pupils make good use of the wealth of opportunities for working in a variety of different groupings to learn how to collaborate with others, and to develop self-confidence in expressing themselves. For example, in design and technology pupils learn how to share equipment equably and to function effectively as a team in practical tasks. Ensemble work in music lessons also promotes very good collaboration and a desire to work exactly in harmony with others. Pupils are actively encouraged to take responsibility in school life. The school council offers pupils the opportunities of representing others and helping to oversee the very successful fund-raising activities for local and national charities. Older pupils make musical contributions to assemblies and there are many opportunities for pupils of all ages to take responsibility in group and pair work in physical education.

68. The school makes very good provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to appreciate the customs and traditions of their own culture and also those of other cultures. In art they benefit from visits to local museums and galleries, and from the wide range of art and artists studied. For example, aboriginal art is used as a stimulus for posters that are on display at the Lichfield Festival. In music there is a good comparison of European and African traditions, as well as opportunities of concerts to play in and to attend. The English department encourages pupils to take part in theatre visits and provides reading material from a variety of countries and literary periods. Pupils encounter different cultural traditions through the study of world religions, the visits to Europe organised by the modern languages department, and, in design and technology, through the study of foods and textiles from other countries.

Sixth form

69. The curricular provision is good in the sixth form. An extensive range of 25 academic AS and A-level courses and two Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course are provided. This range is extended by the provision of a number of General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses, and a GNVQ foundation course in collaboration with the local Further Education (FE) College.

70. The curriculum is very responsive to local circumstances and matches the different needs and aptitudes of the students well. The arrangements with the FE college are well planned and provide coherent programmes of learning with the result that intermediate and foundation vocational courses are very successful.

71. Since the introduction of the new curriculum in 2000, the course options enable students to choose up to five subjects. Most Year 12 students take four subjects to AS level. Most Year 13 students continue their studies in three subjects to A-level but a small number take four subjects. In principle, students can mix advanced vocational courses with traditional subjects, but because they spend three days each week in the local FE college, the GNVQ Intermediate students cannot take an AS level course.

72. Most Year 12 students have the equivalent of one day each week outside lessons for private study, increasing to two days in Year 13. A consequence of the fire is that the students' private study facilities are presently inadequate, though the school has done all it can in the circumstances to ease the situation.

73. Equality of access and opportunity are very good. The fundamental aim of the school is to ensure that each student is offered the greatest opportunity to learn and achieve. The open access policy to the sixth form reflects this principle as far as possible.

74. The school provides very well for students' personal development in the sixth form, despite the present lack of religious education. There is a good range of sporting and social activities. However, other enrichment activities such as the very successful Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Millennium Volunteers and Community Sports Leadership Award have been curtailed by national changes to the curriculum and some students would like more opportunities to take part in these activities. The inspectors agree with the students who think that enrichment activities could be expanded further; nevertheless, many students take responsibility in the school and wider community through, for example, paired reading, supporting younger pupils in their classes, as mentors, running the homework club and raising money for various charities. Many students take an active part in drama, musical events and public speaking competitions. All these activities promote very good relationships and make an effective contribution to students' personal development.

75. At present, most students no longer take A-level general studies and this is one of the reasons for the fall in the students' average point scores in 2002. For the future, additional time is planned to be given for general studies, physical recreation and enrichment activities and, in Year 12, for the specialist teaching of key skills.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

76. Pupils receive very good personal support and guidance. The school monitors pupils' personal development very effectively and provides a wide range of counselling and mentoring for them, especially those with social or academic needs.

77. The school has good child protection procedures which are well known to the teachers. The school maintains confidential records. The governors' health and safety policy is up to date and effectively implemented. The school has benefited from professional advice to minimise the risk to pupils in the current temporary circumstances and a full risk assessment has been carried out, as required.

78. Several external agencies regularly work with pupils to very good effect. The school nurse holds a drop-in clinic to give practical advice to pupils about health issues. The school's anti-bullying procedures are very effective.

79. The arrangements for monitoring and sustaining good attendance are very effective and have led to a recent improvement in the attendance figures. The school works effectively in partnership with the educational welfare officer in individual cases when concerns arise and there is very little truancy. Attendance is routinely checked by subject teachers in lessons. Parents appreciate what the school does to monitor attendance and know that they will immediately be informed by the school's attendance officer if their child is absent.

80. The school monitors and promotes pupils' personal development very well. Up-to-date computerised records are kept for each pupil. These records enable staff to identify patterns of behaviour which cause concern so that they can intervene when necessary. Pupils' good work is recognised and celebrated and the annual awards ceremony is a key event in the school's calendar.

81. The greatest care is taken to identify pupils with special educational needs and to take action to help them. Particularly helpful in this regard is the careful induction of the intakes of new Year 7 pupils, which begins in the final year of primary education, when the pupils are formally assessed. The teaching assistants, who co-ordinate the school's provision for a number of these pupils, are responsible for their records, organising their reviews, and acting as the first point of contact for parents. They do this effectively. Individual education plans of a high quality are reviewed very thoroughly twice a year. Teachers and learning support assistants work very closely together to identify the best ways to meet their pupils' needs; they display great care and concern for them.

82. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are generally good although they are unsatisfactory in information and communication technology. The results of national tests taken in Year 6 and of other nationally standardised tests enable the school to build up a clear picture of each pupil's attainment at the time of joining Year 7. This baseline information is used effectively as a basis for setting targets in Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations. Pupils' progress is made clear in annual reports to parents, supplemented by half-yearly progress reports.

83. The school takes the involvement of parents seriously and communicates with them very well. An excellent booklet for parents, explaining and interpreting the data it uses, helps parents monitor their children's progress objectively. Pupils who are recognised as underachieving are closely monitored by form tutors who work closely with academic staff, sharing information and providing pupils with helpful feedback on their progress towards achieving their targets. There is strong direction by senior managers who personally monitor, on a class-by-class basis, how pupils are progressing towards their targets and have a clear vision of how assessment can be used to improve standards. A data file for each year group of pupils informs senior staff about whole-school progress in meeting targets and improving performance.

84. Subject assessment procedures vary in effectiveness: they are very good in music, physical education and religious education and good in all other subjects, apart from design and technology and geography where they are satisfactory, and information and communication technology where they are weak and unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

Assessment

85. As in the main school, assessment procedures in the sixth form are good though individual teachers could improve the quality and helpfulness of their marking of the students' work. Assessment data, such as GCSE and test results are used effectively to help governors and senior staff to monitor the school's performance. Heads of subjects use data to set individual targets for students and to measure their progress; subject teachers use individual scores to monitor the students' progress towards their targets. The management of the sixth form and form tutors use the data to identify students who may have peaked at GCSE and who require particular support and monitoring. This is an effective system that is developing well but further staff training is required in the interpretation and use of predictors, particularly by form tutors.

Advice, support and guidance

86. Students receive very good quality support and guidance. Induction procedures for the sixth form are good. The information provided by the school gives a clear picture of what to expect in the sixth form. All students are interviewed prior to admission and there are regular reviews to sort out any potential

problems. Very few students drop out from their chosen courses and this indicates high quality of guidance.

87. New admissions are assigned to tutor groups, which are small and organised in such a way that friendships are respected and the subjects taken are balanced. Students meet with their tutors and the subject teachers for regular effective individual personal and academic monitoring sessions, at which targets are set and reviewed.

88. There are good procedures to promote and monitor good attendance, with clear expectations about the use of free study time, which is mainly spent on site. Relationships between the students and staff are very constructive and friendly. There is a well-planned programme of life studies, which includes study skills and careers guidance. The external careers service takes an effective role in advising students as they prepare for higher education and future careers. At present with the temporary site, careers reference materials are not all conveniently located and some resources were lost in the fire. Despite these difficulties, the guidance for careers is good. The personal references written by staff for the students are of high quality, reflecting detailed personal monitoring. It is impressive that nearly all students applying to university are successful in gaining places at their first choice of institution.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

89. Parents have very positive views about the school. They are proud of the way the school was able to reopen just two weeks after its main facilities had been destroyed by the fire and say that the school's staff have shown great dedication. Parents believe that the school is well managed, approachable and that the children behave well, make good progress and are helped to become mature and responsible. The inspectors agree with parents' positive views, although they consider that most pupils make satisfactory rather than good overall progress.

90. Some parents said that they would like better information on their children progress. The school has changed the arrangements for parents' consultation evenings after canvassing parents' opinions, to meet the wishes of the majority. Parents now meet their child's form tutor rather than subject teachers, as was formerly the case, but a minority of parents prefer the system as it was. Most parents, however, welcome the changes because the consultation evenings now run more smoothly than before.

91. Some parents would like more regular homework for younger pupils. The inspectors agree that the setting of homework could be more consistent.

92. The home-school partnership is very effective; it is established early in Year 7 with an excellent bridging programme for new pupils and their parents. The school listens to parents' views and consults them. Parents feel welcome when they visit the school and say that they are confident that complaints or suggestions will be dealt with properly.

93. In most respects, the school provides high quality information for parents; for example, the pupils' planners are effective as a channel of communication between home and school. The *Chase Terrace Times* presents interesting articles, photographs and contributions written by the pupils. The annual written reports on children's progress are good and present a clear picture of attainment.

94. Most parents are very supportive of their children's learning at school and at home. The vast majority of parents attend the annual consultation evenings to discuss their child's progress. Parents support the school through the parents' association, which runs enjoyable social events and raises funds to supplement the school's resources. School productions and award ceremonies are very well attended.

95. The members of the special educational needs staff maintain very close contact with parents and are ready to talk with them at any time. Pupils' individual education plans incorporate a valuable section for

parental action. The school has also prepared a helpful parental guide on dyslexia, and another on how to help children become effective learners by building up their self esteem, security and sense of identity.

96. The post-16 parents' consultation evenings were revised in the same way as for the main school. Adult education courses are hosted at the school and in recent years several adults have studied alongside the sixth formers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

97. The senior leadership team is small in relation to the size of the school: it comprises the headteacher, one deputy head and four assistant headteachers. The leadership provided by the headteacher and her senior staff is very good and the school's management is satisfactory.

98. The headteacher took up her post in September and, together with senior staff, has led and sustained the work of the school magnificently through the traumatic effects of the fire. She has worked very hard and successfully to restore confidence and morale throughout the school community. She is now working closely with governors, teachers and other key staff on plans for the construction of a new school which embrace her vision for a genuine learning community. Her very effective leadership is providing exactly the clear direction that the school presently needs to move forwards and to raise standards. The work of the senior staff clearly reflects the values of the school; this in turn is shown in the very good relationships throughout the school, the very positive attitudes of the pupils, and the confidence and morale of the staff.

99. The governors work effectively through their committees, which have been set up since the last inspection. The governors are hard-working and support the school energetically. They are proud of the school and are committed to its success. They played a full and beneficial part in the inspection, which showed that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and matters for its further improvement. They receive regular reports from the headteacher, senior and middle managers, which enable them to monitor the quality of the educational provision and to set challenging but attainable targets for achievement. The school does not fully meet its statutory requirements: there is currently no provision for religious education in the sixth form, the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) is not fully implemented in the main school, and a daily act of collective worship does not take place for all pupils. The governors have oversight of the budget and monitor spending effectively.

100. Since the previous inspection, members of the senior leadership team have been attached to subject departments in order to improve monitoring and accountability. Subject reviews take place on a four-yearly cycle, but this is not frequent enough and the follow-up is often insufficiently rigorous.

101. The school's middle management comprises the co-ordinator of the special educational needs department, subject heads, and key pastoral staff. The management of subjects is generally good and very good in art, music, physical education and religious education. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is also very good. However, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are only satisfactory. The management of information and communication technology needs to be improved to enable the school to meet the National Curriculum requirements for the subject. More generally, a whole school approach is needed to the use of performance figures to set subject targets for improving teaching and raising standards. Of equal importance is the need for a more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by subject heads and senior staff.

102. The special educational needs department is very well organised and managed. The co-ordinator ensures that all staff are kept fully informed of the needs and the nature of difficulties of each pupil with special educational needs. The deployment of support teachers and learning support assistants is very well organised. Similarly, arrangements for withdrawal of pupils from lessons and for help in registration periods are very successful in raising standards in reading, spelling, number work and life skills.

103. School development planning is good. The current school improvement plan is well constructed and focuses correctly on the need to raise achievement through improving the quality of teaching and learning.

104. The school's funding is slightly below average for a school of this type. The budget is carefully planned and well administered. It is in balance and there is a small contingency carried forward.

105. Systems for financial management are satisfactory, although not all the recommendations of the most recent audit report have been fully implemented. Budget monitoring is good and governors receive regular reports which compare predicted with actual expenditure and analyse differences. Special funds, such as those for pupils with special educational needs, are spent on their intended purposes. The school has started to forecast and analyse budget implications for up to three years ahead.

106. The school uses its resources wisely to fund its educational priorities. The school applies the principles of best value by consulting parents through questionnaires and pupils through the school council. It compares its performance with that of similar schools through analysis of government and local authority tables. It sets realistic targets but needs to take more effective action to meet them. Overall, the school gives sound value for money.

107. The school has a well-qualified staff whose expertise matches the curriculum requirements well in most subjects, although some non-specialist teachers of ICT in Years 10 and 11 would benefit from further training. Induction procedures for newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school are effective.

108. The school was awarded *Investors in People* status in 1997 and this was renewed most recently in 2002. A well established and effective induction programme for all new staff includes a comprehensive programme of support and development for newly qualified teachers. The performance management programme meets all statutory requirements. All staff had their targets reviewed in the autumn term. New targets have been set which are linked to whole school and departmental priorities. The teaching staff are well supported by an adequate number of administrative, technical and educational support staff who help to ensure that the school runs smoothly.

109. The present accommodation, consisting mainly of mobile classrooms and a building situated five minutes walk away from the main site, is satisfactory only as a temporary measure. At present, accommodation for physical education is inadequate, because the indoor provision is too small. Plans for the new school have already been drawn up and will house the whole school on a single site. Teachers have done their best to brighten the learning environment with colourful displays of children's work.

110. Resources are gradually being replaced following the fire and are generally satisfactory, but it will take some time for teachers to replace them fully. The library is not yet fully equipped: its book-stock is presently insufficient for the school's needs and it has no computers or other modern technological equipment. However, funds are being made available to remedy these deficiencies.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

111. Sixth-form responsibilities are clearly defined. The sixth form successfully supports the school's aim to work in partnership with the community to promote life-long learning. Leadership of the sixth form is good and its management is satisfactory.

112. A feature of leadership is the very clear intention of the headteacher and the head of the sixth form to improve teaching and learning in order to raise standards. The monitoring and evaluation of performance is not yet underpinned with an effective framework against which to check measure success. Although individual students have targets there are no subject targets. In 1999, there was a very useful survey and evaluation of teaching and learning and results in 2000 were the highest the school

has achieved. Subsequently, however, keeping track of teaching and learning within and across subjects has been inconsistent and examination results have declined over this period. Although the results are analysed in detail, so that the school is aware of the relative performance of subjects, little has yet been done to secure improvements.

113. A very good aspect of the sixth-form leadership is the successful pastoral team who provide advice, support and guidance of high quality. There is a regular review and evaluation of all procedures and areas for improvement are identified. This includes an annual review of students' views.

Resources

114. The staffing and resources for the sixth form are satisfactory. The staff and students are coping with the temporary accommodation though the private study facilities are inadequate. Overall, the sixth form is efficient; although it is subsidised to a small extent by the main school, it is cost effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

115. In order to improve teaching and standards, the governors, headteacher and senior staff should take the following action.

Main school

- (1) Take steps to improve the GCSE results especially in
 - science, modern languages, geography and design and technology*(paragraph 9)*
- (2) Raise standards in ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9 by
 - ensuring that the National Curriculum is covered for the subject
 - improving the management of the subject*(paragraphs 7,34,48,101,175-182)*
- (3) Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to raise standards
 - identifying in subject reviews and in analyses of pupils' work how teaching and learning can be improved and
 - taking the necessary action to secure the improvement*(paragraphs 100, 101)*

Sixth form

- (1) Take steps to improve the examination results, especially in
 - biology, chemistry, environmental science, design and technology, German, ICT, media studies, music and psychology.*(paragraphs 14,15)*
- (2) Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in order to raise standards, as in the main school, by
 - identifying in subject reviews and in analyses of pupils' work how teaching and learning can be improved and
 - taking the necessary action to secure the improvement*(paragraphs 100, 101, 112)*
- (3) Develop students' independent learning and use of their private study time
 - doing less for the students in lessons and holding students to account more for their own learning
 - expecting students to carry out more research, and finding answers for themselves*(paragraph 45)*
- (4) Improve the effectiveness of the students' use of information and communication technology
 - both in lessons and in their private study time*(paragraph 45)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	119
	Sixth form	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		70

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	1	17	62	39	0	0	0
Percentage	1	14	52	33	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	0	6	31	14	1	0	0
Percentage	0	12	60	27	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1158	169
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	74	-

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	73	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	376	4

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	121	115	236

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	86	88	95
	Girls	102	83	87
	Total	188	171	182
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80(68)	73 (69)	77 (65)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (23)	54 (36)	33 (31)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	96	81	95
	Girls	97	81	92
	Total	193	162	187
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (74)	69 (75)	79 (75)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (33)	49 (38)	46 (35)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	109	114	223

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	47	101	103
	Girls	68	111	112
	Total	115	212	215
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	52(50)	95 (97)	96 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.1 (40.5)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	39	47	86
	Average point score per candidate	14.9 (15.6)	15.5 (19.8)	15.2 (17.6)
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (18.0)	* (17.5)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	39	47	86	3	11	14
	Average point score per candidate	15.2	18	16.5	7.3	8.7	8.4
National	Average point score per candidate	* (16.9)	* (17.9)	* (17.4)	*	*	*

** National comparison data for AS/A level results are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1294	23	2
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	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	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	641

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	3948840
Total expenditure	3964724
Expenditure per pupil	2965
Balance brought forward from previous year	35940
Balance carried forward to next year	-6851

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1327

Number of questionnaires returned

240

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	61	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	32	62	4	1	1
Behaviour at the school is good	25	66	4	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	8	67	17	6	2
The teaching is good.	15	75	4	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	7	68	23	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	52	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	46	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	54	18	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	30	61	2	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	55	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	67	8	3	5

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards and results are above average.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes.
- Teaching is good.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is not monitored as thoroughly as pupils' progress.
- Time is not used efficiently in all lessons.

116. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average although the proportion of pupils who exceeded the expected standard was below the national figure. The results represent a significant improvement on 2001, when the proportion reaching the expected standard was below the national average. There has been a steady improvement over the past four years, so that the school is now above average in comparison with similar schools, indeed with all schools. The GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average in English and slightly above in English literature. Boys and girls did better than their counterparts nationally in both subjects.

117. In relation to the pupils' attainment on joining the school in Year 7, the results represent good achievement. This is still the case with pupils currently in Year 9: standards are above average. The progress they make can be clearly seen even in Year 7, where the majority of pupils can identify main and subordinate clauses, for instance, and read confidently. In their first three years in the school, pupils demonstrate their competence in talking and writing about a range of literature, including much from earlier centuries, whether traditional ballads, Shakespeare plays or Victorian poetry. By Year 9, higher attaining pupils discuss linguistic devices such as antithesis in *Macbeth* and most pupils produce written work that is neat and presentable. The very best are typing up extended pieces of work of some quality, notably one boy whose work included the first four chapters of his own novel. At the other end, a significant minority struggles to write well and the teachers are right to have identified writing as the area needing most attention overall. Reading skills and speaking and listening skills are good.

118. Pupils maintain good progress in Years 10 and 11. Speaking and listening skills are above average across the ability range. Lower attaining pupils were seen engaging in discussions on moral and social issues with much confidence. Pupils rated average by the school produce work on Shakespeare, for instance, of above average standards compared to that seen in most schools. Higher attaining pupils write confidently and at length, even under examination conditions. Final drafts of their work are of a very high standard, and look likely to attract top GCSE grades.

119. One reason for the good progress made by pupils is that they have positive attitudes to learning and relate well to their teachers. They behave well in lessons and are very mature in their relationships with each other.

120. The pupils' good achievement is also the result of good teaching and learning. There is a team of well-qualified teachers with a wide range of experience; their subject knowledge is good, as are their organisational skills. Varied teaching methods are used, many of them quite imaginative. Because teachers manage their classes effectively and pupils respond well to them, teachers are able to make

lessons more interesting – by singing a ballad, for example, and getting pupils to join in, or by getting them to read lines of Shakespeare in chorus and shouting out antithetical phrases to show they understand the contrasts built into the text. Teachers use resources well and are particularly alert to the need to develop literacy skills. They have high expectations of their pupils, setting them tasks one would think were more appropriate for older classes, whether this is grammar work or the study of pre-20th century texts. Just occasionally planning goes awry, or teachers fail to use the time effectively, but the pace of most lessons is good. Homework is set regularly and pupils' work is marked well. Strategies for helping pupils with particular needs are effective; these pupils usually participate fully in lessons but, on occasions, they are also withdrawn from them to work separately when this is in their best interests.

121. Staff are making the best of the temporary accommodation, but have to move frequently between rooms, which limits the use of some resources. All lessons are double periods of up to 75 minutes, which is not always an appropriate length of time to sustain concentration, but the situation is managed well. The head of department is an effective leader and is very well organised. Department policies and procedures are very clear, for instance the arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. The use of cover sheets, containing constructive advice, grades for effort and attainment, pupils' self-assessment and targets, is particularly helpful in the case of more formal assessments. Pupils keep assessment sheets of their speaking and listening skills, as well as reading logs. They have clear information on what they are achieving and what they need to do next. The monitoring of teaching is not as thorough as the monitoring of pupils' progress, but it is satisfactory. Because coursework is moderated within the department, and teaching materials shared, teachers have a good knowledge of what others are doing and the department leadership observes lessons to some extent and pupils' written work to a greater extent. The resultant evaluation has led to changes in teaching, in particular a special emphasis on writing skills.

122. The previous report spoke of good provision in English; there have been ups and downs since then, but above average standards have been sustained.

Drama

123. GCSE results in drama in 2002 were below the national average but represent a reasonable achievement considering that drama is only taught as a separate subject from Year 10 onwards. Current standards are average; pupils have positive attitudes and teaching is good. There is one specialist teacher, who currently teaches all lessons in a specialist studio in the school annex.

Key skills – literacy across the curriculum

124. Although department files do not draw attention to any policy for literacy, an effective and successful strategy is clearly in place. Literacy is co-ordinated by one of the assistant headteachers, and meetings are held regularly with representatives of all subject departments. A training day was held for all the staff in 2001, and staff continue to be updated about what is happening and how funding is being used. In particular, they are informed about how pupils with literacy needs are being helped. All the evidence points to noticeable improvement against prior attainment for those pupils who are supported in this way.

125. Support has been given in a variety of ways. A summer school was held in 2001, but last year the funds were used in other ways, to benefit a larger number of pupils. Progress units are held during tutorial time, with support staff available to help those individuals withdrawn from their tutor groups on the basis of perceived needs. Some are also withdrawn from lessons for literacy support. There are also booster classes, where creative use is made of funding, for example a visit by a theatre in education group.

126. Some subject departments are more involved in the provision for literacy than others and have received training. Some subjects, such as science, provide frameworks for pupils to follow in their written work. Most subjects encourage pupils to use correct vocabulary and to learn key words; some provide lists of the latter, although the extensive use of words on walls has not survived the fire. Grammatical

structures and spellings are taught in modern foreign languages, where a sensible balance between the use of English and the target languages is maintained to maximise learning. Wide reading is encouraged in art; there are opportunities for reading aloud in history, science and English. Speaking and listening are encouraged in design and technology, science, music, drama and English. As a result, most pupils' literacy levels improve steadily and this improving picture is reflected in the above average results of national curriculum tests of Year 9 pupils in English.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Above average standards - good achievement
- Good teaching and learning
- Positive attitudes and relationships
- Leadership provides clear educational direction for the subject

Areas for improvement

- The presentation of written work
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in order to raise standards further

127. In the 2002 national tests the results of Year 9 pupils were above the national average. Analysis shows that pupils achieved well, having attained average standards when they joined the school in Year 7. The number of pupils who attained the highest national curriculum levels was more than that seen nationally, and represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Overall results have improved in line with the national picture and there is little difference between the results of boys and girls. Results in mathematics are broadly similar to those in English and science.

128. The 2002 GCSE results were above the national average. Six out of ten pupils entered for the examination gained a grade within the A*-C grade range, compared with five out of ten nationally. Almost every Year 11 pupil sat the examination and results spanned the whole grade range. A higher proportion of pupils than that seen nationally were unsuccessful in achieving a pass grade. This was because a number of pupils were entered for the examination at an inappropriate level. Overall, girls' results were slightly higher than boys' results. Most girls and boys performed at least as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection when the proportion gaining A*-C was slightly below the national average.

129. The standard of work produced by pupils currently in Year 9 is above average. Given the starting points of pupils, which are average, this represents a good level of achievement. National strategies have resulted in improved schemes of work and better teaching. All pupils have benefited from the implementation of national strategy for numeracy so that learning and progress are not hindered by weaknesses in arithmetic. Every pupil meets similar topics at appropriate levels and work is well matched to different needs. For example, higher attaining Year 9 pupils, working on shapes in two and three dimensions, are appropriately challenged with calculations that include the use of Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry ratios. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, competently translate and enlarge various triangles and quadrilaterals.

130. The standard of work of Year 10 and 11 pupils observed during the inspection is above average and reflects recent GCSE results. Pupils build on their prior learning, maintain steady progress, and achieve well. For example, highest attainers extend their trigonometry to include the use of sine and cosine rules and average attainers extend their skills with equations to include linear simultaneous equations. Standards of work are above average across the whole GCSE grade range. At all levels there is an

appropriate balance between consolidating and rehearsing prior learning and acquiring new knowledge and skills.

131. Overall, the presentation of written work is unsatisfactory. Although the quality of many pupils' written work is good, that of many others is untidy and unstructured. This concern is not confined to average and lower attainers. For higher attainers the joy of seeing the total shape and logical sequences of a complex solution is not always realised because of a lack of rigour in its presentation. The use of information and communications technology to enrich and support learning is increasing and its contribution and importance are identified and promoted in new schemes of work. In lessons, there is no discernible difference in the attainment or involvement of boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into their groups. The involvement and positive impact of classroom assistants are good and help to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make good overall progress.

132. The overall quality of teaching and learning across the Year groups is good and has improved since the previous inspection. All the teachers know the subject well and lessons increasingly reflect the format recommended in the national strategy. Teachers know their pupils well and the high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils ensures that lessons are conducted in a purposeful atmosphere. Pupils' behaviour is invariably good and the great majority display positive attitudes to their work.

133. Teachers' preparation and planning are thorough and work is generally well matched to pupils' needs. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In the best lessons, these features are enhanced by the teacher's infectious enthusiasm for the subject and a brisk pace that is helped by challenging deadlines for the completion of tasks. For example, when higher attaining Year 9 pupils were working towards the solution of quadratic equations by factorisation, the teacher's skilful questioning reflected thorough planning and subject expertise. In other, nevertheless satisfactory lessons, there is too little involvement of pupils during the introduction to the lesson and less evidence of the national strategy.

134. Because some of these long lessons lack a variety of activity there is sometimes a loss of impetus, particularly in the final stages of the lessons. Pupils' work is generally marked and assessed regularly but there are variations in the quality of diagnosis and the degree of guidance on what pupils need to do to improve.

135. The leadership and management of the subject are good and provide a clear sense of educational direction. Good assessment procedures are reflected in the analysis of subject performance, planning and evolving schemes of work. There is a positive team ethos and much is achieved through the quality of the relationships between teachers and their combined experience. The commitment of teachers is illustrated in the good quality of display and celebration of pupils' work in the temporary classrooms. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place but are not being fully utilised to raise the quality of teaching.

Key skills across the curriculum - numeracy

136. The school's numeracy strategy has had a positive effect on standards in mathematics. Pupils' fluency with arithmetic and number work has improved and teachers are increasingly using the strategies to plan their lessons for Years 7,8 and 9 and, as a result, pupils are now more actively involved in their learning. In Year 7, lower attaining pupils have extra teaching time to raise their National Curriculum level.

137. Although numeracy skills are not consistently applied in every subject, there are many subjects in which these skills are used effectively to enhance learning; for example, geography, science, design and technology, and physical education. Overall, pupils' good numeracy skills make a positive contribution to their work across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Year 7, 8 and 9
- Above average overall standards by Year 9
- Assessment, recording and target setting.
- Very good links with feeder primary schools ensure common starting points in Year 7.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The GCSE results
- Use of ICT
- Some large-scale equipment needs to be replaced.

138. Recently introduced initiatives, such as revision packages for Years 9 and 11, additional revision classes and increased links with feeder primary schools to ease the transition for Year 7 pupils are beginning to have a positive effect. Efforts are being made to improve pupils' investigative skills, which should ultimately improve their GCSE grades through their coursework.

139. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average by Year 9. In 2002, the results of the national tests of Year 9 pupils were above the national average, and were an improvement on the results for the year 2001. The boys slightly outperformed the girls in the tests but boys and girls make similar progress in lessons. There has been an overall improvement in these results each year since 1998 and this has been greater than that seen nationally. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils are able to describe respiration and photosynthesis and write word equations for them. Evidence from exercise books shows that they are able to draw line graphs representing time and speed with reasonable accuracy and perform relevant calculations. Below average pupils in this year group are able to name factors that will cause the rusting of metals but have little understanding of the chemistry involved. Overall, pupils' achievement is good.

140. The overall standard of the present Year 11 pupils' work is average and represents a satisfactory achievement for these pupils. GCSE results for the year 2002 were average and were similar to those in 2001. The results were not as good as those for English or mathematics. Pupils are entered for the dual award examination except for a very small minority who follow a single science course as they are entered for the Youth Award Scheme. The higher attaining Year 11 pupils are able to explain the difference between exothermic and endothermic reactions and showed competence in practical skills when carrying out an experiment related to this topic. Their written work shows that they have a clear understanding of the causes of variation in living organisms and can explain the role of chromosomes in genetic inheritance. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty with this and are unable to give such clear explanations. The majority of pupils are confident when carrying out practical work and handle chemicals and apparatus with care and respect. They work co-operatively together and share tasks amongst themselves. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils during lessons are generally good in all years. They listen attentively when required, are keen to answer oral questions and participate in class discussions and usually remain on task during written work.

141. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The schemes of work reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination board. The teaching has some important strengths. Lessons are well planned and organised and teachers have good subject knowledge so that they are able to give clear explanations of scientific ideas to the pupils. The teachers manage the pupils well; working relationships are friendly but discipline is firm. Learning aims are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons, which often start with a game or

a quiz to revise previous work, which the pupils enjoy. The strengths of the pupils' learning lie in the good progress that they make, the good pace of lessons, their ability to concentrate and to learn independently, in Years 7, 8 and 9.

142. The teaching materials used usually ensure that pupils work at the right level, but occasionally the teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough, so that they are insufficiently challenged. Lessons contain a variety of activities, including practical work, which reinforces theory and helps to maintain pupils' interest. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Pupils learn the vocabulary of science lessons through the emphasis of key words. Pupils read aloud and develop their speaking and listening skills through group discussions. The use of simple formulae to calculate factors such as distance, time and speed and graph plotting enable pupils to practise their numeracy skills. Insufficient use is made of ICT in lessons because of the present difficulty of access to computers. However, Year 9 pupils participate in an award scheme which gives them the opportunity to use ICT. Groupwork in lessons enables the pupils to interact socially and moral issues are covered by such topics as the environment and genetics. Homework is set according to the school timetable and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory and is in line with the school marking policy.

143. Assessment is accurate and pupils are set individual targets. The results of regular testing are held on a departmental database and are shared with pupils. Underachieving pupils are identified and interviewed and strategies are discussed with them to help them improve their performance.

144. The department is well led and managed and there is a good team spirit amongst the staff. Departmental meetings take place regularly both formally and informally, so that subject expertise is shared. The national test results have improved well since the last inspection and the new initiatives introduced in Years 7, 8 and 9 are already showing positive effects although the number of pupils gaining higher levels in the tests could be greater. The GCSE results have not improved in the same way as the test results and could be improved. The teaching accommodation is satisfactory although it is divided between two sites, and there is very little space for staff to carry out administration work. Resources are satisfactory, but some larger apparatus needs to be replaced. The department receives good technical support from three technicians.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning
- Pupils' good achievement
- Well above average standards in Year 11
- The subject's very good contribution to pupils' cultural development

Areas for improvement

- The lack of enough opportunities to work on a larger scale in Years 7 to 9.

145. The results of the teachers' assessments of the previous Year 9 pupils were above average. The standards of current Year 9 pupils are also above average and they are achieving well, considering their average standards when they joined the school in Year 7. They make good gains in their skills in working in three dimensions, and they use card, paper and clay, to produce lively and humorous small sculptures. These effectively capture the variations in shapes and attitudes seen in the human form. Their work in oil pastel is bright and vigorous, and they design masks, based on the study of the art of other cultures, which are bright and bold. They make good gains in their composition skills, and confidently arrange shapes and colours to create pleasing paintings and drawings using chalk and paint. However, there are not enough opportunities for them to work on a large scale, especially in the larger teaching groups, when the space in

classrooms is cramped. This means that pupils' broader media handling skills are not as fully developed as they could be.

146. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, results were above average. Results show some variation owing to variations in standards of those pupils who take the course, but they have usually been well above average in recent years. Standards in the work of current Year 11 pupils are well above average. Their achievement is very good, and they make very good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. They make ceramic dishes, based on the study of medieval art, which show a growing confidence in working with clay. These are decorated with carefully placed harmonious colours. They work very confidently from observation, and produce lively drawings in oil pastel, which accurately record the shapes and textures seen in cut and sliced pieces of fruit. Their painting skills also show very good improvement, and they learn to create very complex designs, based on a study of ancient cultures. These draw the eye around the picture, and create high levels of interest in the viewer. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well, because teachers understand their strengths, and provide active lessons and a very wide variety of materials.

147. Pupils' attitudes are good in years 7 to 9, and they try hard in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, attitudes and behaviour are very good, and these pupils, who have chosen to do the subject, are very well motivated and work very hard as a result. This helps produce very good learning in lessons.

148. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In Years 7 to 9, they are good, and in years 10 and 11 they are very good. Strong features of the best lessons are the high level of challenge in the tasks set, and the teachers' high expectations. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils were shown how to blend oil pastels to record the subtle variations in texture and colour seen in pieces of fruit. They were then shown how to use a knife to scrape through the materials to capture the reflections of light seen on the cut surfaces and the curving outer skin. Even though the pupils felt they could not achieve the results at first, they persevered, and were very pleased when they found they had been successful. This approach produced very good learning. In a small number of lessons, mostly in Years 7 to 9, however, the pace of the lesson waned a little at times, and pupils were not able to maintain the very high levels of concentration seen in the best lessons. This is the major reason why teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall, rather than very good, as it is in Years 10 and 11.

149. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Achievement is now good in Years 7 to 9. In addition, well above average standards have been maintained in Years 10 and 11. Leadership and management are very good, and frequent monitoring of standards of work helps to maintain teachers' high expectations. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good, and pupils work in a very wide range of materials and processes. For instance, they make card constructions; they model and build in clay, and paint on card, board and silk. The subject also makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development. For example, they regularly visit galleries and museums, and explore local environments, such as the botanical gardens, to sketch and draw on the spot. In addition, the art of other cultures is often studied to further inform pupils' own artwork.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Good teaching overall
- Very good achievement of more able pupils and those with learning difficulties
- Above average standards in Years 10 and 11
- Very good planning of the programme
- The very good contribution of visiting speakers
-

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and of teaching and learning
- The assessment of pupils' work
- The involvement of lower attaining pupils in lessons

150. Pupils begin Year 7 with below average attainment in citizenship. Overall, they reach above average standards in Year 9 and standards are again above average in Year 11. Pupils increase their knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and make good progress developing their skills of enquiry, participation and communication. Most are enthusiastic, take an interest in their work and achieve well. However, achievement is inconsistent across all groups of pupils.

151. Higher attainers make the very best of the opportunities given to them and they achieve very well. The work of lower attaining pupils' is sometimes incomplete. They contribute less to group work and are more reluctant to take part in discussions and presentations. Nevertheless, their standards are average and represent good achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress developing their skills of participation and communication with effective and sensitive help from learning support assistants.

152. Year 8 pupils develop their communication skills well, as seen in a debate about school uniform. Pupils increased their understanding of the concept of the world as a global community in lessons on fair trade, exploitation and pollution in geography. They have investigated the effects of the differences in economic development on the quality of life of different groups of people in a case study of a city in Brazil. Many pupils reach high standards when working independently, for example, planning and designing the new school. Year 10 pupils' presentations to the whole of their year group showed effective problem-solving and decision-making skills and many pupils used ICT very effectively to make professional-quality presentations. This successful project improved pupils' self-esteem. In role-play situations and studying newspaper articles, Year 11 pupils showed a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities connected with missing and runaway persons. During the inspection, an outside speaker led an excellent session on substance abuse which increased the pupils' awareness of their responsibilities to themselves and to others.

153. Teaching and learning are good overall. The strength of the teaching is the very effective planning of the work which challenges pupils and encourages them to work collaboratively or independently to solve practical problems. This imaginative approach generates a high level of interest and ensures that pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills and become informed young citizens. Some less effective teaching is too didactic and concentrates too much on imparting knowledge and not enough on developing understanding and thinking.

154. Leadership ensures a very clear direction for the development of this new subject. It is innovative and practical and aims to involve teachers and pupils in the planning of the work so that they feel ownership of the subject. Management of the subject is good but, as might be expected, monitoring and evaluating lessons to improve the quality of teaching and learning is at an early stage. Assessment procedures are not yet securely related to National Curriculum criteria and there is no effective system for recording all of the relevant evidence on individual pupils' attainment and progress. However, the citizenship programme is very well planned to involve all subjects and has been effectively drawn together. Some aspects of citizenship are covered in assemblies and visits, in pupils' involvement in paired reading, pupil mentoring, counselling and the school council.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good relationships

- Good management of the pupils
- Positive approach to new technologies
- Good subject expertise
- Good standards of practical work

Areas for improvement

- Consistency in the teaching of design
- Presentation of work
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
- Use of assessment data to improve pupils' performance

155. Standards of work in Year 9 are average and results of teachers' assessments of the previous Year 9 indicate similar standards. Pupils make satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 9 and their achievement is satisfactory. Practical work is usually above average and the better design folders are neatly presented. Girls usually produce better work than boys but not greatly so. Good work was seen in a Year 7 project about electronic symbols and circuits with good explanations of what the various components do. Good work in a Year 8 clock project, using colour to good effect and clear, labelled drawings in the research. In a Year 9 food technology project, pupils achieved good standards when researching the needs of blind, deaf or disabled people in connection with the operation of microwave cookers. Design folders are satisfactory and practical work is good. Some less satisfactory work shows poor presentational skills, both written and graphical, lack of depth in the research and design, and is often incomplete.

156. Standards of work in Year 11 are average across the different technology subjects. This is a satisfactory achievement. The standards seen are reflected in the 2002 GCSE results, which were in line with national averages. Girls' results were marginally better than those of the boys. In 2001, the GCSE results were above the national average in all subjects with the exception of resistant materials. Child development (which is not strictly a design and technology subject) was well above the national average. In graphics, pupils' projects about computer games made good use of information communication technology, and applied effective modelling skills. A project in resistant materials to investigate hand-crafted jewellery showed good freehand sketching and use of colour. In textiles, a good use of photography was applied in a practical project on a seaside theme. Practical outcomes are generally of a good standard, for example, an impressive water feature displayed in the school foyer. Weaknesses are mainly due to lack of depth in the research, design ideas not developed in sufficient detail, poorer drawing or work not completed.

157. In child development, in a project on communication skills and their influences on young children, the pupils' presentation and written work are particularly good. Weaknesses in the work are similar to those found in the design and technology subjects. Pupils taking this course achieve average standards in coursework and well in practical work.

158. Pupils' attitudes are usually good and they respond well in lessons. They collaborate well and share equipment as needed. On occasions, pupils drift off task and engage in idle chatter but mostly they contribute positively to the lessons. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory and information communication technology is used well in pupils' work.

159. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good teaching. Teachers have good subject expertise. In the best lessons, pupils make good progress because teachers use their good subject knowledge to expand and develop pupils' ideas. In such lessons, pupils work at a good pace and sustain their motivation, and are clear about the lesson's objectives. Discipline is good. In a Year 11 lesson for lower attaining pupils the teacher coached the pupils effectively in examination techniques and how to interpret the examination questions. Pupils show that they have a good knowledge of the fair trade system in food production, which contributes to the development of their active citizenship. In some lessons,

pupils drift off task during explanations or demonstrations which are too lengthy. Marking of work is regular but can be over-generous at times and spelling errors are not always corrected.

160. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good documentation and schemes of work are in place and planning is generally good. The teachers work well together as a team. Assessment procedures are accurate but data are not used effectively to raise standards or to plan the work. GCSE examination results have been above the national average until 2002 where they are average. Monitoring of teaching and learning requires a more rigorous footing across all design and technology areas. In particular, the teaching of the design process needs to be consistent.

161. Accommodation is rather cramped in food technology and the rooms are awkwardly designed and storage need updating. Some resources are inadequate in textiles and there are insufficient information communication technology resources. Technician support is very limited and this adversely affects lesson preparation. No work is presently done in control technology because the equipment was lost in the fire.

162. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Hand tools are now used safely; there is more use of information communication technology in pupils' work and marking has improved. CAD/CAM has also been introduced.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour
- Good leadership of the subject
- The range and quality of fieldwork

Areas for improvement

- The GCSE results
- Target-setting
- Marking of pupils' work so that they know what they have to do to improve
- The pace of lessons
- Independent learning

163. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9. The standards of pupils' work are average by Year 9 and their achievement is satisfactory. Year 7 pupils' map skills are good. They can interpret map symbols well and higher attaining pupils can measure distances and use map co-ordinates accurately. The teachers' clear explanations and their use of attractive and well-structured resources help Year 8 pupils to identify geographical patterns, such as those of climate and vegetation in various regions of Brazil. Pupils' understanding of the culture of another country is extended through their study of Brazil. A visit to the botanical gardens in Birmingham stimulates pupils' interest in tropical plants and helps them to explain clearly how these are adapted to their environment. Year 9 pupils explain differences in economic development between different locations, for example, northern and southern Italy. In their work on this topic they show that they understand and use specialist terminology, such as 'life expectancy' and 'infant mortality'; however, pupils are less secure in their understanding of more complex geographical concepts such as 'Gross Domestic Product'. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress with constructive help from classroom assistants.

164. In the GCSE course, overall standards are average by Year 11 and this is a satisfactory achievement. The GCSE examination results were average in 2002 and were similar to those of the previous two years. Girls' results were better than those of boys. In 2002, pupils' performance in GCSE geography was slightly below that of other subjects they took. The results pupils gained in GCSE

examinations, when compared with their previous attainment, indicate that they achieved below what was expected of them. Year 11 pupils can analyse maps, graphs and tables, reaching sound conclusions, for example, about water supply and use. All pupils understand the environmental issues associated with water conservation but they are less sure about the precise meaning of 'sustainable resources' in this context. Year 11 pupils speak enthusiastically of the fieldwork they carried out during a trip to Chamonix where they improved their enquiry skills and knowledge of physical and human geography.

165. Pupils have good attitudes towards their work and behave well in lessons. They co-operate well with the teacher and work well with each other. When working in groups, they share information and ideas sensibly.

166. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and sometimes it is good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage their classrooms well in order to promote learning. Lessons are well prepared and good use is made of information and communications technology to produce attractive resources which stimulate pupils' interest. The strength of the pupils' learning is their interest in the subject. Teachers use textbooks, work sheets, video extracts, and fieldwork activities to extend pupils' skills and knowledge of the subject. Pupils' literacy skills are developed through extended writing but their range of writing styles tends to be limited. Collaborative work with the mathematics department involving analysis of data collected from river studies has enhanced pupils' numeracy skills and their understanding of river processes. In some lessons, too much time is spent on a particular activity: this leads to a slow pace and pupils are not as productive as they could be. In some lessons, the teachers' explanations are too long and this results in some loss of concentration. Pupils need more encouragement to think for themselves. The way in which pupils' work is marked is not consistent and some pupils are unclear about how well they are doing or how to improve their grades.

167. The leadership of the department is good and there is a clear vision of how the subject can improve further. The management of the department is satisfactory but assessment results are not yet used effectively to set targets for all pupils. Teachers have worked very well together to replace their lost resources and to re-plan their schemes of work. The temporary accommodation is proving adequate.

168. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The teachers in the department are strongly committed to further improvement and are well placed to achieve this.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Pupils' good achievement
- Good, enthusiastic teaching
- Good contribution to pupil's personal development and literacy skills
- Good management of the department

Areas for improvement

- Continued focus on raising achievement at GCSE
- More effective use of homework and follow up when work is missed

169. Standards of Year 9 pupils' work are above average. Given their average level of achievement on entry to the school, they make good progress throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 and achieve well. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and develop key historical skills from the beginning. For example, a Year 7 class studied the consequences of the black death in the middle ages and were able to reach a well researched evaluation of the bad and good consequences of this terrible event. In a Year 8 lesson,

effective role play about the various radical groups which came into being during the civil war gave the pupils a better understanding of political upheavals during this time. All were able to complete good quality written work which took their learning forward. Year 9 pupils have many examples of extended writing in their books such as detailed accounts of the reasons for the first world war, as well as analysis of original sources and the developing ability to look at complex subjects from more than one viewpoint.

170. History is a popular subject in Years 10 and 11 and nearly half of the year group took the GCSE examination in 2002. The GCSE results for the last 3 years have been close to, or a little above, the national average. In 2002 they were in line with the national average. Girls performed better than boys, a reflection of the picture nationally. The standard of the present Year 11 pupils' work is average, which represents a good achievement for these particular pupils. Their work on 'medicine through time' shows that the pupils are developing skills in handling source material and in making judgements and evaluations. In a lesson on the work of Lister, students produced good research into why Lister faced so much opposition from fellow professionals. Year 11 groups showed their ability to analyse information accurately to identify groups who opposed Hitler during the Nazi regime and explain why they did so.

171. Pupils with special educational needs and those whose literacy skills are weak make good progress because their work is carefully matched to their needs. Those whom the school has identified as gifted and talented are well provided for with extension work and open-ended questions.

172. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in history are good and sometimes very good. They work very effectively in groups by sharing ideas and tasks. Their very positive attitudes are a contributory factor in making sure that lessons can proceed with pace and discipline.

173. Teaching is good throughout the school and often very good. Dynamic lessons are planned with many strategies designed to fire the imagination of pupils. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils built a fine tower with building bricks which was ruthlessly swept down to give a vivid illustration of the sometimes terrible consequences that can come from individual actions. Teachers use a variety of role-play and thinking exercises to make history come alive for the students. They provide academic rigour in lessons at all levels to teach the important skills needed for success in examinations. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and their enthusiasm captures the interest of the pupils. They have high expectations of their pupils. Their approach to history makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development as they are constantly challenged to interpret the past in the light of their experience of the world today. The teachers ensure that there are literacy targets in every lesson and make good use of information technology in their planning of lessons. Marking is thorough and includes positive comments wherever possible, but there is no attempt to follow up students whose work is incomplete. Learning is consistently good. Pupils make good progress in lessons; they try hard and work at a good pace. Some of the work in their books is meticulous, detailed and thorough. Other pupils are less careful and leave gaps where work is incomplete.

174. A strong team of dedicated historians is managed effectively and well. Staff morale is high, especially so, considering the recent crisis caused by the fire. Good teaching is vigorously promoted and the department keenly monitors its own performance. They have identified as priorities the need to raise achievement in GCSE results, as well as to refine processes of assessment. The history curriculum is enriched through a series of well-planned and enjoyable visits to castles, museums and other places of interest. The department has maintained the good standards in history noted at the time of the last inspection and made good progress in several areas, including developing the use of information technology in history and improved achievement in Years 7-9.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- All Year 10 and 11 pupils take a GCSE or GNVQ examination in this subject
- Pupils' attitudes are good

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work are too low in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9
- The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory

175. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the National Curriculum in ICT is intended to be taught through other subjects. However, since the fire, pupils experience few such opportunities to further their learning.

176. In 2002, the teachers' assessments indicated that the attainment of Year 9 pupils was above average. However, evidence from the inspection, including discussions with pupils and scrutiny of ICT work in other subjects, indicates that these assessments are inaccurate and that standards of the current Year 9 pupils' work are in fact below average.

177. Given their attainment on joining Year 7, which was average, the pupils' are underachieving. Skills of word-processing, desk-top publishing and communicating information generally, are about average. However, knowledge and understanding of how computers can be used to handle information, particularly the value and use of databases, are well below average. Although higher attaining pupils can create spreadsheets and understand their advantages, the pupils are not confident with them when using formulae. Pupils' skills in electronic communication, for example, by use of the Internet, are underdeveloped. They have a very limited understanding of the use of ICT to control objects, for example, by giving a series of instructions in order to achieve a particular outcome.

178. Standards in Year 11 are close to average. GCSE results were average in 2002 and were the school's best ever in this subject. As in previous years, more boys took the examination than girls and the girls' results were better than those of the boys. The proportion of pupils who passed the examination was above average. During the first three months of the academic year the school was without an effective computer network and there have been printer and hardware difficulties which also have had an adverse affect on standards. The on-line GNVQ course is helping pupils effectively to become independent learners. Their understanding of why they use a particular system in preference to others is below average but their design skills are good. Data management skills are weak. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils lack awareness of the social, economical, ethical and moral issues surrounding the use of new technologies. Taking into account the circumstances caused by the fire, pupils are making satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory.

179. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 due to the lack of teaching time and coverage of the National Curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, they make satisfactory progress in lessons because the course they follow is designed to provide opportunities for them to work at their own pace. All pupils take an examination course. Although teachers make no special provision for the more gifted pupils, the courses are flexible enough to allow them to progress at a faster rate than others. However, given that in last year's GCSE examinations no pupil achieved the highest grade, it is likely that the more capable pupils could achieve these grades with greater attention given to their needs.

180. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall because the National Curriculum programmes of study are not being taught systematically. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In these years, the subject is taught by a large team of mainly non-specialist teachers. Whilst they work hard to help and support pupils in their learning, some of these teachers lack experience and the expertise to teach the subject in depth and would benefit from further training. There is no subject marking policy and assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. For example, teachers of Year 11 pupils do not all have information about their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 and have no knowledge or awareness of what pupils' target grades are. Consequently they are not

aware of the pupils' underachievement. The teachers make assessments of the pupils' work at the end of each unit but their routine assessment and marking of the pupils' work does not tell the pupils how they are progressing in their course and what they need to do to improve their GCSE grades or GNVQ performance, and this is unsatisfactory.

181. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient improvement since the previous inspection, in particular in the provision for Years 7, 8 and 9. There is no scheme of work to plan how the National Curriculum will be taught through other subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9. There is no monitoring of teaching and learning despite the large number of non-specialist teachers involved in teaching Years 10 and 11. Pupils are not formally assessed in ICT at any time during Years 7 or 8, and even Year 9 reports to parents contain no information about their performance in ICT. Older pupils' progress is not monitored against their GCSE or GNVQ targets for ICT. There is no department assessment policy and the subject makes no planned contribution to pupils' personal development. There are few formal departmental meetings, which are of crucial importance for the non-specialist staff. The ICT co-ordinator and ICT teachers have worked extremely hard to mitigate the negative impact of last summer's fire on pupils' chances of examination success. The fact that the examination board's special consideration section is pleased with the progress made by GNVQ full award pupils is testimony to their efforts.

Key skills: the use of information and communication skills across the curriculum.

182. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in other subjects have been temporarily affected because computers and software lost in the fire have yet to be replaced, for example, in modern foreign languages and mathematics. In addition, there are continuing problems with the temporary network. The evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' written work and subject schemes of work, suggests that, until the fire, the use of ICT to support learning was satisfactory. In science, computers have been used for investigative work and data-logging; in mathematics for spreadsheet work. In design and technology and textiles, pupils have used specialist software for such purposes as computer-aided design and manufacture. In art and design, a very good use of computers generates images to create interesting designs for finished work, for example, in ceramics. In history the use of ICT is very good and pupils at all stages use word-processing, data analysis, Internet research and presentations. In some subjects, especially English, pupils use word processing and desk-top publishing software to present information and regularly use the Internet for research.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

French and German

Strengths

- Pupils' good achievement in both languages in Year 7, 8 and 9
- Good management of the subject
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs
- Good development of pupils' literacy skills

Areas for improvement

- Standards in both languages in Years 10 and 11
- Independent learning and speaking skills in Year 10 and 11
- The use of information and communication technology

183. Half the pupils take French and the other half German. Pupils may take one or both languages in Years 10 and 11 to GCSE. Provision for French is broadly similar to that for German, because most staff teach both. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are reported without distinguishing between French and German. Those for 2002 indicate that standards at this stage are above average compared with all schools. Girls do better than boys as they do nationally.

184. GCSE results in French in 2002 were above average, having improved from below average in 1999. Standards seen in lessons and in the analysis of pupils' written work are above average in the first three years. They are average in Year 11 and there is room for improvement. Pupils achieve well in their first three years but achievement in the GCSE years is just satisfactory.

185. GCSE results in German were average in 2002 after several years of gradual improvement. They are similar to the French results but appear lower because national standards are higher in German in percentage terms. Pupils taking German also achieve well in the first three years but no better than satisfactorily in the GCSE years.

186. During the first three years pupils develop good listening and speaking skills in their foreign language, because teachers now make good use of the foreign language in teaching. There are few distinctions to be drawn between the languages except in the case of one very good German lesson where pupils learned very well. Most pupils develop an understanding of grammar at an appropriate level, which supports their literacy skills in English, as do opportunities for reading in the foreign language. At present this cannot include reading electronic text. Some higher and middle attaining pupils in Year 9 can produce pieces of written work ten or twelve lines long, and most others have writing skills sufficient to record information. Pupils use numbers to deal with everyday concerns, such as dates, times, ages and prices in Euros, but other opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills are missed.

187. In Years 10 and 11 most pupils are working towards the GCSE examination, in either French or German. A small number in each year have been formally disapplied from the National Curriculum requirement to study a foreign language. Pupils have average writing skills and knowledge of vocabulary and structures; however, speaking skills are weaker. Because ICT provision has been destroyed the pupils have no opportunity to use computers to support their learning, for example, through the Internet. They have not developed good independent learning skills and remain too dependent on their teacher.

188. Pupils with special needs achieve well throughout their five years at school in relation to their attainment in basic literacy when they entered Year 7. They have no history of problems in the new language, and they are well supported both by teachers and by teaching assistants. Some of them in Year 7 can say their basic phrases with confidence. Others approaching the GCSE are continuing to work well at Foundation Level. Gifted and talented pupils and the few with English as an additional language learn as others do.

189. Overall attitudes and behaviour are good. In most lessons observed pupils showed positive attitudes to language learning, working well with the teacher and with each other. Some were very well motivated, notably when looking forward to a forthcoming exchange visit.

190. The teaching of French is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good language skills and use them well in lessons, creating a good climate for learning. They plan their lessons to good effect and normally manage their pupils well. Relationships are good and in many lessons pupils are clearly enjoying the experience. In consequence of the good quality of the teaching, pupils learn effectively in Years 7, 8 and 9 and make good progress. A strength of the pupils' learning are their good awareness of the progress that they make, because the teachers mark their written work well.

191. The quality of teaching and learning of German is also good in the first three years and satisfactory in the GCSE years. Some German lessons in the first three years are taught by non-specialists but the teachers have enthusiasm for the subject and their teaching is satisfactory. Otherwise teaching and

learning are similar to what is found in French because most teachers teach both languages. They have equally good language skills, and the methodology is the same.

192. This is a well managed department. There is an effective line management structure, which through monitoring of teaching and learning enables teaching to be evaluated and improved. French and German are closely co-ordinated with each other. There has been a good recovery from the devastating affects of fire, leaving ICT as an area still in need of restoration. Staff show strong commitment, leading for example to school trips to France and to Germany each for 40 Year 8 pupils, and to the rebuilding of exchange links with a German school. A French exchange is run by the County. Resources apart from ICT are good. They have been well chosen to meet the learning needs of these pupils. The temporary accommodation is fit for purpose.

193. Since the previous inspection improvement has been satisfactory. Teaching has improved, and examination results have over the last four years recovered to the level they were at in 1996 against a national background of improvement.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Above average standards in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Very good leadership and management
- Very good assessment
- Very high standard of school bands and choirs

Areas for improvement

- Formal monitoring and evaluation of lessons
- Insufficient computers for composition in Years 7 to 9

194. Standards of Year 9 pupils' work are above average and the pupils are achieving very well. Year 9 pupils clap and play a complex mixture of rhythms on a variety of percussion instruments. In this work on African drumming they read notation well. Higher attainers read conventional music notation and once they stop counting the beats out loud they listen carefully to the intricate sounds and rhythms that are being created. Lower attainers read the graphic notation well, concentrating hard and keeping their beats accurate and steady.

195. Standards in the current Year 11 are average and are lower than in previous years because pupils' overall ability is lower than usual. The standards these pupils reach represent a good achievement. From available evidence during the inspection several pupils are expected to do well at GCSE. Too few pupils take the GCSE examination to make reliable comparisons with national averages or between boys and girls. In the GCSE examination in 2002, 83 per cent of pupils taking the examination achieved grades between A* and C and all of them passed the examination. For several years, the GCSE results have been better than expected and, for many pupils, music has been their most successful subject. Playing instruments is the strongest aspect of their subject but for this particular group composition and listening are proving difficult.

196. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are very good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are very good at their subject; they plan lessons very well, providing a really good variety of activities which interest and enthuse the pupils. All pupils learn very well because tasks and activities are designed to enable each pupil to make good progress. This is a particularly strong

feature of the department and comes as a result of sustained development of materials for pupils of differing attainment over the last few years. Teachers are also very conscious of using the right kind of approaches and methods in the classroom so that all pupils can make good progress. For example, teachers select pupils to form working groups to include boys and girls and high and low attainers. This is very effective, allowing the higher attainers to take the lead sometimes and the lower attainers to be well supported and motivated and for all to learn from each other. Pupils with special educational needs are well known and supported by the teachers in the classroom. Teachers are firm but very positive with the pupils and as a result all pupils behave very well. Pupils trust their teachers and consequently relationships are very strong and all pupils feel valued. They enjoy music greatly, particularly when they are playing instruments. In Year 7 pupils' enjoyment was particularly noticeable during individual practice time and when playing their pieces together as a class on glockenspiels, recorders and piano. This enjoyment has a very positive effect on their learning.

197. The subject makes an effective contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils use excellent self-assessment sheets in Years 7, 8 and 9 which encourage them to express their opinions in writing. The quality of their written language is good as is their spoken language in the classroom. Practical music making also provides pupils with opportunities to count and subdivide beats and keep a steady pulse, which they do well. Teachers give very good feedback to pupils in class, helping them to improve the work they are doing. The procedures they use to assess pupils' work are very thorough particularly so in Years 7, 8 and 9. Details of the National Curriculum levels of attainment are displayed clearly for each project and appear to be well known by the pupils. For GCSE the marking scheme for the exam is regularly used. Teachers keep very careful track of pupils' progress. More opportunities for pupils to reflect regularly on their work as a class would enhance an already very good system.

198. The department now has five computers which are used by all pupils. Although this makes a good start with ICT, there are insufficient computers for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to use for composition. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The team of teachers works closely together. They have a clear, shared vision for improvement in the department. Since the last inspection, very good progress has been made not only with specific areas for improvement, but with many other aspects. They have improved teaching and learning and high standards have been maintained. This is a department on the move. Keeping track of and planning this progress through formal monitoring and evaluation now needs to be implemented more rigorously.

199. The subject makes considerable contributions to pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to play instruments in school and the quality of these lessons is good. They take part in concerts as members of the bands and the choirs, and regular concerts provide very good social and cultural experiences. They are anxious to show that they enjoy themselves and to make sure that their audience is enjoying it too. The school produced a very successful CD of their high quality performances. A performance in Symphony Hall, Birmingham is planned.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning
- Good achievement throughout the school
- Above average standards in Years 10 and 11
- The high quality programme of extra-curricular sport
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs
- Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of lessons to improve the overall quality of teaching
- Learning opportunities for non-participants
- Changing facilities and lack of indoor teaching space
- The lack of examination courses in this subject

200. Overall standards seen in Year 9 are average and pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points on entry to the school, which are below average. Pupils are brought up to average standards because the overall quality of teaching and learning is good and because pupils have very positive attitudes to learning in physical education.

201. Girls and boys reach average standards in major games. Girls' standards in set dances, such as American-style rock and roll, are average and boys apply their personal survival skills soundly in real-life situations in the swimming pool. Their capacity to talk about their work and devise ways of improving their performance is sound overall but there is some inconsistency between teachers in the extent to which they provide pupils with opportunities to do this. Pupils know that it is important to prepare for strenuous physical activity and can lead each other well in appropriate safe-stretching exercises. Their understanding and use of correct technical vocabulary for example in referring to muscle groups such as the quadriceps, is sound.

202. Standards in Year 11 are above average overall and pupils achieve well. Standards are higher in the major games where pupils continue to develop their skills and more advanced tactics, than in the activities which they only begin to learn in Year 10. Boys and girls also reach above average standards in lifesaving skills such as a rescue from deep water and can explain why particular rescue methods are appropriate in different situations. Pupils successfully devise fitness programmes to meet their own particular needs, for example to increase stamina or improve body tone, and they can evaluate their relative success. Good progress is made in learning basic skills and rules in squash and some higher attainers are beginning to include more difficult shots such as the boast into their game. Standards in volleyball, where pupils have little previous experience, are weak. Pupils throughout the school develop a good understanding of the importance of physical fitness in contributing to a healthy lifestyle and by Year 10 can evaluate their improvement in responding to the 'bleep' test for stamina by analysing and displaying their results obtained since Year 7.

203. Pupils who have special educational needs, which affect their learning in physical education, make good progress. Their needs are well understood by their teachers who adapt the learning activities well for them and ensure that they are well integrated in the lessons. Some pupils receive individual support from a learning assistant and they make particularly good progress as a result. The learning assistant is well integrated into the department's ethos and the individual programmes emerging from their joint planning are effectively implemented. Extra-curricular activities, for example, swimming, are also provided for pupils who experience particular difficulties in learning, which helps them to get the most from their normal lessons.

204. There is a very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities for individual boys and girls as well as teams. A major strength of this provision is that the opportunities for participation extend throughout the school, provide equally for boys and girls and, through inter-form competition and sports days, involve the majority of pupils. Pupils experience a good level of success in competition at local, district and sometimes, national level. The standards reached make a significant contribution to the overall standards reached in physical education throughout the school.

205. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are very good. Participation rates in lessons are good and standards of kit are high. Pupils respond well to the high expectations set by their teachers in terms of fair play and respect for rules. They work well with each other in pair and group work and persevere well in, and enjoy demanding physical activity. In a netball lesson in Year 9, the girls cheerfully continued to

work hard in unpleasant weather conditions and a class of Year 9 boys showed their appreciation of an enjoyable swimming lesson with spontaneous applause.

206. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. One of the major strengths of the teaching in this subject is the way in which the teachers use their specialist knowledge and understanding in explanations and demonstrations, and to inform their accurate analyses of pupils' performance. This ensures that pupils have a clear idea of what they are expected to learn and can also adapt their practices in order to improve their rate of progress in developing their skills and application of tactics. However, in some otherwise satisfactory or good lessons in Years 7 to 9, the pupils are not given sufficient responsibility for this aspect of the learning for themselves. Teachers also create very good relationships with pupils, which they capitalise on well to demand high standards of performance and physical effort. The learning is also good because activities are made interesting and enjoyable. All these positive features were present in a hockey lesson in Year 9 and ensured that the class of lower attaining pupils persevered with very challenging passing and receiving practices, which they later succeeded in using in their game, and so made very good progress. Teachers question pupils well at the conclusion of lessons in order to assess their understanding of skills and techniques but do not usually get them to evaluate the progress they have made. Pupils who are excused from taking part in lessons are expected to help with equipment or officiate but are not, as a matter of routine, provided with appropriate means of joining in the learning.

207. Since the previous inspection the school has made a very good overall improvement, especially with the curriculum, so for example, the provision for boys' gymnastics is now good. The school still has to rely on off-site provision at a local leisure centre to ensure a broad physical education curriculum is provided for pupils. The small amount of indoor teaching accommodation actually available on the school site, whilst offering some advantages such as the swimming pool, still results in a curriculum biased towards outdoor games. Changing accommodation is inadequate. Subject leadership and management is very good and through careful planning has done much to minimise the effects of the inadequate accommodation. Relationships are strong and there is a very positive ethos committed to providing good learning experiences in physical education for all pupils. Very good assessment procedures are in place. The introduction of examination courses would give pupils further opportunities to develop and extend their particular talents.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The high standards attained at GCSE
- Very good teaching and learning
- Pupils' very good attitudes towards their work
- Pupils' very good use of resources
- Very good leadership and management of the subject

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results in the borderline area of grades D and C
- The balance between teachers' input and pupils' response in some lessons

208. Standards reached in Year 9 are above average in relation to the expectations set out in the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus. Teachers are adept at passing on to pupils their own very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Work seen during the inspection shows that most pupils have a good grasp of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other world religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. They are also good at explaining what they learn from religious beliefs. Pupils achieve well because they find the lessons interesting. They are keen to take part in discussions, and also enjoy practical tasks, such as making collages and examining artefacts. They use a wide range of key

religious words accurately and have a good understanding of the spiritual significance of symbols. Standards of written work in Year 9 are generally above average. Pupils of all levels of attainment express themselves clearly and write at reasonable length. The personal viewpoints of some higher attaining pupils often show considerable thoughtfulness and perception, as in the comment, 'Martin Luther King made an impact on prejudice, but I think it will never be banished from people's minds and the way they think.'

209. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow one of three examination courses in religious studies. In 2002, pupils' results were well above average in both the full course and the short course examinations at GCSE. Standards for the full course have risen steadily over the last three years and, in 2002, almost all of the candidates gained grades A*-C. This represents very good achievement for the much larger than average group of pupils taking this examination. In 2002, the results for the short course were higher than those of the previous year, with only a few grades at D and E. These results also reflect very good achievement because the majority of pupils in Year 11 take this examination. The department has very high expectations of its pupils, and has identified the raising of achievement in the borderline area of Grades D and C as a focus for action. A small group of pupils follow a course that leads to the Certificate of Achievement, and in this they are successful.

210. Standards in Year 11 are well above average. Pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching and their own mature approach to the subject. Written work shows that pupils generally are very well informed on the beliefs and practices of Islam and of the various denominations within the Christian Church. Pupils record their information in a variety of ways, ranging from formal essays to notes, letters and illustrations, and they present their work well. Higher attaining pupils produce very detailed biographies, such as the life of Mohammed, because they research their subjects in depth. Pupils show in their responses that they understand the some of dilemmas faced by faith communities in today's world, as for instance in the definition of 'a just war', and a modern interpretation of Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

211. Most pupils have very positive attitudes towards the subject and behave very well in lessons. This is because of the very good relationships within the classroom, pupils' interest in the religions studied, and the confidence that pupils develop through having access to a wide range of practical resources. For example, in a Year 10 lesson focusing on different styles of worship within the Christian Church, pupils with special educational needs were able to structure their written responses successfully because of the good quality worksheets prepared by the department. Through their study of world religions and the visits they make to different places of worship, pupils have very good opportunities for spiritual and cultural development. In discussions and homework tasks they are keen to show what they have learned about beliefs, ways of worship and traditional customs. Most pupils use ICT effectively in presenting their work.

212. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and this has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Teaching is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. There are many strengths. Lessons are very carefully planned with a variety of learning activities, and homework plays a strategic part in consolidating the work of the lesson. The department also places great importance on giving pupils plenty of practice in developing their research skills. This was well demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson on signs and symbols, where groups of pupils made effective use of textbooks, bibles and artefacts to discover the significance of different Christian symbols and then report back on their findings. Teachers assess pupils' work on a regular basis and pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing. A particularly strong feature is the marking in Years 10 and 11 where teachers' constructive comments help pupils to improve the quality of their written responses. However, an area of teaching which is not as strong as it could be is the use of time. In some lessons teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time in explanation at the beginning of the lesson, and therefore do not have enough time at the end to check on progress by finding out from pupils what they have learnt. Nevertheless, the strengths of the teaching far outweigh any shortcomings.

213. The leadership and management of the subject are very good with a very strong commitment to further improvement of standards. The staff work together very well as a team. Classrooms have eye-catching displays of pupils' work, and resources and records are being steadily built up again after destruction in the fire. Departmental documentation, which is exemplary, includes very comprehensive methods for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11, and attainment is now well above average at GCSE. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and pupils have more opportunities for independent research. Religious education is a strength of the school.

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

214. In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	23	61		26		2.0	
Biology	15	47		20		1.3	
Chemistry	10	70		30		2.2	
Physics	7	100		43		3.6	
Environmental science	7	86		0		1.3	
Design and technology	16	88		44		2.9	
Information technology	30	50		0		0.8	
Economics	10	80		30		2.2	
Art	20	100		30		3.2	
Theatre studies	10	100		10		2.4	
Media Studies	10	100		20		2.9	
Geography	10	70		0		1.0	
History	25	96		33		3.0	
Government and politics	9	100		67		4.4	
Sociology	16	94		25		2.6	
Psychology	26	42		4		0.9	
English	29	97		10		2.2	
French	2	50		0		1.0	
German	2	50		0		0.5	

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	16	93		13		4.8	
Biology	10	90		10		4.0	
Chemistry	11	91		18		4.4	
Physics	11	100		18		4.5	
Environmental science	5	80		0		2.8	
Design and technology	10	100		0		3.6	
Information technology	21	91		9		3.9	
Health and social care V	7	100		14		4.7	
Business studies V	7	86		14		3.7	
Economics	11	100		27		5.1	
Art	18	100		44		6.7	
Music	3	100		0		2.7	
Media Studies	10	90		0		3.2	
Geography	15	100		33		6.3	
History	17	94		41		6.0	
Religious studies	3	100		0		5.3	
Government and politics	5	100		40		6.4	
Sociology	9	89		33		5.6	
Psychology	12	92		8		2.8	
English	23	100		22		5.3	

German	3	66		0		2.0	
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Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	1	100	*		*		*
ICT	4	100	*	25	*		*
Health and social care	1	100	*		*	100	*

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

215. In this curriculum area, mathematics, biology and physics were the subjects inspected in depth but one lesson was sampled in each of chemistry and environmental science. The 2001 A-level examination results were well below average in chemistry and environmental science. In the chemistry lesson, Year 12 students were reaching average standards, learning about the reactions of carboxylic acids. In environmental science, in the first lesson for Year 12 students on the biosphere, the standards reached by Year 12 students were a little below average. Teaching was satisfactory in these lessons.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers' thorough command of the subject
- Very good relationships between teachers and students

Areas for improvement

- Too many students are unsuccessful at AS level
- The structure and presentation of notes and solutions
- The use of ICT to enrich and support learning
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning

216. A-level results in 2001 were average but the proportion of students who achieved the higher grades was lower than that seen nationally. Most students performed at least as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. Similar A-level results were obtained in 2002. Analysis of the 2002 A-level results indicates that although some students achieved well a significant proportion performed less well than predicted on the basis of their prior attainment. Results at A-level have been broadly similar over the last four years. AS results in 2001 were below the national average and almost one-third of students did not achieve a pass grade. AS results improved in 2002, and the number that attained a grade A or grade B increased significantly. However, the proportion of students who did not pass remained high. Although retention rates are generally good, a significant number of students terminate their study of mathematics at the end of Year 12. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.

217. The standard of work seen in Years 12 and 13 is average and slightly better in Year 12 than Year 13. Work is sufficiently rigorous to challenge students with the potential to attain the highest grades and similar standards are achieved in the pure mathematics and statistics modules. In statistics specially tailored notes and questions are designed well to meet the different needs of individual students. In pure mathematics work is often of a high standard but there is frequently a lack of rigour, structure and sequence in the setting out of solutions. This does not help weaker students to establish the necessary routines for presenting solutions and limits the value of their notes and exercises for revision purposes. A similar picture can be seen in the work in mechanics. Diagrams are sometimes scrappy and, therefore, do not help students to understand the topic. However, the quality and quantity of Year 12 students' work in mechanics are higher than the work produced by the current Year 13 when they were at the same stage.

218. The most able students confidently apply their prior learning to the development of new knowledge and skills. However, except for the highest attainers, Year 13 students lack confidence in applying their pure mathematics to work in statistics and they experience difficulties with recall when developing topics in pure mathematics. Weaker students make elementary errors even though they understand the new work. These errors are generally associated with a lack of fluency with the manipulation of algebraic expressions. Overall, the content of students' exercises matches course specifications and indicates that most students are achieving satisfactorily. The quality of students' notes, though sometimes good, varies and few students annotate their notes to suit their individual learning needs.

219. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. Two particular strengths characterise the lessons observed in the inspection: the subject command of the teachers and the very good relationships that have been established between teachers and students. In the best lessons the teacher's subject expertise was reflected in the skilful choice of questions that illuminated understanding and isolated misconceptions. For example, in a good Year 13 lesson on co-ordinate geometry, the teacher was able to progressively adapt the lesson to remedy the deficiencies in recall that many students displayed with questions that involved deploying a wide range of knowledge and skills from previous work. The teacher ensured that all students were engaged in the exposition, using carefully crafted questions that enabled them to make their contributions with increasing confidence. The result was a good balance between the consolidation of prior knowledge and acquisition of new knowledge and skills. In less successful lessons, there is too much teacher talk and insufficient involvement of the students during explanation. Consequently, opportunities are lost to share and discuss ideas. Overall, there is little variety in teaching strategies. For example, the potential for using ICT to enrich and support learning is rarely utilised. Teaching could be further improved with more rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

220. Students' work is regularly marked and assessed. In most instances, there is detailed analysis and correction of inaccuracies, with supporting comments and guidance on what action is required to bring about improvements. Although there is a lack of consistency in the grading of work, students feel they are well informed about their progress and how they stand in relation to their target grades. Very good relationships between students and teachers are characterised by mutual respect. Students invariably display positive and mature attitudes to their studies. They find teachers approachable and are particularly appreciative of their availability to give extra help when required.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The teachers' good knowledge of their subject
- Committed staff who work as a team.

Areas for improvement

- The A-level and AS results
- The development of the use of ICT
- Replacement of outdated equipment
- Monitoring teaching and learning

221. The GCSE A-level results in 2001 were well below average, and no students obtained the higher grades. There was an improvement in the results in the year 2002, although only ten students took the examination. The results at AS level in 2001 were below average and there was an overall decline in the AS level grades in 2002, when half of the students did not achieve a pass, although more students achieved the higher grades. Retention rates are good.

222. Standards of work currently are average and this is a satisfactory achievement for the students concerned. Year 13 students make satisfactory progress in lessons and discuss types of animal behaviour and devise investigations relating to it. During the inspection, Year 13 students showed competency in practical skills during the dissection of a kidney. Evidence from their written work shows that that lower attaining students lack depth of knowledge, for example, of the nervous system. Year 12 students' written work indicates a sound knowledge of the subject; for example, they can name and draw the molecular structures for important biological molecules and identify the finer parts of cells as viewed under the microscope. In discussion of the applications of gene technology in modern society and its benefits to humans, the students also showed an average knowledge.

223. Teaching in biology is satisfactory overall. Teachers show very good subject knowledge so that they are able to give clear explanations of facts and promote the confidence of the students. Lesson planning is satisfactory. Lesson aims are shared with students and lesson reviews help to consolidate their learning. Special efforts are being made to improve the investigative skills of Year 12. Students are encouraged to share ideas and help each other, particularly in Year 13, which is only a small group. Teachers question students frequently during lessons to establish and reinforce knowledge and understanding and independent learning skills are fostered by project work. Students concentrate on their work and show interest in it.

224. Literacy skills are promoted by frequent emphasis on relevant terminology. There are good working relationships between staff and students so that students feel able to ask for help if they need it. Testing takes place on a regular basis every half term for the purpose of target setting and mock examinations are set before each module test. The marking of students' work is good and provides helpful guidelines for improvement. Self-assessment sheets help students to identify areas on which they need to concentrate. As a result, the students have a good knowledge of their own progress, and this is a strength of their learning. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis and is used to reinforce work covered in lessons, often comprising past examination questions. An annual residential field-course takes place, which all students attend, and there are opportunities for students to attend biology conferences at a nearby university. The department purchases biological journals to encourage students to read around the subject and broaden their knowledge. The use of ICT in lessons needs to be developed, but the department is aware of this and there have been problems with access to computers.

225. Management of the department is satisfactory and there is a good team spirit among the staff who support each other and share information and expertise. The new head of department has implemented some new initiatives, such as a revision programme and a better scheme of work for Year 12 students, soon to be extended to Year 13, which should eventually pay dividends. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be more rigorous in order to raise standards further. Assessment and record keeping are good and set to improve; for example, it is planned to set up a departmental database

similar to the one which has proved successful for Years 7 – 11 in tracking pupils' progress. There needs to be an increase in the number of higher grade passes at both AS and A-level. All staff are biology specialists enabling them to deliver lessons with confidence. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, although larger pieces of apparatus, such as colorimeters and centrifuges are due to be replaced.

PHYSICS

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

Strengths

- Good leadership of the subject, clear policies and procedures for securing improvement
- Very good relationships between teachers and students
- Students' good mathematical skills enhance understanding

Areas for improvement

- Consistency of teaching quality
- The slow pace of work in some lessons
- Work does not always match the students' earlier learning
- The rigour of assessment of students' work

226. The GCE A-level examination results over the years 1999-2002 have been consistent in that they have always been close to or slightly below the national average. In 2002, 11 students took the examination; all gained a pass grade and two gained A or B grades. Students taking physics usually obtain grades that are similar to those they obtain in their other subjects. The entry is often too small for meaningful comparisons but the results are broadly as expected considering the students' GCSE grades. Seven Year 12 students took the AS-level examination in 2002; all obtained a pass grade and three obtained grades A or B. These were particularly good results. The retention rates are good.

227. Standards of work of current students are average overall and represent a satisfactory achievement. However, Year 13 students' work is above average with all students well on track to obtain the higher grades at A-level. Effective teaching is enabling these students to continue the good progress they made in Year 12 and they are achieving well in relation to their AS and GCSE grades. Year 13 students use their good mathematical skills to solve problems, for example, they were able to calculate the rate of decay of a radioactive isotope and use the Doppler effect to calculate the change of frequency in the light emitted by a moving star.

228. Standards in Year 12 are below average and below what could be expected from their GCSE grades. In particular, students' skills of investigation are not sufficiently well developed. For example, results of observations are often imprecise and poorly recorded. Students have difficulty in translating their knowledge of a topic into a practical situation. Their files which record the work covered are often scrappy and disjointed and do not provide a good base for future revision.

229. The quality of teaching in the five lessons observed was variable but is satisfactory overall. Students experience an appropriate range of activities which contains a good balance between investigations and theory. Teachers are enthusiastic, giving much personal attention to individual students who respond well thus creating a good working environment. In some lessons, the pace of work was a little too slow; the work set did not match the students' earlier learning well enough and teachers did not give sufficient direction in order for students to make maximum progress. However, in the best lessons the teachers' very good subject knowledge enabled the topic to be presented in an interesting and challenging context. This was evident in a lesson on cosmology when the developing theories of the universe from pre-historic to the present time captured the students' imagination. Their sensible and perceptive questioning of the teacher and his responses ensured that they developed a good understanding of not only the current view of the universe but also how scientific theories change to take account of new evidence.

230. There is a close correlation between students' learning and the quality of teaching. Students are attentive and respond well to the teachers prompting. However, in Year 12 they are not confident in asking questions which would extend their learning further. They show particular interest in practical work where they collaborate well with others and share their ideas and findings. There are limited opportunities on-site for independent learning. The potential of ICT to enhance and extend learning is only being exploited to a limited extent. This limitation is caused by a shortage of the department's own ICT resources.

231. Although examination results and standards have remained similar since the previous inspection there have recently been some significant improvements. The AS and A2 examination courses have been changed to include more up-to-date material and are now more suited to the students abilities, interests and aspirations. Examination specifications are currently being turned into detailed schemes of work. An extensive programme of visits and other after-school activities enriches the curriculum. The monitoring of students' progress is good in Year 13 but it is not consistent in the early months of Year 12. Assessment criteria are variable and students are not clear how well they are doing and what level of work they should be aiming for. However, the department has developed a very good assessment and monitoring computer program which is currently in use with 11-16 pupils. It is planned to bring that into use with the sixth form in the near future. There is a clear vision of where the department is going which augurs well for the future.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

232. The school provides a course leading to A-level in design and technology (graphics). This course was inspected in depth.

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY (GRAPHICS)

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

Strengths

- Good relationships
- Staff have teaching and industrial experience
- Good planning and assessment

Areas for improvement

- The students' use of CAD/CAM
- Independent study
- The use of industrial visits as a support to learning
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning

233. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Results in the 2001 A-level design and technology graphics course were average. In 2002, results declined but all students passed at A-E grades. The 2002 AS results were higher than those of the previous year and almost half of the students gained higher grades. The majority of students who start AS and A-level courses complete them.

234. The standard of current work is average overall, with good work seen in design folders. In Year 12, there is some good research work on plastics in connection with advantages and disadvantages of the material for different purposes. A project researching the use of computers in the design process included good examples of CAD in the design folder. Good investigation into aesthetics in design, function, ergonomics and production methods, was well presented. Weaknesses in the work are due to lack of detail in the research and unclear evaluations. In Year 13, the results of effective research can be seen in the students' written work about automation and robotics. Again, there is some good work in a

project connected with the environment, re-cycling of materials and artefacts, and consumer issues such as energy. Weaker work tends to be poorly presented and lacks depth in the development of ideas. Some work has not been presented for assessment on time, showing that the students have difficulties in completing coursework assignments.

235. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good teaching. In a Year 12 lesson, students learned effectively about industrial production methods, including colour separation, screen printing and flexography. Here the teacher's good subject knowledge was evident when developing the topic and searching questions encouraged the students to contribute to the lesson. A particularly good project designing a garden feature for the new school made good use of information communication technology and photography in the research and development. A Year 13 lesson developing students' information and communication technology skills in manufacturing enabled the students to make good progress learning because the teacher used his personal experience of industry effectively. The lessons tend to be teacher led and students need to develop more independence in their learning and be encouraged to use time outside lessons for this subject. The monitoring of teaching needs to be more rigorous so that faults can be eliminated. The wider uses of CAD/CAM needs further development and to be linked to industrial visits. Procedures for assessment and the monitoring of students' progress are good.

BUSINESS

236. The main inspection focus in this area was the AVCE (business) course but two economics lessons were also sampled as a part of the provision related to business education. The A-level examination results in economics in 2001 were below average; they improved in 2002 and all students passed the examination. The teaching was good in the lessons seen and students made good progress. The students' notes and writing were concise and accurate.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Appropriate teaching and learning styles including active involvement of students
- Use of case studies to support lessons
- The effective use of ICT
- Improvement in examination results

Areas for improvement

- Completion of homework
- Matching the level of work to students' capabilities
- Submission of work on time to a standard commensurate with the individual's ability

237. Examination results in 2001 at the end of Years 12 and 13 were above average. Girls outperformed boys but not significantly so. The highest grades were achieved by a number of students predicted to achieve lower grades. Grades are good when compared to the students' GCSE results at the end of Year 11. A similar pattern emerged in 2002. Standards of the students' work are average and their overall achievement is good in relation to their modest attainment when they began the sixth-form course. Retention rates are satisfactory.

238. Standards in Year 12 are average. Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business enterprise in relation to current business theory and practice. Good examples were used to illustrate a coherent marketing strategy, drawing from the advertising of manufacturers of fashion wrist-watches and ice cream. The majority of students, but particularly girls, make effective use of relevant business

terminology, concepts and computing methods to select up-to-date data. The above average students appreciate the views of different stakeholders in relation to business trends. These students are fully aware of the significance of inflation and recessionary movements. Good writing, debates and arguments were observed on the marketing and control of business, the management of people in business and the several functional areas of finance and production. Students are gaining an understanding of the moral, ethical, social and cultural issues that influence modern business activities. Case studies are used well to develop communication and computing skills and students undertake research both individually and in groups.

239. Standards in Year 13 are average. Students have a sound awareness of business theory and practice in their everyday life, for example, the power of advertising. The students recognise that different people are involved in business transactions and they are familiar with the different sectors of the UK economy. The above average students quickly see the value of a case study approach to business studies when seeking and verifying evidence. Students understand the value of electronic data sources to gather current information. They research up-to-date information on economic trends, searching for growth or decline. Students focus on relevant theories related to the UK's position with regard to Europe. Students can use case studies, stimulus materials, textbooks and well prepared teacher notes to enhance their writing making it factually accurate. Students are encouraged to organise their time and develop their study skills. Self-motivation and discipline are satisfactory amongst the average ability students. Students can be lax about completion of homework on time.

240. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teachers present business knowledge clearly and act as a resource to the students. Teachers give ideas for areas of investigation to students but leave them to work as individuals. They give help with the presentation of results and guide students in their use of electronic sources where appropriate. Matching the level of work to students' capabilities could be better. Learning comes both as a result of investigating business in the classroom and by visits to local firms. Equally important are the economic theory inputs from knowledgeable teachers. Students with ability are able to demonstrate their talents by using their initiative and enterprise in their research work. Their writing has depth. Those students with learning difficulties find teachers supportive. Learning is monitored and teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss teaching strategies and students' progress. Changes are made to methods as and when necessary.

241. Leadership and management are good. A variety of strategies are used to monitor the quality of learning in the classroom and are effective in promoting higher standards. A management goal is to improve and upgrade the range and quality of resources.

242. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Students are now more actively encouraged to study outside class time and to utilise a wide range of business and economic resources including Internet access.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

243. This subject was not inspected in depth but one Year 13 A-level lesson was sampled. In 2002, there were 21 candidates for the A-level examination. Two gained higher grades, two failed and 17 passed with lower grades. Standards were below average in the lesson seen but teaching was satisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

244. The school does not offer any courses in this area at the present time.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

245. This subject was not inspected in depth but one lesson was sampled in which students used the Internet efficiently to research into pre-natal tests relating to genetically inherited diseases. Teaching was good in this lesson and the students were reaching above average standards. In 2001, the examination results were well above average. In 2002, all seven candidates passed the examination, one with the highest grades.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

246. Art and design was inspected in depth but lessons in drama and theatre studies, media studies and music were also observed. In 2001, the results in drama and theatre studies were average and all students passed with two achieving the highest grades. In 2002, there were no candidates. In the lesson seen, standards were average but the teaching was good and students were making good progress, evaluating their performance of *After September* effectively. In 2002, ten candidates took the A-level examination in media studies: none gained higher grades and one failed. Three students took the music A-level examination in 2002 and two in 2001. All students passed. In a combined Year 12 and 13 lesson observed, teaching and learning were good. Students made good progress with their ensemble performance and standards for this component of the examination are high.

ART & DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning
- Good achievement
- Vigorous and imaginative use of materials
- High standards in ceramic sculpture

Areas for improvement

- Students' use of private study time to extend their research skills
- The slow pace of learning in some lessons

247. The A-level examination results were very high but declined in 2002. The AS-level results were well above average in 2001, though they declined a little in 2002. Results vary from year to year, reflecting the variations in students' GCSE results when they start their courses. In recent years, standards have usually been above average or better and students usually do better in art and design than in most of their other subjects. In recent years all students who started their courses completed them, and retention is very good.

248. In the work of current Year 12 students, standards are well above average. They are achieving well in relation to their GCSE grades in the subject. They paint vigorously and on a large scale, and handle colour very imaginatively. For example, they produce bright compositions based on a visit to a local cathedral. These draw the eye across the lively surface, and are informed by the study of the narrative paintings of David Hockney. Students confidently draw in pencil on a large scale, accurately recording the fall of shadows on the curved surfaces of bottles and jars. They also produce very attractive monoprints; balancing crisp and incisive line work with soft, warm colours.

249. In the work of current Year 13 students, standards are above average. They make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject, and achievement is good. Their ceramic sculpture is of a very high standard, and they use clay imaginatively and vigorously to create large curving forms, based on the study of shells and fossils. These are very well made, and richly decorated with carefully

constructed patterns and textures. Students also work confidently when modelling life size figures in clay. They create beautiful intaglio prints, which use high contrasts to express the atmosphere of the interior of a local cathedral. They paint freely and well, and sometimes use gold and silver leaf to create lively and attractive surfaces. Their research work, however, is weaker, because they do not always make good use of their private study time to extend their skills in this area.

250. Attitudes are very good in Years 12 and 13. Students appreciate the active lessons and the opportunities they have to work with a wide range of materials and processes. In addition, they listen very carefully to the individual advice that they receive in lessons.

251. Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, methods and materials are vigorous, active and ambitious. For example, in a lesson on ceramic sculpture, the teacher encouraged students to work boldly, rolling very large slabs of clay to construct ambitious curved and circular forms. They worked vigorously with the materials, and the learning atmosphere was confident and very active. The teacher's expectations were also very high, and students were encouraged to strive to achieve professional standards. These factors produced a very good pace, and very good learning was the result. At times, however, the pace of lessons wanes, and interest and engagement with the work are not maintained at the very high levels seen in the best lessons. This is a major factor preventing learning, and achievement, from rising above a level that is good overall.

252. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, students consistently achieve well, and a wide range of art and artists are now studied.

HUMANITIES

253. History and psychology were inspected in depth but lessons were also seen in geography, government and politics, and sociology. The 2001 A-level results in geography were above average and the 2002 results were similar and all students passed the examination. In government and politics, the results were average in 2001 and improved in 2002 and all students passed the examination. There were no candidates for sociology in 2001. In 2002, eight of the nine candidates passed the examination and three achieved higher grades. In the geography lesson about population and migration studies, the teaching was good and Year 13 students were reaching above average standards. In the government and politics lesson, the very good quality of the teaching enabled the students to make very good progress in their study of the politics of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In a Year 13 sociology lesson about punishment and crime, good teaching enabled students to make good progress.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Well above average A-level examination results
- Good teaching
- Students' good attitudes
- Effective use of negotiated assessments

Areas for improvement

- Students' weak oral communication skills
- Teaching strategies to engage pupils more actively in some lessons

254. The A-level results are well above average and have been so for the past few years. In 2002, 18 students took the A2 examination and nearly all of them passed. More boys than girls achieved the higher grades of A and B. In 2001, 16 students took the examination, all of them passed with more than half

gaining A and B grades. Results in the AS examination reflect a similar picture. Again, boys' performance was slightly stronger than that of the girls. In both examinations, students performed better than their GCSE grades would indicate. The great majority of students complete the course and retention rates are very good.

255. Students make good progress and achieve well in both Years 12 and 13. Standards of work Year 13 are above average. Students use a variety of methods to develop and consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the subject, including paired research, charts and diagrams and even cartoons. Their files are well organised. They are adept at using the internet for research, as well as textbooks and historical magazines. Students are taught to think for themselves and great emphasis is put on source work. For example, one group were studying 13 contemporary accounts of the Major-Generals experiment under Cromwell in order to reach conclusions about Cromwell's concerns and frustrations in 1655.

256. Standards are also above average in Year 12. Students approach their work seriously and in one lesson demonstrated their developing knowledge of the Reformation period. Prompted by encouragement from the teacher, they were able to identify and analyse the important doctrinal differences between Protestants and Catholics, and to develop this knowledge through an effectively designed follow-up task. Students use technical vocabulary accurately. However, in both Years 12 and 13 students tend to be passive learners and their communication skills are under-developed.

257. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have excellent and wide-ranging knowledge and they present lessons which are full of interest and fascination making the subject come alive. They provide students with clear guidelines of what is required. The course is structured to provide a balance between making sure they have the information they need and providing opportunities for personal research. The skilful use of questioning helps to clarify students' understanding and ensures concentration throughout lessons. A good range of teaching strategies is employed to keep lessons varied and challenging. For example, the brief showing of a video about the martyrdom of protestants during the Tudor period vividly illustrated the horrors of persecution.

258. Students are enthusiastic about the subject and enjoy their work. They expressed strong appreciation of the support and guidance provided by their teachers. The subject contributes well to their personal development. They are clear about their progress and what they need to do to improve. They especially value the negotiated assessment procedure.

259. Their work in history makes a significant contribution to the development of all the key skills. Students are fully conversant with the use of information technology and work well together. Their problem-solving skills are developed through the many analyses they make in assessing evidence in history. Oral communication is less fully developed.

260. The department is well led and managed. A team of experienced and enthusiastic teachers have maintained very good results for some years. There is a sound system for tracking the progress of students and setting targets. The subject is a popular choice with students.

PSYCHOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching of research methods and wide use of specialist vocabulary
- Pastoral and academic support which develops learning skills
- Working relationships between students and staff

Areas for improvement

- Improve the skills of analysis and evaluation
- Independent learning skills
- Use of computers to explore, develop and present information

261. Examination results in 2001 at AS level were well below average. Failure rates were high in 2001 at AS level as they were in 2002. Standards in the current Year 12 are average and students' achievements, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, are satisfactory. Retention rates are satisfactory. Students gain a critical understanding of the terms cognitive therapies and stress inoculation training, for example. They understand why Milgram's and Zimbardo's studies provoked a public outcry, particularly the ethical issues raised by their published work. Teachers use good social influence and research studies to illustrate their lessons. The higher attaining students can write well and produce clear descriptions of a study or theory. The average attaining students taking psychology occasionally run out of ideas but they are supported to think of correct explanations. Students can collect data in two ways – empirically and rationally. Year 12 students fully understand that human development is a dynamic process. Research methods are considered carefully, particularly the setting of experiment, control and accuracy. The contrast between field and laboratory experiments is fully recognised. This point was made in a lesson on stress management.

262. Standards in Year 13 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Students apply a scientific process to learning about human behaviour. Students are comfortable using terms such as classical conditioning, stress, stressor and operant conditioning. They make observations and produce facts about psychology. Students can construct a theory to account for a set of related facts and they can then progress to generating expectations (hypotheses) from the theory. Male and female students are equally competent to collect data to test expectations. Females are better at spelling, punctuation and grammar. All students can write about cognitive psychology and analyse and evaluate a range of psychology theories and studies. The high attainers communicate their knowledge and understanding of psychology in a clear and effective manner.

263. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are planned to develop an understanding of psychology as a scientific study. The teachers are good at helping students to understand the logic or statistical concepts of psychology. There is some use of ICT to secure research data but not enough and this adversely affects the standards that the students can reach. Students increase their understanding of psychology by discussing their writing or research with their teachers and fellow students. However, their independent learning skills, particularly extracting information from a wide range of sources, are a weakness which is bound to affect their performance at this level.

264. Leadership and management are satisfactory but there is a need to monitor teaching and students' progress more thoroughly in order to raise standards.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

265. English literature was the subject inspected in depth in this curriculum area but a lesson in German was also sampled. French and German examination results are amongst the lowest in the school. In the German lesson seen, the teaching was satisfactory and Year 12 students were making satisfactory progress in a listening exercise connected with immigration to Germany, which the students found difficult.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

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

Strengths

- Above average examination results in 2001
- Good relationships and students' attitudes
- Teachers' good knowledge of their subject
- Good assessment procedures
- Effective monitoring of students' progress

Areas for improvement

- Standards – not as high as they were
- More effective use of time in lessons
- Students expect teachers to do too much for them
- The effectiveness of the monitoring of teaching

266. The results of A-level examinations in 2001 were above average. Of the 26 candidates for the examination, nine achieved A or B grades. Provisional results for 2002 were not as high as those of the previous year, although all 23 candidates achieved at least grade E. AS results for 2002 show a similar decline from the previous year. Standards of the current Year 12 and 13 students are average. The students are making satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment and their achievement is satisfactory. They keep good notes and have a secure knowledge of their texts, and – where appropriate – of the context of these texts. Students studying Blake, for example, were able to draw on an understanding of the contemporary political, social and religious background; some quoted Rousseau in support of their findings.

267. English literature is a popular subject, with two sets in both Year 12 and 13, each taught by two different teachers. Students have a positive attitude to the subject and relate well to their teachers.

268. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The eight A-level staff have a good knowledge of their subject and know their students well: good arrangements for assessment are in place. Planning of lessons is sound, although some teachers are not using the opportunities to develop independent learning by students sufficiently well. There is good group work in lessons, and students were seen doing some worthwhile work together on set plays and poems. They are usually expected to report back to the class on their findings; this may not be the best use of their time – if students were encouraged to prepare notes for homework and present the findings from their group work at the start of lessons, the time could be used more effectively. This strategy was hardly seen.

269. Teachers work very hard in lessons, and get their students to annotate texts and make effective notes, but could employ more strategies to get students to take responsibility for their own learning. In a Year 13 lesson on Henry V's speech before Agincourt, for example, the learning was largely controlled by the teacher and the students contributed minimally, although they were keen to make notes. By contrast, a lesson on *Othello*, involving teacher and students in role, was very lively. Heated debates took place between students in the roles of Othello, Iago and others about their moral responsibility, in an imaginary interrogation on the Day of Judgement, in the presence of St Peter and the Devil. Where students are encouraged to do so, they will participate, especially the boys. Too often, however, teachers provide a safe structure: the use of generic writing frames for poetry work, for example, guarantees a safe level of analysis but fails to stimulate original thinking. As a result, students' progress is not moving beyond the satisfactory.

270. The effect of 75-minute lessons is also that the pace is slower than one normally sees in a 60-minute lesson, so less ground is covered in a typical week. Better monitoring of teaching would bring out the deficiencies and help to set an agenda for action. The department is working hard for its sixth-form students, who are having to overcome the lack of resources they might have expected had it not been for

the fire. Their progress is monitored well, through thorough marking and assessment, but they need to be shown ways in which they can use their own time more effectively to raise standards.