

INSPECTION REPORT

LORDSWOOD BOYS' SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103484

Headteacher: Mr Hayden Abbott

Reporting inspector: Mr David Cox
10297

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th January 2003

Inspection number: 252928

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18

Gender of pupils: Male

School address: Lordswood Boys' School
Hagley Road
Birmingham

Postcode: B17 8BJ

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Annette Judges

Date of previous inspection: December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10297	D Cox	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements. How well are the students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13395	J Illingworth	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English (11-16) English as an additional language.	
4145	C Harrison	Team inspector	Science Chemistry (Post-16)	
11933	D Driscoll	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
30518	M Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design	
30973	G Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology	
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	
15832	J Vanstone	Team inspector	History	
20124	J Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15208	A Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
12986	S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	
11720	P Winch	Team inspector	English (Post-16) Special educational needs Educational inclusion	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lordswood Boys' School is smaller than most other secondary schools, and is a comprehensive school in Birmingham, educating boys between the ages of 11 and 18. There are 679 students on roll, which is almost identical to when the school was last inspected. There are 62 students in the sixth form. The school is popular with parents and is over-subscribed; the school had 200 first choice applications for 124 places. The school has a multicultural intake. Most students come from Indian, Pakistani or Black Caribbean backgrounds, although there are many different ethnic groups represented at the school.

The intake has changed over the last decade. Fewer students come from the immediate vicinity of Harborne, and the trend had been towards more ethnic minority students and economically disadvantaged students from the more deprived areas of Handsworth, Winson Green and Ladywood. Thirty-one per cent of students are from the most deprived ward in the UK – Ladywood; 25 per cent of students come from Winson Green, an area of high levels of crime. Approximately 53 per cent of students speak English as an additional language, which is very high. There are no students at an early stage of language acquisition.

Twenty-seven per cent of students are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average and similar to that noted in the previous report. The overall socio-economic circumstance of the students is well below average.

The attainment of students on entry is well below average for Years 8 to 11 but below average for Year 7. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is below average. There are 73 students on the special educational needs register; this is 11 per cent of the 11-16 school population. Most students on the register have either moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are 12 (1.9 per cent) students with statements of special educational need, which is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school where students achieve well. In many areas the school is improving because of the good leadership of the headteacher and the chair of governors. Teaching is good. Apart from in 2002, students leave Lordswood with better results than would normally be expected given their attainment on entry. Students in the sixth form do better than expected and leave with results that are average. Overall, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students' attitudes are good and there are very good relationships between teachers and students.
- The leadership and management of the school are good.
- Pastoral systems are good and students are well cared for.
- Students achieve very well in German because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. The amount of time that is devoted to teaching is well below the national average.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 underachieve in information and communication technology because of the unsatisfactory teaching they receive; achievement is poor in computer studies in the sixth form because teaching is poor.
- Students in Year 11 underachieve in religious education because they do not receive enough lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since it was last inspected in December 1997. Whilst the proportion of students gaining the higher grades at GCSE has fallen, the proportion attaining five or more passes at A* to G has risen. The quality of teaching has improved. The good leadership provided by the relatively new headteacher has brought about many improvements in the school's systems; for example, there is now a better and more consistent system for dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour; this has led to a significant improvement in the behaviour of students and exclusions have fallen. The sixth form has made good progress; standards and results have improved. The school has addressed the key issues from the previous report satisfactorily; although the curriculum has undergone change there is still more to do.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students 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	D	D	E	D
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	C	*	

Key

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

*There are no national figures available at the time of writing.

In the work seen during the inspection, standards are below average by the end of Year 9 and students do better than expected. Standards are above average in citizenship; average in art and design and religious education; and below average in all other subjects with the exception of English, design and technology and geography where standards are well below average. Students' achievements are very good in German, and good in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology, information and communication technology, geography and history where achievement is satisfactory.

Results in the 2002 national tests were well below the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science when compared with all schools. Results were well above average in mathematics and average in science and English when compared with similar schools. Results have broadly followed the national trend since 1998.

In the work seen, standards are below average by the end of Years 11 and students' achievements are satisfactory. Standards are now above average in citizenship, average in history, art and design, religious education and physical education, and below average in all other subjects with the exception of English, design and technology and information and communication technology where standards are well below average. Students achieve very well in German, and well in all other subjects except for mathematics, design and technology, art and design and music where they achieve satisfactorily. Achievement is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology and religious education.

Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well below average overall and were below average when compared to similar schools. However, of particular note is the fact that the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to G was above average; the proportion of students gaining one or more grades at A* to G was very high compared to all schools and to similar schools and places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The trend in the school's results at GCSE has been below the national trend but this comes as no surprise given the levels of students' attainment on entry which fell between 1997 and 2001 from below average to well below average. Students of Indian backgrounds attained much better results than students from Pakistani

backgrounds. Students from Black Caribbean backgrounds attained results somewhere between the other two groups.

The school failed last year to meet its GCSE targets but has done so for the years prior to 2002. The targets for 2003 are challenging and if achieved will return the school to the level being achieved prior to 2002.

The achievement of gifted and talented students is satisfactory. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good. Virtually all the students for whom English is an additional language have sufficient knowledge of English to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. Students' standards of literacy and numeracy are broadly in line with the national expectation for boys.

Standards are average in the sixth form and students achieve well. In the subjects inspected in detail, standards are now above average in mathematics and chemistry, average in English and geography and very low in computer studies. Achievement is good in all subjects with the exception of computer studies where achievement is poor. Examination results in 2001 were well above average in biology; above average in general studies; average in chemistry, mathematics and physics; below average in English; well below average in geography and very low in sociology. There were too few candidates in other subjects to make national comparisons statistically valid.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes are good. The good attitudes owe much to teachers' consistently upheld expectations that students should always give good attention to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Students' behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is satisfactory, and the quality of relationships is very good.
Attendance	Attendance has improved since the previous inspection, but it is still below average. The attendance rate was below the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence was well above the national average.

Sixth form students show good, responsible attitudes to learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The school's adoption of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies has helped to improve standards of teaching, which in turn has led to a good rate of learning in Years 7 to 9. It is the better structure to lessons in Years 7 to 9 that is one of the main differences between the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and that seen in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 in modern languages, and good in all other subjects with the exception of science, design and technology, information and communication technology, geography and history where it is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in modern languages, and good in all other subjects with the exception of English, mathematics, design and technology, art and design and music where it is satisfactory and in information and communication technology where it is unsatisfactory.

In the majority of lessons, teachers exercise effective discipline and this creates an orderly atmosphere in which learning can take place. When lessons are conducted at a lively pace, the tasks are varied and students have the chance to be active, rapid learning takes place. Students respond well to the good level of questioning of their teachers by answering questions clearly and this enhances their learning. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students within their charge. Teachers use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect. However, in Years 10 and 11, there are too many non-specialist teachers teaching information and communication technology and this results in students underachieving. Teachers plan their lessons well. The management of students is generally good in all years and the students respond accordingly; behaviour is good and students work well with each other. Most teachers play a good part in developing students' skills in reading and writing; the teaching of everyday mathematics is satisfactory.

There are two areas of teaching which, although satisfactory, need improving: the marking of students' work and the collection of homework.

Students with special educational needs learn mostly in whole class lessons and with support from integration assistants, but there are a few occasions where individuals or small groups are taught separately. In these sessions, teaching and learning are always good.

Teaching is good in the sixth form and students make good progress as a result. Teachers manage students well. This leads to trust and a mutual respect between teachers and students. Students respond to the good teaching by working hard; their notes are detailed and their files well organised, providing a valuable basis for further study and revision. There are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons, and to develop their capacity for independent study and research.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. The amount of time that is devoted to teaching is well below the national average and the minimum amount of time recommended by the government.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The additional support available for students with all special needs, including those that arise from limitations in their use of English, is targeted most effectively.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory and good for moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good attention is paid to students' welfare and personal guidance.

There is not enough time to teach religious education in Year 11, so the school fails to meet statutory requirements in this respect. The sixth form curriculum does not meet fully the requirements for religious education. There is good provision for careers and vocational education throughout the school. The school has satisfactory links with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The quality of leadership and management of the school is good overall. The school is now in a new phase of development, having seen a change of headteacher and chair of governors in September 2001. Together, they are introducing many positive and far-reaching initiatives; the school is becoming more outward looking and students are now keen to succeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors support the headteacher well. They have a sound understanding of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There are satisfactory procedures for identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Good use is made of specific grants from outside agencies. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.

The school has a satisfactory good match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum; support staff are very good. There are enough resources and accommodation. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

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 good standard of teaching. • The good care that students receive. • The way the school is managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are not always kept well informed about progress. • The amount of homework that students get.

Inspectors agree with all the positive comments made by parents. Parents are justified to some extent about how well they are kept informed because annual reports do not always give a clear picture of how well their sons are doing. Homework is set regularly but students do not always complete it.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM LORDSWOOD BOYS' SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is smaller than that found in most other schools. There are currently 62 male students in the sixth form. The students come from a very wide range of backgrounds that are very similar to those of the main school. Overall standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are below average but improving. The school provides a suitable range of two-year courses leading to A-level or advanced vocational qualifications as well as one-year Intermediate courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good standard of education for students and its cost effectiveness is good. The quality of teaching is good and leads to students achieving well and attaining better results than would normally be expected given their standards on entry to the sixth form. The sixth form meets the needs of the students well. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

Strengths

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good and there has been a rise in standards since the previous inspection.
- Students' attitudes are good and there are very good relationships between students and teachers.

What could be improved

- Students underachieve badly in computer studies.
- The sixth form curriculum does not meet fully the requirements for religious education.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to work on their own and to develop independent learning skills.

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	Good. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Chemistry	Good. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
Computer studies	Poor. Standards are very low. Teaching is poor and students do much worse than expected.
Geography	Good. Standards in Year 13 are average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.
English	Good. Standards in Year 13 are average. Teaching is good and students do better than expected.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Advice and guidance for students are satisfactory overall. The quality of support for their learning and academic progress is good. They rarely feel like changing courses, and most make good progress. Subject teachers monitor them carefully. There are good procedures for promoting attendance. The school gives students good guidance on careers and opportunities in higher education.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The academic and pastoral systems have been combined to get a clear picture of a student's progress. Results are analysed well and the sixth form uses the same systems as the main school for ensuring the quality of teaching. As a result standards are improving.

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"> • Students are very glad that they stayed on in the sixth form and are enjoying their studies. • They feel that the quality of education in Years 12 and 13 meets their expectations. • They appreciate the good quality of teaching in the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are unhappy with information on academic progress. • Students think that the range of extra-curricular activities is inadequate.

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by students. However, inspectors found that annual reports do not always inform students about their academic progress. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

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 students' achievements

1. Students join the school at the beginning of Year 7 with well below average standards and by the end of Year 9 are below average. By the end of Year 11, standards are below average. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11.
2. In the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds, results were well below the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science when compared with all schools. Results were well above average in mathematics and average in science and English when compared with similar schools. Results were very high in mathematics, well above average in science and above average in English compared with schools where students had similar test results at the age of 11. Results have broadly followed the national trend since 1998.
3. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average in citizenship; average in art and design and religious education; and below average in all other subjects, with the exception of English, design and technology and geography where standards are well below average.
4. Overall, students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 given their standards when they joined the school. Students' achievements are very good in German, and good in all other subjects, with the exception of design and technology, information and communication technology, geography and history where achievement is satisfactory.
5. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well below average overall and were below average when compared to similar schools. However, when only their best eight GCSE results are taken into account, results were average when compared with similar schools. The proportion of students gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C was well below average and there was a significant decline compared to results in 2001. However, of particular note is the fact that the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to G was above average; the proportion of students gaining one or more grades at A* to G was very high compared to all schools and to similar schools and places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
6. The trend in the school's results at GCSE has been below the national trend but this comes as no surprise given the falling level of students' attainment on entry since the previous inspection – from below average to well below average. Results in 2002 were seriously affected by two major incidents. The first, a serious assault on a student whilst in school, undermined the morale of the year group when they were in Year 10. The second incident, which occurred whilst students were in Year 11, had a far greater impact on results. Ten students were involved in alleged criminal activity and lost a lot of time being interviewed by outside agencies. Many of these students were predicted to attain five or more passes at GCSE A* to C. The impact of these incidents can be seen in the decline in the higher grades at GCSE, which in turn had a negative impact on the average points score.

7. The amount of time that is devoted to teaching is well below the national average and the minimum amount of time recommended by the government. This means that students can usually only take nine GCSE examinations, when the higher attaining students are capable of taking, and doing well in, at least ten. This results in the average points score being lower than that found in many schools.
8. There was a difference in the performance of the different ethnic groups represented in the school. Students of Indian backgrounds attained much better results than students from Pakistani backgrounds. Students from Black Caribbean backgrounds attained results somewhere between the other two groups.
9. In Year 11, standards are now above average in citizenship, average in history, art and design, religious education and physical education, and below average in all other subjects, with the exception of English, design and technology and information and communication technology where standards are well below average.
10. Overall, students make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 given their standards when they entered Year 10. Students' achievements are very good in German, and good in all other subjects, except for mathematics, design and technology, art and design and music where it is satisfactory. Students' achievement is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology and religious education.
11. Students underachieve in information and communication technology because teaching in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory and students are not learning enough. There is only one specialist teacher of the subject and too many examination classes for him to teach, so non-specialists teach half of the lessons for almost all classes. Overall, the students in Year 11 have had a succession of temporary teachers and have not made the progress that they should have. Students are now making better progress because they are being provided with opportunities to have extra lessons after school.
12. Students underachieve in religious education in Year 11 because students are taught religious education within the personal and social education programme of work. This is done in two units of work over two five-week periods. Although the work done is covered in good depth there is insufficient time given to study the required aspects of the locally agreed syllabus and therefore achievement is unsatisfactory.
13. The school failed last year to meet its GCSE targets but has met them for the years prior to 2002. The targets for 2003 are challenging and if achieved will return the school to the level being achieved prior to 2002.
14. The achievement of gifted and talented students is satisfactory. The school has now set up a programme of activities to boost the performance of these students through 'master classes'.
15. The achievement of students with special educational needs is very good. These students enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy. They soon improve their reading and writing and learn to speak with greater confidence. They also improve their basic numeracy skills and develop new ways of learning, including the use of computers. As a result, students gain in self-esteem and most show a keen desire to do better. By the age of 16, they take GCSE examinations in several subjects and do very well in relation to their previous levels of attainment.

16. Students' standards of literacy are average for boys nationally. The majority of students have skills that enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. Those who are unable to do this by themselves receive a good quality of support. Most students are able to read independently and understand how to work out the meaning of words in their context. Students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narrative, description and reporting. Inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar mar the work of lower attaining students.
17. Virtually all the students for whom English is an additional language have sufficient knowledge of English to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum.
18. Students' standards of numeracy are broadly in line with the national expectation for boys. The majority of students have skills that enable them to have access to the National Curriculum.

Sixth form

19. Those students currently in Year 13 and those students who left the sixth form in the summer of 2002 entered the sixth form with standards that were below the level usually seen in sixth forms. Students who have just started in Year 12 entered the sixth form with standards below the level usually seen. Very few students do not complete a course of study once they have started it.
20. Whilst most students follow two-year courses leading to GCE A-level or AVCE advanced level vocational qualifications and do well, other students follow one-year courses, do well and then proceed to do advanced level courses. Results in 2001 show that students left school with average A-level results. Results were similar in 2002. Results have improved from below average to average since the previous inspection.
21. Examination results in 2001 were well above average in biology; above average in general studies; average in chemistry, mathematics and physics; below average in English; well below average in geography; and very low in sociology. There were too few candidates in other subjects to make national comparisons statistically valid.
22. In the subjects inspected in detail, standards are now above average in mathematics and chemistry; average in English and geography and very low in computer studies. Achievement is good in all subjects with the exception of computer studies where achievement is poor.
23. The reasons for the different rates of progress made on the different courses are directly linked to the quality of teaching. For example, the teaching on the English course is good so achievement is better than expected, while in computer studies both teaching and achievement are poor.
24. Students' skills in communication and use of number are broadly average, and in information and communication technology they are below average.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

25. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and enhance their attainment. Their personal development is satisfactory, and the quality of relationships is very good. Standards have risen since the previous inspection. At that time the number of temporary exclusions for violent behaviour was high, relationships were strained and discipline in some classes was described as 'fragile'. The school is now a friendly community in which students from many different ethnic and social backgrounds interact harmoniously. Parents are happy with standards of behaviour and personal development. They say that their sons like school and that members of staff help them to become more mature and responsible. Inspectors, while agreeing with these views, are aware that a minority of students is not fully committed to learning. This is evident from the numbers who fail to complete coursework and homework on time. Some students also have patchy records of attendance that impair their progress.
26. Overall, students have good attitudes to learning. However, there is a small minority that is not fully committed to learning. They are generally punctual, settle down quickly and concentrate well in class. Students respond very positively to good teaching, and as a result often show very good attitudes in lessons. When teachers are enthusiastic, have high expectations, and exercise firm but quiet control, students of all ages and attainment levels behave well and want to learn. This was evident in a Spanish lesson in Year 11. The teacher had an excellent rapport with students and encouraged them with plenty of praise. They responded by listening attentively, working hard and making very good progress during the lesson. Students usually remain well behaved and work satisfactorily in the minority of lessons where the teaching is dull and unchallenging, although they sometimes have difficulty in sustaining their concentration. Attitudes are occasionally unsatisfactory even though the teacher's planning of activities and management of behaviour are sound. For example, in one Year 11 science lesson, students had continually to be reminded to listen and to concentrate. The teacher, with the support of a learning mentor, eventually got them to settle down to work and to make progress. However, the students would have achieved much more if they had been co-operative from the outset. Students' attitudes to learning are generally satisfactory in science. Nevertheless, lack of motivation and effort sometimes impairs standards of attainment in the subject. Students do not take the trouble to finish their class work and homework, despite constantly being urged to do so by their teachers. Students' attitude to work at home is a weakness in other subjects, such as modern languages and geography. Although students are co-operative and work well class in these subjects, they are not diligent about completing homework and handing it in on time.
27. Students are keen to participate in lunchtime and after-school clubs, and are very appreciative of the good range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. They speak with enthusiasm about the Combined Cadet Force and the provision for outdoor pursuits. Extra-curricular sport is popular, but students also enjoy taking part in music and drama. The chess club is greatly valued by younger boys.
28. There are no major variations in the attitudes of students of different ages and from different backgrounds. All year groups and ethnic groups want to learn and to do well. They are very loyal to the school and are proud to be its students. Boys with special educational needs have very good attitudes to learning, and are well integrated in ordinary lessons. Their positive approach to their work enhances their

attainment and progress, and reflects well on the school's policies for promoting inclusion.

29. Behaviour is good both in and outside the classroom. Students behave well in lessons. There are occasional lapses in discipline. These usually occur when the teaching fails to engage students fully in the lesson and they become bored and idle, as was the case in an information and communication technology lesson observed during the inspection. Unsatisfactory behaviour in lessons is rare. Typically students are orderly, respect the rules, and are polite to their teachers and to one another. They also show these qualities when they are out and about the site between lessons and during the lunch hour. Students are open, friendly and self-disciplined. They play football energetically in the playground, but without being boisterous or aggressive. In general, they treat the school's property with respect. There is a lot of litter around the site, but no vandalism or graffiti. The behaviour of a few individuals causes serious problems from time to time, and results in their exclusion from school. The numbers of students excluded and the rate of exclusion have fallen considerably since the previous inspection, and are now in line with national norms. The figures support students who say that standards of behaviour are good and have improved substantially in recent years. Older boys say that fights used to happen every day, but are very rare now.
30. Relationships are very good overall, and students feel safe and confident with their peers and members of staff. They have no concerns about bullying, or racism or other forms of harassment because the school clearly defines the boundaries of acceptable conduct and is effective in dealing with the few incidents that do occur. The constructive relations that students have with members of staff make a positive contribution to their attainment and personal development. They trust teachers and support assistants, value their advice, and want to earn their good opinion. Very good relationships between students also enhance the quality of lessons and contribute positively to academic progress. Students are mutually supportive and work well in class in pairs and groups. They show consideration for other people's feelings and treat each other's views with respect, showing that the school provides them with good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
31. Other aspects of personal development are satisfactory. Students are willing to use their initiative and take responsibility for school routines, and get good opportunities to do so. They help at open evenings, serve as library assistants, and act as receptionists. They can take part in fund raising for charity and in activities that serve the school community. For example, the peer reading programme gives older boys the chance to help younger boys to develop their reading skills, and benefits the self-esteem and confidence of all who take part. There is also a very successful prefect system. Many students in Year 11 apply to become prefects, and the successful candidates carry out their duties conscientiously and effectively. Students show less maturity and independence in their learning. They are sometimes over dependent on members of staff in class. This was the case in some modern languages lessons observed during the inspection, where students tended to rely on teachers to do the work and provide all the answers. A significant minority also has problems with independent learning outside the classroom. They are unable to organise themselves or get down to tasks, and their consequent failure to complete tasks and meet deadlines has an adverse effect on their attainment.
32. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection, but it is still below average. The statistics show a sharp increase immediately after the previous inspection, followed by a decline in the last three years. The attendance rate for the year

2001/02 was below the national average for secondary schools. The rate of unauthorised absence was well above the national average. The figures for the autumn term 2002 suggest that the school has halted the downward trend. Attendance was highest in Year 11, where statistics include days spent out of school on work experience and study leave. Nevertheless, even when these factors are discounted, the school is on course to achieve 91 per cent attendance for the year 2002/03.

33. The incidence of unauthorised absence still appears to be relatively high. However, the figures may be overstated, as there are weaknesses in the school's procedures for recording reasons for absence. Very few students are absent without good reason for prolonged periods, and internal truancy and extended holiday are not significant problems. Some students tend to miss one or two days a week, and this harms their progress, but the vast majority attends school regularly.

Sixth form

34. Sixth form students have good attitudes to learning. They are well motivated and have high aspirations. They come to lessons expecting to learn and wanting to do well. They concentrate well, enjoy a challenge, and spontaneously pose their own questions. Students in English made an excellent response in the lessons that were observed during the inspection. They were fully involved in their work, were keen to improve and showed a mature attitude to their studies. Students have a good sense of community and of loyalty to the school. Their relations with one another and with members of staff are very good, and are enhanced by the quality of teaching in the sixth form. Students appreciate and respond very positively to good teaching. They also value the help that they receive from their teachers. The atmosphere in lessons is friendly and supportive. Overall, very good relationships and good attitudes to learning make an important contribution to students' progress.
35. The development of students' personal and learning skills is satisfactory overall. The majority cope well with the demands made on them. In mathematics, for example, students show the ability to understand quickly and apply new techniques. In all subjects students organise their coursework well and make effective use of private study periods. They enjoy opportunities for independent learning, such as the chance to carry out research on the Internet. There is a programme of personal and social education in the sixth form, but this focuses on careers, learning skills and the transition to the next stage of education, and does not meet all students' needs. Personal development is not strongly promoted outside lessons and academic studies. There are fewer opportunities for students to use their initiative, exercise responsibility and serve the community in the sixth form than in Year 11. There are no prefects in the sixth form, for example, and students are not involved in the fund raising for charity that is a strength of the main school.
36. Attendance is good in the sixth form. The low rate of absence is a tribute to students' good attitudes and ability to take personal responsibility for their learning. It also reflects the school's effective procedures for promoting good attendance. Teachers check whether students are attending their lessons regularly and punctually, and those in receipt of financial support will lose it if they are absent without good reason.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

37. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Students speak highly of their teachers and are grateful for the additional time that teachers spend with them when problems arise.
38. The quality of teaching was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. However, much of the school's in-service training in recent years has been about improving teaching and learning and the management of students; the effects of this are now being seen in the classroom. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
39. The school's adoption of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies has helped to improve standards of teaching, which in turn has led to a good rate of learning in Years 7 to 9. It is the structure of lessons that is one of the main differences between the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and that seen in Years 10 and 11. Lessons have a better structure to them in Years 7 to 9; many departments have adopted the three-part lesson format, which has clear introductions before the main body of the lesson, and then rounds the lesson off by reviewing and reinforcing. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and reinforcing the work of the previous lesson enables students to build upon prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. The best teaching occurs when classroom organisation is adapted to the demands of the task and the differing needs of the students. However, in Years 10 and 11, lessons tend to be less structured, with the teacher providing less input. This results in some students being off task and not knowing what is expected of them.
40. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. In the majority of lessons, teachers exercise effective discipline and this creates an orderly atmosphere in which learning can take place. When lessons are conducted at a lively pace, the tasks are varied and students have the chance to be active, rapid learning takes place. This was seen in a number of drama lessons. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, students improved their skills in speaking, especially in projecting their voices, by experimenting about the ways a script advertising trainers could be best performed.
41. Students respond well to the good level of questioning of their teachers by answering questions clearly and this enhances their learning. In the majority of lessons, students are encouraged to explain how they arrived at their answers and this contributes well to the intellectual effort they make.
42. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students within their charge, although in design and technology unhelpful comments from some teachers do not encourage students to do their best. Teachers use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect. However, in Years 10 and 11, there are too many non-specialist teachers teaching information and communication technology and this results in students underachieving.
43. Teachers plan their lessons well. They identify clear objectives and effective use is made of the three-part lesson. The balance between different types of activities generally keeps students interested and motivated. Students are generally involved well in lessons. An example of good planning was in a mathematics lesson when the teacher used the starter sessions to ensure that there was secure understanding of equivalent fractions before progressing to calculating percentages of amounts. Teachers' explanations are clear so students start their work quickly. By contrast, there are some weaknesses in planning for lessons; for example, in Years 7 to 9 in

history, students' books show that there are some short topics which make it more difficult for students continuously to build up a secure understanding of the main strands of the course.

44. The management of students is generally good in all years and the students respond accordingly; behaviour is good and students work well with each other. Teachers have developed especially good relationships with their students who enjoy the games and fun activities, which are a regular feature of the lessons; for example, in a Spanish lesson, students participated enthusiastically when pretending to be the teacher.
45. Most teachers play a good part in developing students' skills in reading and writing; the teaching of everyday mathematics is satisfactory.
46. There are two areas of teaching which, although satisfactory, could be easily made a lot better: the marking of students' work and the collection of homework. Whilst students' work is marked, comments do not always help students to understand what they need to do to improve. Not all teachers pay close enough attention to the correction of spelling and punctuation. Homework is set on a regular basis and is purposeful and relevant. However, many teachers do not challenge students when homework is not given in or coursework not completed. This leads to gaps in students' understanding which is one reason why GCSE examination coursework in a number of subjects was well below average last year.
47. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology and students are not learning enough. The theory lessons, divorced from the practical work, are boring and consist mainly of listening to the teacher and copying notes from the board. The result is that students become frustrated with the slow pace and the lack of variety and switch off. In the most extreme cases students start to misbehave, although this is usually after they have tried to maintain their concentration for as long as possible. The resulting notes allow students to have a satisfactory knowledge of facts, but little or no understanding, as students play no active part in learning the work.
48. Students with special educational needs learn mostly in whole class lessons and with support from integration assistants, but there are a few occasions where individuals or small groups are taught separately. In these sessions, teaching and learning are always good. The integration assistants, who lead the sessions, know their students very well and have a good knowledge of how they learn best. For example, they give very clear explanations of what the student should do, use appropriate resources and break down the learning into small steps. In a one-to-one mathematics lesson, a Year 9 student learnt well because the integration assistant used a mathematical game to improve basic numeracy skills and paced the lesson well. The teaching of the National Curriculum Progress Units in Year 7 is well focused on helping students to read and write more accurately. The paired reading programme, where Year 10 students help Year 7 students, is very well organised. Students in Year 7 benefit from individual attention from those in Year 10, who have been well trained in helping younger students develop better reading skills. In lessons, the integration assistants give very good support to students. They are skilful in knowing when help is required and when it is appropriate to allow the student to think for himself. They have high expectations of what students can do. For example, they do not spoon-feed students but through effective use of questioning they guide students towards the correct answer.

Sixth form

49. Teaching is good in the sixth form and students make good progress as a result. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
50. Teachers manage students well. This leads to trust and a mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers provide their students with a supportive framework although this does limit the degree of independence of students. There are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons, and to develop their capacity for independent study and research, partly because they do not have enough text books in the library and insufficient access to computers.
51. The high expectations that teachers have of their students are exemplified in mathematics by the way that questioning is used. Teachers rarely give answers to their own questions; instead, they ask more detailed questions to tease answers from the students themselves. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and so are able to talk about topics that are not part of the planned lesson. The marking of written work is generally good, errors are signalled and suggestions are made to students about how they might improve content. Students respond to the good teaching by working hard; their notes are detailed and their files well organised, providing a valuable basis for further study and revision.
52. Teachers' planning of lessons is good and they set challenges to make students think about their responses to topics. In a Year 13 geography lesson, for example, the students prepared a statement on essay planning techniques and were challenged to evaluate each other's contribution. The teacher reinforced understanding of key words prior to setting a task to formulate an essay plan and assessed each one's level of understanding through individual consultation.
53. In computer studies the quality of teaching and learning is poor. Teachers do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of the subject to meet the demands of the course. Too much time is devoted to simply dictating or copying notes, without any link to developing the students' understanding. Students are usually very passive in lessons, simply copying work or answering the odd question with a one-word answer. The notes are not marked or the organisation of files checked. Students are not asked to do enough work in terms of research outside of lessons and are not developing the skills that would be of help in later life.

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

54. The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. The amount of time that is devoted to teaching is well below the national average and the minimum amount of time recommended by the government. This means that students can usually only take nine GCSE examinations, when the higher attaining students are capable of taking, and doing well in, at least ten. It also means that there is not enough time to teach religious education in Year 11, so the school fails to meet statutory requirements in this respect. The school fails to provide a daily collective act of worship for all students. In other respects, the curriculum has some significant strengths, such as the way that higher attainers can study three separate sciences.
55. The greatest strength of the curriculum lies in the very good way that the school works with the community. There are very many links with businesses, charities and other organisations. Work with the Scarman Trust, for example, has proved to be highly successful in forming links with a primary school where students from Lordswood now go to help younger students. The police play a significant part in educating students about the dangers of gun culture, while other groups help to provide alternatives for students to help them to avoid being drawn into gangs. The school has many links with businesses that play a significant part in the school's good careers education, through such activities as an industry day, as well as providing venues for parts of the school's vocational education. Students studying manufacturing, for example, visit Rover and Jaguar cars to see the processes they have been studying in action.
56. The school has good, constructive links with partner institutions, and these enhance the quality of learning opportunities. There are very strong ties with local secondary schools. Lordswood is a member of the newly formed Oaks Collegiate Academy. This consists of five secondary and one special school. Arrangements for students with special needs have benefited from Lordswood's membership of the Academy. The special needs department's contacts with the special school have resulted in improvements to individual education plans and better support for students with learning difficulties. Lordswood's links with other schools in the local area are satisfactory. It has to work with a large number of primary schools, some of whom send only two or three students per year to Lordswood. This fragmentation causes difficulties over the transfer of information on students in Year 7. However, there is good co-operation over induction arrangements. There are also strong links with nearby primary schools over assemblies and extra-curricular activities. For example, Lordswood runs a successful outdoor pursuits project in collaboration with St Thomas's junior school. This enhances the provision for the personal development of students in Year 8, as they get the opportunity to exercise responsibility by working with younger children. Links with the primary schools are steadily improving, but are not strong in respect of the core subjects of the National Curriculum. The school has good links with local colleges and local universities, and as a result is able to provide students with good guidance on courses in further and higher education.
57. Too much time is allocated to registration and form time. Much of this time is wasted as students sit around chatting. Such use of time also provides a poor start to the day in terms of promoting an atmosphere where students are getting in the right frame of mind to apply themselves. On Mondays, students start earlier as they have an extra lesson devoted to personal and social education. This not only provides a satisfactory education in the various topics covered, but also gets the students

working earlier so they are ready to learn in their subsequent lessons. The structure of the school day causes other problems. The 35-minute lessons are reduced to only 30 minutes by the time students have moved from one classroom to another and are far too short for subjects such as information and communication technology, but the 70-minute lessons are too long for subjects such as German, where the students have difficulty sustaining their concentration.

58. The provision for students with special educational needs is very good. Most teachers set work which matches students' needs, and they link well with integration assistants, whose expertise makes a significant contribution to the very good achievement of students. The assistants give generously of their time outside lessons to add to the in-class provision. The games and homework club each lunchtime gives students the opportunity to develop better social skills and to receive help with homework. For example, a statemented student in Year 9 was given good support in his work on *Macbeth*. Assistants join in the games and this creates a friendly atmosphere. Students behave very well and appreciate the resources available. The teaching of the Progress Units and the programme of paired reading for Year 7 students are helping these students to improve their literacy skills. There is good provision after school for students to use computers for their coursework. For example, two Year 11 students worked hard on drafting food technology work and on reading information about *Macbeth* from the Internet. The integration assistant gave good advice on structuring work and developing ideas, so that the students learned well.
59. The school's strategy for teaching literacy is good. The English department's coverage of speaking, listening and writing is thorough. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy has been used to revise the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Lower attaining students in Year 7 attend special 'catch-up' groups in which they concentrate upon basic literacy.
60. Aspects of literacy are also taught in the other subjects of the curriculum. Students are required to write descriptions and diaries in the humanities. They also have satisfactory opportunities to produce reports and extended writing. The extent to which they receive guidance on the choice of language for particular tasks is variable. Effective practice was seen in history, where students considered what might be appropriate starting sentences for their paragraphs and how their essays might be most effectively linked together. In modern foreign languages, teachers model answers and provide writing frames that help students to communicate their ideas. In other areas, students do not have similar opportunities to learn about how to choose language that is appropriate for the set task. In design and technology, for example, evaluations are written in the first person rather than being impersonal. Key words are taught across the curriculum. The extent to which teachers attend to inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar is variable.
61. There is satisfactory provision for teaching of numeracy skills. While individual subjects have not all yet got to the stage where they have their own policy on numeracy, many subjects already reinforce such skills in their day-to-day lessons.
62. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, drama and art. There is a good range of trips and visits available, including residential trips that give students good opportunities to experience life in different environments. Many subjects provide extra classes after school for students studying

for GCSE. Students who are particularly gifted or talented have 'master classes' in different subjects as well as the opportunity to visit universities.

63. The curriculum is worse than that seen at the previous inspection. At that time the curriculum met statutory requirements and was satisfactory.

Sixth form

64. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides an appropriate choice of courses for its relatively small number of students and these are chosen so that they build well upon the GCSE and vocational subjects available in Year 11. It also takes good account of the subjects available at other schools in the area. However, not all students study religious education, which is a breach of statutory requirements.
65. The courses usually meet the needs of the students well. Lower attainers can, for example, study two rather than four subjects to AS-level, while retaking GCSEs in subjects such as English and mathematics. Some students, on the other hand, suffer from the way that they are unable to attend all the lessons in a subject, such as those in computer studies who are unable to attend all lessons because they also study English.
66. Students receive good quality careers advice in the sixth form, which builds well on the work carried out in the lower school. Much care is taken to ensure that students entering the sixth form are recruited onto appropriate courses, and also that students do not take courses where they will have little chance of success.
67. The curriculum also makes satisfactory provision for enrichment activities. Students involve themselves in many school and community-based projects, which are successful in helping them to develop responsibility and self-confidence. The curriculum is also successful in offering a variety of other opportunities ranging from sport through to music and drama. The school council includes students from the sixth form and these students have a significant input into the work of the school.
68. The curriculum has undergone significant changes since the previous inspection. The introduction of the new system of AS-levels and A-levels has been managed very well and there is a much broader range of subjects now on offer so a much broader range of students is staying on at school. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision

69. Overall, there is good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The 'Thought for the Week' is designed so that the students consider spiritual aspects such as fear, kindness, imagination and moral courage. The nature of courage is explored in good depth with a range of salutary examples that ensure that students understand the virtue of courage. However, whilst the 'Thought for the Day' is carried out in the sixth form, students are not encouraged to reflect on the issues raised.
70. Religious education makes a good contribution to students' spiritual development by considering the spiritual aspects of the major world religions. However, the inadequate time given to religious education in Year 11 and in the sixth form

diminishes these opportunities. In English literature, students get opportunities to reflect on emotions, including reflection on the nature of being adolescent. Drama also helps students to reflect on human emotions and consequent responses. Music, including multicultural music, provides uplifting experiences for students. In information and communication technology, students look at the wonders of the universe and the horrors of war. In art and design and history, students consider the underlying spiritual elements that gave rise to the creation of some works of art.

71. Provision for moral development is good. There is a good understanding of right and wrong, seen in students' behaviour throughout the school. Issues of right and wrong are considered formally in assemblies and tutorial periods. Religious education challenges students to consider moral issues in all the relevant topics. This is particularly good in helping to break down superficial understandings of racial and social issues. Most other subjects also contribute to students' moral education. In information and communication technology students consider the misuse of data. The rights and wrongs of the treatment of the environment are studied in geography. Physical education provides good opportunities to consider right and wrong with regards to fair play, honesty and playing by the rules. There is a good awareness of the virtue of helping others. This is displayed in students' generous responses in helping charities.
72. There is good provision for social development. There are opportunities for students to be involved in the life of the school, especially through the prefect system and the school council. Students show a genuine respect for their teachers, for each other and for all members of the school community. There is a warm and friendly atmosphere pervading the school. The vast majority of students show good confidence and self-esteem. The moral and social provision are well integrated. In all lessons there are opportunities for students to work in pairs and small groups. They show consideration for the opinions and needs of others. There are clear understandings of how to behave, and the vast majority of students have good social skills. There is impressive harmony throughout the school.
73. Provision for cultural development is good. The school celebrates and benefits from its multicultural community. Students use their own cultural knowledge to support the learning of others. This is particularly good in religious education. There is good promotion of the art and music of other cultures. Cultural issues are studied in geography. These include aspects of tourism and the displacement of people. Displays around the school show the contribution of different cultures to modern civilisation and knowledge. These include the contribution of black women scientists. Students gain a good knowledge of modern British culture with visits to theatres, art galleries and places of worship. There are regular drama productions.
74. There is good improvement since the previous inspection. There is an improvement in the provision for social development. The cultural diversity of the school is now appreciated and celebrated.

Sixth form

75. The school provides satisfactory opportunities for students' personal development. Students experience a satisfactory range of activities, which contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. However, the most important influences on students within the school are the support and individual attention that students receive from their teachers. Students are expected to be responsible and to work hard. They receive much encouragement and specific advice in order to help them develop self-knowledge and personal organisation.
76. When students are provided with opportunities for reflection and spiritual awareness, they respond well. Nevertheless students indicate that most assemblies, although informative and interesting, have only limited spiritual content and few opportunities to reflect on matters beyond everyday experience. Similarly, some such opportunities that occur within lessons are not fully exploited.
77. The school provides good opportunities for social and moral development and for the aspects of cultural development that relate to music, drama and the arts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

78. The school takes good care of its students. It monitors their academic performance satisfactorily and uses assessment data adequately to guide individuals and to plan lessons. Students receive good personal guidance from effective formal systems of support. The school also has good informal arrangements for monitoring and supporting personal development. The relatively small size of the school allows members of staff to know students well as individuals, and the mutual trust that they establish significantly enhances quality of pastoral care. Students know that teachers have their interests at heart and will give up their time to help them. Procedures for promoting attendance are good, and measures to enhance standards of behaviour are very effective. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection, when support and guidance were described as good. In the last five years it has strengthened its arrangements for promoting good attendance and for raising students' self-esteem.
79. Procedures for providing a safe working environment for students and staff are satisfactory overall. They are good in respect of provision for child protection. The school's arrangements meet legal requirements and members of staff know what they must do if they suspect that a student has been abused. The school has a formal health and safety policy and carries out regular checks of the premises. However, its risk assessments are little more than logs of defects. They make little attempt to anticipate problems. The physical education department has not yet assessed its procedures for risk. The step that lies immediately behind the exit door at the rear of the main lobby is a hazard, and should be marked by a warning notice and yellow line. There are no other outstanding health and safety issues.
80. Students receive good individual support and guidance from the time that they join the school through to the time they leave school. Procedures for inducting new students are good and are successful in helping Year 7 to feel at home in their new environment. The school takes induction very seriously. It has sent questionnaires to new students in order to assess their worries, and has followed this with action to allay fears about bullying and theft. For example, a prefect is assigned to each Year

7 class to act as a mentor. Students in Year 7 greatly appreciate the trouble that the school takes to address their needs.

81. The pastoral structure provides a good framework for delivering educational and personal support. The system of heads of year and form tutors, combined with learning mentors, home-link workers and integration assistants, provides all students with very good alternative sources of advice. Students also know that they can turn to their subject teachers for effective support. They are full of praise for the concern that members of staff show for their welfare. Personal development is well monitored. Much is done informally through teachers' good knowledge of students as individuals. There are also effective formal procedures in the form of records of the number of rewards earned and sanctions incurred by students. Individuals who are having problems are identified and given appropriate support. The school takes due account of the needs of different groups of students. There is special provision for those who are in particular danger of disaffection or of failing to fulfil their potential, as in the case of underachieving Pakistani students who receive help and guidance from mentors from 'Second City Second Chance'. This is a good example of the way in which pastoral care underpins and enhances standards of attainment. There are effective links between the academic and pastoral areas of the school's work. All pastoral staff are closely involved in support for students' learning. Form tutors and heads of year regularly check students' planners in order to help them to develop independent learning skills, such as accurate recording of tasks, good organisation and the ability to schedule work sensibly.
82. Personal and social education makes a satisfactory contribution to support and guidance. It includes a good system of self-assessment that encourages students to learn more about themselves and also help members of staff to monitor personal development. The quality of careers education and guidance is good. Year 9 get good advice on their choice of options for Years 10 and 11. The school's well-organised and prepared programme of work experience enhances older students' knowledge of the world of work and helps them to become more mature and responsible. They also receive good guidance on courses in the sixth form and at colleges of further education. As a result, nearly all members of the sixth form say that the subjects that they are studying suit their abilities and aspirations
83. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, including the provision of an alternative curriculum for students who are in danger of becoming disaffected. The school uses an appropriate combination of incentives and deterrents. Students know that they can earn rewards for good attendance. They also know that it is the school's practice to make first day contact with the home of anyone who is absent without explanation. This is an effective deterrent against truancy. Students are aware that truants are certain to be found out. There are good arrangements for monitoring attendance. Tutors and heads of year check form registers regularly, identify students who are frequently absent and liaise closely with support services on initiatives to get them back into school. The school's system provides accurate records of attendance, but not of authorised and unauthorised absence. Because of administrative problems, there is a delay in entering information from absence notes into form registers. As a result the incidence of unauthorised absence is overstated. Procedures for monitoring attendance in lessons are adequate. Teachers hold roll calls and follow up absences if they suspect that students are playing truant, but do not systematically cross-check lesson registers against form registers.

84. Arrangements for monitoring and improving behaviour are very good. They are very effective in raising standards and have enabled the school to tackle successfully some serious disciplinary problems. There are good formal policies that promote consistent expectations and a common approach to discipline across the school. They also give members of staff good guidance on behaviour management. Students on their part know what is required of them via the code of conduct. This sets high standards and clearly defines the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Assemblies and the programme of personal and social education also reinforce the message that bullying, racism and oppressive behaviour will not be tolerated. There is a good system of rewards for hard work and positive behaviour. This promotes high standards because students like to receive recognition for their achievements, and are keen to earn merits by behaving well and working hard. Celebration of success also improves attitudes to school by raising students' self-esteem and confidence. Overall, teachers manage behaviour well in lessons by providing challenging activities and by using praise well. However, a small minority cannot cope with conflict or deal effectively with difficult students.
85. The school's efforts to eradicate bullying, racism and aggression are very effective. There are well-established routines for recording breaches of discipline, and good procedures for identifying and supporting individuals who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour. Students and parents agree that any instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school has taken appropriate action to tackle the problems of theft after a survey showed the incidence of stealing was relatively high. Police officers were invited in to talk about the issue in assemblies, and individuals who had committed acts of theft were given professional counselling. The most serious offenders were excluded from school. Exclusion is used to deal with instances of really poor behaviour when all other options have been exhausted. Generally, the school's systems are successful in preventing serious problems. Students are very closely supervised in the grounds during breaks and when moving between classrooms. Senior members of staff are conspicuously on duty at these times, and they are ably supported during the lunch hour by prefects and volunteers from the Schools Support Service. Good supervision reduces the opportunities for students to become involved in oppressive and aggressive behaviour, such as fighting.
86. Students with special educational needs receive very good guidance in both their personal and academic development. In-class support is very good and the lunchtime club provides very well for students to socialise and to receive individual help with their work.
87. The assessment of students' performance is satisfactory. The school takes students from many primary schools and although information is not always available immediately as students enter the school, it uses what information it has well. The school has also designed its own tests in many subjects that are given during the first term. All the available information is then used well to allocate students during their second term to classes based on their performance. Information about how students are performing is also used during Year 9 to help students to make subject choices for Year 10.
88. As students progress through the school, class teachers collect further information. A new system has been established which records results centrally and allows the leadership group to identify students who are at risk of performing less well than they should. These students are then given special help, which is beginning to improve

their performance. In most cases departmental heads and the tutors ensure that the appropriate action is taken, although the system is so new that there has been little time to prove its effectiveness as yet. Results are analysed against local and national data and are broken down by ethnicity but this information is used inconsistently at departmental level to identify trends.

89. During Years 10 and 11, heads of department monitor students' progress satisfactorily although many of the systems are relatively new. At the end of Year 11, GCSE results are analysed and in departments such as history, geography, science and German the data is well used to indicate areas for further development. For example, in science the department has brought forward the coursework to Year 10 and this has led to a rise in the number of students achieving good marks in this area. Monitoring of students' performance is less good in information and communication technology where the information is not used to any great effect.
90. The assessment of students with special educational needs is good. The targets of the individual education plans are specific and very clearly suit the students' needs. However, the collaboration sheet used to record students' progress over time does not give sufficient opportunity to monitor the achievement criteria for targets and to assess how well students learn in each lesson. Very good use is made of data from primary schools and from information given by subject teachers to help in the planning of annual reviews for students with statements.

Sixth form

Assessment

91. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress in the sixth form are good. The data on students' attainment, which is available when students enter the sixth form, is used well by heads of department and tutors to assess actual performance against predicted performance. There are regular opportunities for students to meet with their tutors to review their progress and some very effective examples were seen of this during the inspection. At subject level, teachers keep a careful watch over students' performance and in several subjects, such as English and geography; students are involved in reviewing their own progress. In others, such as computer studies, students are not as clear about how they are progressing because the systems are inconsistent.
92. The use made of information from assessments in order to plan the curriculum is good. In most subjects data is gathered and is used to provide advice and guidance about students' future options. Most teachers know their students and their individual needs very well so they can ensure students have access to a wide range of courses that suit their needs, including vocational courses. In addition, teachers are skilled at choosing components of the course that are tailored to meet the interests of those that they are teaching.
93. In some departments such as geography and chemistry there is a systematic recording of students' progress and consistent monitoring of standards. In geography, for example, there is also good use of assessment information to identify the needs of individual students, which enables teachers to match their work closely to the needs of their students.

Advice, support and guidance

94. Advice and guidance for students are satisfactory overall. The quality of support for their learning and academic progress is good. Students arrive in the sixth form with a good grasp of what is required of them, thanks to the very good briefing that they receive in Year 11. They rarely feel like changing courses, and most make good progress. Subject teachers monitor them carefully. They identify students who are experiencing difficulties with their work and give them help that meets their needs. All students receive good feedback on their performance, and on areas for improvement, via regular reviews of progress. The information includes levels of attainment and predicted grades. Students appreciate the support that their teachers give them. In the survey of their views, eight out of ten students said that they received helpful and constructive advice. Personal support is less well developed. There is a system of form tutors in the sixth form, but many students feel that they do not have good access to support and help with personal problems. Approximately three out of ten who completed the survey of sixth formers' views were unhappy with this aspect of advice and guidance. More than six out of ten felt that the range of enrichment activities was poor. Their dissatisfaction reflects the content and teaching of the sixth form tutorial programme, which focuses on promoting good study skills and guidance on how to apply for courses in higher education. There are relatively few opportunities for students in Years 12 and 13 to explore personal and social issues and widen their horizons.
95. There are good procedures for promoting attendance. Students' presence at registrations and lessons is recorded and monitored, and instances of excessive absence are followed up. Students believe that the school's arrangements are effective and that anyone who regularly missed lessons would be identified.
96. The school gives students good guidance on careers and opportunities in higher education. They have good access to information on courses, and they get the opportunity to visit local universities. The school provides students with good support when they apply for admission to university. The head of the sixth form advises them on how to fill in their UCAS forms and write their personal statements. There is good provision for careers advice and guidance in the sixth form. Students have good access to careers advisers, and to information in databases and on the Internet. Careers education for Year 12 is enhanced by work experience placements. The survey of students' views showed that the majority of sixth formers did not feel well advised about future options. However, this might simply reflect the situation when they completed in the questionnaire. Year 12 would not have received much careers guidance at that stage. Older students say that they are satisfied with the quality of information on future courses and careers. Some do not act on the advice that they receive because they have unrealistically high aspirations. This reflects parental pressure rather than the effectiveness of the school's provision for careers education and guidance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

97. The school knows that strong parental support for students' learning raises standards of attainment. It has, therefore, put in place measures to build good links with parents. These are beginning to improve the quality of the home/school partnership. Parents, for their part, have high opinions of the school. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go before their support, and their involvement with their sons' learning at home, make a major contribution to attainment and progress. The previous inspection report did not make an overall judgement on partnership with parents, but said that it was weak in some areas, such as day-to-day

communications between school and home. This school has successfully addressed some of the issues raised by the previous inspection and has made satisfactory improvement in the last five years.

98. The majority of parents who responded to the inspection's questionnaire are satisfied with the running of the school and the standards that students attain. They are particularly happy with the quality of leadership and management and the way in which teachers expect students to work hard and do their best. They feel very comfortable about approaching the school with questions and problems. Nine out of ten parents also believe that their sons are helped to become more mature and responsible. Only a small minority expresses dissatisfaction with any aspect of the school's work. One in six parents is unhappy with information on progress and the amount of homework that students get.
99. Information for parents is satisfactory overall, and in some respects is good. Parents are regularly informed of school events through newsletters. These are given added interest by contributions from students. The school provides good information on the curriculum. The school prospectus, sixth form prospectus and annual report of the governing body contain adequate summaries of the subjects that students and students will study. However, the main prospectus does not include information on the school's provision for students with special educational needs, and therefore does not meet legal requirements. Subject departments provide valuable additional information. For example, the history department provides parents of students in Year 9 with details of options, and gives them good guidance on how to support their sons' learning.
100. There are good day-to-day communications between home and school. Both pastoral staff and subject teachers contact parents if they have concerns about a student's progress. They also send letters home in praise of good work and behaviour. Homework diaries, which are regularly checked by form tutors, provide adequate information on the tasks that students are required to do at home, and the merits that they have earned. There is a section for targets for improvement, but this is rarely filled in. Information on progress is satisfactory when consultation evenings and informal contacts between teachers and parents are taken into account. The weakest feature of the school's provision is the annual written report on progress. Subject reports contain very little information on what students have studied during the year, and rarely refer to National Curriculum levels or targets for improvement. They focus too much on attitudes and behaviour, and too little on attainment and raising standards. The reports for students in Years 7 to 9 make no reference to progress in information and communication technology. They do not meet legal requirements on reporting, and are therefore unsatisfactory.
101. The school makes good provision for parents for whom English is a second language. It employs a home/school links worker who speaks the main minority languages used by students and their families. He acts as an interpreter for parents who do not speak much English. The school's three home/school links workers make a valuable contribution to the partnership with parents. They organise parents' evenings and carry out surveys of parents' views. They also hold surgeries every morning. These give parents very good opportunities to talk about problems with approachable, supportive members of staff.
102. Parents are keen for their sons to do well and are generally supportive of the school. Some families are actively involved in students' work at home, and their interest and

encouragement enhance their sons' attainment and progress. The school works hard to engage all parents in support for learning. For example, it runs workshops on revision and organises a 'welcome evening' in September for the parents of new students. Despite these initiatives, only small numbers of parents are active partners in the work of school. Overall, parental involvement in learning is limited. A significant number of parents do not read and sign their sons' homework diaries. The parent teacher association needs more parental support and participation. It has not been active in organising events during the past year. However, the home/school links workers have recently recruited new members of the association, and there are plans to hold a social function in the near future. Attendance at parents' evenings is satisfactory. It is enhanced by input from the home/school links workers. They contact parents who do not respond to teachers' letters, and where necessary re-arrange times for meetings.

103. Links with parents of students with learning difficulties are good. Parents appreciate the school's provision for their sons and the hard work of the staff. For example, during GCSE examinations staff telephone homes to ensure students are aware of their examination timetable and sometimes bring students in to take the examination. The co-ordinator and integration assistants are available during the school day to deal with problems and to give advice. Copies of the individual education plans are sent home, so that parents are clear what their son needs to do to improve.

The sixth form

104. Parents are happy with the work of the sixth form. They receive adequate information on their sons' progress. There are satisfactory arrangements for consultation evenings and for written reports. For example, parents receive copies of students' progress reviews.
105. Parents have high aspirations for their sons and are supportive of their learning, as shown by good attendance at parents' evenings.

Students' views

106. Students are loyal to the school and hold generally positive views about it. They are very glad that they stayed on in the sixth form and are enjoying their studies. They feel that the quality of education in Years 12 and 13 meets their expectations, and that the courses that they have chosen are appropriate to their talents and ambitions. They appreciate the good quality of teaching in the sixth form and the thoroughness with which teachers assess their work. They also speak highly of the helpful and constructive advice that they receive from members of staff. However, one in three students is unhappy with information on academic progress. There is also a significant amount of negative comment on non-academic aspects of the sixth form's work. Two thirds of the students think that the range of extra-curricular activities is inadequate, and approximately half feel that the school does not provide good advice about future options. Older students are more positive about the quality of guidance on careers and courses in higher education. They value the support that they receive in Year 13 when they apply for places at universities and colleges. A significant minority of students is dissatisfied with the quality of personal support and with the school's response to the views of the sixth form. Sixth formers nevertheless believe that members of staff treat as them as responsible young adults.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

107. The quality of leadership and management of the school is good overall. Since the previous inspection report, the good leadership and management provided by the current headteacher have brought about many positive changes. The school is now in a new phase of development, having seen a change of headteacher and chair of governors in September 2001. The school is becoming more outward looking and is working closely with other schools as a member of the newly formed Oaks Collegiate Academy. The headteacher has a highly visible presence around the school, is approachable to students and teachers and manages the school well. His vision for the school is clear; he knows where he wants the school to be in the short, medium and long term. The headteacher has galvanised the school and undoubtedly contributed to the good atmosphere for learning. There is a real sense of commitment to creating an environment within which every one of the students feels valued, respected and able to succeed. Fundamental to the school's work is a commitment to inclusion and this can be seen in the very good relationships that exist between the different ethnic groups represented in the school. The result of this good leadership and management can be seen in the good teaching provision, the reduction in the rate of exclusions, the positive attitudes of students and a school that knows its strengths and its weaknesses.
108. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is fully supported by the satisfactory leadership group. The headteacher has broadened the base of the leadership group to help translate the aims of the development plan into achievable plans or action. All members of the leadership group have clear job descriptions and line management responsibilities and work closely with the heads of department and other teachers to ensure that the school's vision is understood by all. Members of the leadership group are well informed and all have expertise in each of their own specialist fields. Together with the headteacher they are helping to steer the school through a period of rapid change. A strong shared commitment to succeed has been created and is aided by the good communication between the leadership team and staff.
109. The school's aims embody much that is happening in the school. There are good, effective systems in place, which ensure that the school campus operates smoothly and efficiently.
110. The leadership and management provided by many middle managers are good. However, there is a wide variation in the quality of leadership and management at this level from very good through to poor. For example, the subject leader for modern languages is providing very good leadership and management, which has resulted in many innovative schemes being introduced and students achieving well at GCSE. However, in information and communication technology, leadership is poor. The very hard working head of department has so many roles to carry out, with no other specialist for support, that the priorities for development in the short term are not being identified clearly enough.
111. Leadership and management of the learning support department are very good. The co-ordinator leads a team of very dedicated staff, who meet regularly. They are fully committed to helping their students learn and to giving them greater self-confidence. Integration assistants are very well deployed to ensure that the statutory requirements of statements are met and that all students with learning and behavioural difficulties receive maximum help. This has a major impact on the very good achievement of students. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

There is more support in class and it remains of a high quality. The achievement of students is now very good rather than sound, and there has been a very significant rise in the proportion of students gaining five A* to G and one A* to G at GCSE. Teaching has improved and individual education plans, which were satisfactory, are now very good.

112. The governors have a sound understanding of the school's work. The chair of governors has very good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and she has identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory duties; however, it does not meet the following statutory requirements:
- to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students;
 - students in the sixth form do not receive their full entitlement to religious education;
 - there is not enough time to teach religious education in Year 11, so the school fails to meet statutory requirements in this respect;
 - there is no annual written report to parents in information and communication technology;
 - the main prospectus does not include information on the school's provision for students with special educational needs.
113. Since the previous inspection, a new system and cycle of school improvement planning has been introduced and this has resulted in a school improvement plan that is of a good quality, focuses on raising achievement and sets a clear agenda for improvement. All areas of the plan are linked to raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Subject development plans are linked to the school improvement plan. The school's priorities are appropriate and the school is fully aware of the areas for development noted in this report.
114. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. The headteacher, the leadership group and the governors have set challenging targets for improvement for 2003, having been disappointed by the GCSE results in 2002. The school successfully met its GCSE targets prior to 2002. The school compares its performance with similar attaining schools in the local education authority and with national benchmarks.
115. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology. Good use has been made of specific grants. For example, funds from the Scarman trust have been used to support community projects, which are helping to forge closer links with the local and wider communities.
116. The financial planning in the school is satisfactory. The last auditor's report highlighted a few areas for improvement and the school has responded positively to the report's recommendations. The school receives a basic budget that is well above the national average. The school is providing satisfactory value for money and the effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

Sixth form

117. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is good overall. The head of sixth form ensures that all students are treated equally. The head of sixth

form is well informed about the students' academic and personal development because he knows all the students well. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a good capacity to succeed. The introduction of the new curriculum in the sixth form has been managed well and has resulted in a rise in standards.

118. The same systems are used for monitoring and supporting teaching as exist in the main school and they are equally effective. The results are observed in the improvement in the quality of teaching in the sixth form since the school was last inspected.
119. The school's aims and the values that underpin the work of the sixth form are relevant to the needs of the students and are embedded well in all aspects of the school's work. There is a good relationship between the sixth form and the main school.
120. The governors view the sixth form as equally important as the rest of the school and take their role here equally as seriously. The governors have a satisfactory understanding of the work of the sixth form.
121. The school improvement plan includes areas specific to the sixth form and is of a good quality. The school applies the principles of best value well to the sixth form. The strategic use of resources is satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good, as is the cost effectiveness.

Staffing

122. The school has a satisfactory match of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum although there is not enough specialist staff in information and communication technology and this is leading to students underachieving in Years 10 and 11. The school has a very good match of non-teaching support staff. For example, the learning behaviour mentors have helped to bring about the improvement in students' behaviour.
123. The school's strategy for performance management is good. The inclusion of lesson observations in the monitoring methods used by line managers meets national regulations. The school's arrangements ensure that the headteacher is provided with an annual record of how successfully teachers are achieving their objectives.
124. The school has good procedures for deciding the in-service training that is undertaken by its teachers, and the focus is clearly on the needs of the school. The in-service provided is good and includes both external and in-school activities that contribute effectively not only to teachers' professional development, but also to the development of the support staff whose work is highly valued by the school. In-school activities have been extended recently by the appointment of Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) who work alongside individual teachers and by the school's membership of the local collegiate. In science, for example, the subject practice has been very positively enhanced by the contribution of the AST.
125. There is a good induction programme for teachers new to the school with newly qualified teachers benefiting from in-school, local education authority and university-based professional development programmes.

Accommodation

126. Accommodation at the school is satisfactory overall and allows for a broad range of subjects to be taught. The state of repair of the school building is better on the inside than outside. Inside it is clean and safe with effective use of display in many areas including a mural in the gymnasium, enhancing the quality of the learning environment. The music room lacks soundproofing and as a result lessons are frequently interrupted by external noise. The library remains short of space and is not a welcoming area for independent study.

Learning resources

127. There are sufficient resources in the school to meet the needs of the students. Most subjects have adequate numbers of textbooks for students to have access to one during lessons but not all have enough to take them home. This means that sometimes students find it difficult to do their homework or to do revision.
128. The library is well stocked in some areas, having, for example, a wide range of books for students who find reading difficult. There are fewer materials to allow wider reading around the topics being studied in subjects such as science. All the resources available are of a good quality and have been well chosen but there is a shortage of electronic materials such as CDs. Currently the three computers are out of action; this has been a problem for several months so students find it difficult to access the Internet or work on the computer in their free time. The library is well used at lunchtime but is not often open after school to allow students to do further research.
129. There are now enough computers as the school has invested heavily in this area since the previous inspection and this is having a positive effect in subjects such as geography, design and technology and music.

Sixth form

Resources

130. The resources in the sixth form are satisfactory overall. There is a satisfactory range of books and other resources to support students' studies in all areas, except in information and communication technology where there are currently too few reference materials for advanced level work. There are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons, and to develop their capacity for independent study and research, partly because they do not have sufficient access to computers.
131. There has been good improvement since the last inspection with the building of a sixth form block, which is valued by students.
132. The school has a satisfactory match of teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum although there are not enough specialist staff in computer studies and this is leading to students underachieving.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

133. To improve further the quality of education provided and students' standards, the management of the school should:

Improve the curriculum by:

- increasing the length of the taught week;
 - making better use of tutorial time;
 - restructuring the day to make the length of lessons more suitable for students.
- (Paragraphs: 7, 54, 57, 211)

Improve the standards attained by students in information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 and in computer studies in the sixth form by:

- improving the quality of teaching by ensuring teachers have a greater knowledge and understanding of the courses they teach;
- providing more specialist teaching;
- improving the quality of leadership and management of information and communication technology by identifying the priorities for development in the short, medium and long term.

(Paragraphs: 10, 11, 22, 23, 47, 53, 110, 122, 211, 213, 214, 261-264)

Improve the achievement of students in religious education in Year 11 by providing sufficient lessons in religious education. (Paragraphs: 10, 12, 54, 64, 240)

Sixth form

Provide more opportunities for students to work on their own and to develop independent learning skills. (Paragraphs: 35, 94, 130, 250, 257)

Minor weaknesses

- Provide religious education for all students in the sixth form. (Paragraphs: 10, 12, 54, 64, 240)
- Improve the quality of marking by ensuring all teachers follow the school's marking policy consistently. (Paragraphs: 46, 144, 158, 198, 205, 230)
- Ensure all teachers insist that students complete and hand in homework and coursework. (Paragraphs: 26, 46, 171)
- Improve the quality of the annual written reports to parents. (Paragraphs: 99, 106, 200)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	132
	Sixth form	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 - 11							
Number	4	24	52	42	9	1	0
Percentage	3	18	40	31	7	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	1	16	5	0	0	0
Percentage	4	4	70	22	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	617	62
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	169	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	73	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	362

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
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	0	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	80	69
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	77	80	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64(54)	66(56)	57(60)
	National	66(64)	67(66)	66(66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10(22)	40(33)	23(26)
	National	32(31)	45(43)	33(34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	63	67	81
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	63	67	81
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52	55	67
	National	67(65)	70(68)	67(64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13	33	31
	National	32(31)	44(42)	34(33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	120	0

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	28	113	120
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	28	113	120
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	24(34)	94(93)	100(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	29.8(32.1)
	National	39.8(39)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	32	N/a	32
	Average point score per candidate	14.3	N/a	14.3
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	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	32	N/a	32	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Average point score per candidate	14.3	N/a	14.3	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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	81	3	1
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	29	4	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	1	1
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	219	3	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	145	10	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	8	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	120	38	1
Black or Black British – African	7	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	16	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	12	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	45.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	475

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

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

Key Stage 3	22.6
Key Stage 4	18.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	2408111
Total expenditure	2434667
Expenditure per pupil	3488
Balance brought forward from previous year	202209
Balance carried forward to next year	175653

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
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	679
Number of questionnaires returned	70

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	54	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	51	10	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	50	7	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	47	13	4	1
The teaching is good.	33	53	10	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	49	7	10	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	3	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	24	7	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	54	10	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	37	44	3	1	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	49	7	3	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	43	4	4	7

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

- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and leads to students achieving well.
- The Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy has helped to raise standards in Years 7 to 9.
- There is some excellent use made of information and communication technology in teaching and learning.
- Most students have good attitudes, behave well and are keen to learn.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Some of the marking is unsatisfactory.
- Insufficient use is made of modelling demanding written tasks in Years 10 and 11 to enable students to understand what is required of them.
- In some lessons the work set does not provide students with an appropriate level of challenge.

134. In the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds, results were well below the national average for all schools but in line with the average for similar schools; results were above average compared with schools where students had similar test results at the age of 11. However, the results obtained were below the national average points score attained by boys only. Results have fluctuated over the past five years. However, in the past three years they have remained steady and on average have been broadly in line with the national average for boys, even with the declining attainment of students on entry. In 2002, results in English were below the levels gained in mathematics and science.
135. In 2002, the GCSE points score in English was well below the national average and in English literature it was below the national average. When compared to the national average for boys, the points scores in both subjects were below the national average. Results have been similar for the last three years.
136. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards being currently attained in the school are consistent with recent examination results; by the end of Years 9 and 11, standards are well below average. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, including those with special educational needs, achievement by the end of Years 9 is good and by the end of Year 11 it is satisfactory. Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 primarily because of the impact of the introduction of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy upon teaching methods.
137. Whilst most students are willing to take part in speaking and listening activities, there is a significant minority in each year group that requires considerable encouragement from the teacher before it is willing to contribute to lessons. However, higher attaining students are confident, fluent speakers who possess a good vocabulary. They are able to challenge each other and to explain themselves

more fully in response to questions. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on extracts from the script of *Gregory's Girl*, when students had to decide, in groups, how best to portray characters sharing a fantasy. Middle and lower attaining students express themselves more briefly and find difficulty in elaborating their ideas when questioned. They also rely heavily upon colloquialisms, find difficulty in expressing themselves more formally when the situation requires it and sometimes confuse tenses.

138. Students benefit considerably from the opportunity to participate in drama, as was seen, for example, in a Year 10 lesson when students enacted a script based upon Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Students showed considerable creativity in the pace and tone of their delivery when presenting a variety of characters.
139. By the end of Year 9, students have read a range of literature that is appropriate for their age and prior attainment. Whilst a minority read aloud with good expression, many middle and lower attainers tend to read in a halting fashion. However, most students can work out the meaning of words from the context and so can understand what they have read. The lowest attainers are not able to read independently. By the end of Year 11 students go on to read more complex literature. In doing so, higher attaining students are able to compare different styles of writing, as was seen in some high quality Year 11 work comparing short stories written by Roald Dahl and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. However, relatively few higher and middle attaining students are able to express their responses to literature with the level of clarity that might be expected. Lower attainers tend to be aware of the gist of what they read rather than being able to analyse the text in any depth.
140. By the end of Year 9 students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narratives, diaries and descriptions. Since the introduction of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy, students have become more aware of the terms used to describe language, as was seen in a Year 7 lesson in which lower attaining students were able to identify and explain the function of the topic sentences in paragraphs they were studying. This, in turn, led them to be better able to construct their own paragraphs. By the end of Year 11 most students go on to improve the range of their writing. Good work was seen on discursive topics, including, for example, how the misuse of drugs might be controlled. The best work seen was on narrative topics and reports. A number of students wrote at some length and with considerable insight about their work experience placements. Many students redraft their work so as to improve its quality. However, inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar mars the work of many lower attaining students.
141. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The department's adoption of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy has helped to improve standards of teaching, which in turn has led to a good rate of learning in Years 7 to 9. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. In the majority of lessons, teachers exercise effective discipline and this creates an orderly atmosphere in which learning can take place. When lessons are conducted at a lively pace, the tasks are varied and students have the chance to be active, rapid learning takes place. This was seen in a number of drama lessons. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, students improved their skills in speaking, especially in projecting their voices, by experimenting with the ways a script advertising trainers could be best performed. When teachers possess good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic, students have their curiosity aroused and they start to think more deeply about the subject. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on

Macbeth. The teacher constantly probed his students about the exact meanings of words, how a particular scene might be performed and how the plot might develop. This led the students themselves to probe and speculate and, indeed, to be surprised by the different layers of meaning contained in the text.

142. When teachers use high quality resources students are immediately interested in the work. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson in which students attempted to re-create the images they had studied in poems in the form of 'freeze frames'. That they were able to do this using shadows created by an electronic smart board, and have what they were doing recorded on a digital camera, so enabling them to assess their presentations at a later stage, meant students became thoroughly absorbed in what they were doing. There is close co-operation between teachers and learning support assistants and this results in a good quality of support for students with special educational needs. Most of the marking is of good quality and guides students on what they need to do in order to raise their standards.
143. Students' use of information and communications technology is satisfactory. There were only limited opportunities to observe lessons using information and communication technology during the period of the inspection. However, one such lesson, on how hyperlinks could be used in creating a web site, was excellent.
144. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, teachers do not sufficiently take into account students' prior attainment and this means the work is not sufficiently challenging to move students forward. In other instances, the tasks are not explained to students in sufficient depth to enable them to understand what is required. In Years 10 and 11, teachers generally do not sufficiently work on modelling the types of responses they expect from students. In some instances, they model lower level tasks but not the more demanding ones. When the teacher does not use a blackboard to provide written instructions, students can be left unclear as to what is required of them. Some of the marking is superficial, and in a small number of cases, students' work has not been marked for some time.
145. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Students' standards and achievements and the quality of teaching and learning have remained broadly similar to what they were. There has been some improvement in students' skills in speaking and listening.
146. Leadership and management of the department are good. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy has been introduced effectively into the school and has been used as a means of improving teaching in Years 7 to 9. The department has recently started making use of statistical data to measure students' progress and to set targets for students and teachers. Though it is not yet possible to measure the full impact of this approach, the early indications are that it is helping to raise standards. It is also leading to an evaluation of the impact of student groupings upon achievement.

Literacy across the school

147. Students' standards of literacy are broadly in line with the national expectation for boys nationally. The majority of students have skills that enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. Those who are unable to do this by themselves receive a good quality of support.

148. Higher attainers speak with confidence and fluency. The majority of students, who are middle and lower attainers, express themselves with clarity but have limited skill in elaborating their ideas. Most students are keen to contribute to lessons but a minority is reluctant to do so.
149. Most students are able to read independently and understand how to work out the meaning of words in their context. However, fewer undertake their own research than might be expected.
150. Students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narrative, description and reporting. The extent to which they can fully adopt a particular style varies, however. Inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar mar the work of middle and lower attaining students.

English as an additional language

151. Virtually all the students for whom English is an additional language have sufficient knowledge of English to enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. The additional support available for students with all special needs, including those that arise from limitations in their use of English, is targeted most effectively. Consequently, those who need extra help receive it. Students feel they are well supported and are well integrated into the school.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The good quality of leadership and management results in students achieving well by the end of Year 11.
- There is consistently good teaching in Years 7 to 9 that leads to students achieving well.
- Generally teachers manage students very well, and students' behaviour in lessons is good.

Areas for improvement

- There is a need to develop more rigorous methods of tracking students' progress and setting them objectives as they go through the school so that students can see where they need to improve, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The whole school numeracy handbook needs to be developed further in order to give students more opportunities to practise their mathematics.

152. Results in the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds were below average in comparison with the national average for all schools and for boys. When compared to other schools taking students from similar backgrounds, results were well above average. Results were very high compared with schools where students had similar test results at the age of 11. The results in mathematics were in line with those in science and above those in English. Over the last six years the trend in results has been broadly in line with the national trend, even with the declining attainment of students on entry.

153. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations in mathematics were well below average but these students achieved as well as expected from their results at the end of Year 9. Students' results in mathematics were lower than those they attained in most other subjects they studied in the school. The results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were lower than the previous year. This was due particularly to temporary teachers. There is now a change of staff and standards are improving. The school has recognised that the number of students attaining C grades was lower than expected and strategies are in place to improve the attainment of those students.
154. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents a good level of achievement for all students given their attainment on entry to the school. Students with special educational needs and the students with English as an additional language also achieve at a good level. The school has developed strategies to improve attainment. The school has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy into its planning of lessons and the work that students do has been planned well to support a variety of abilities. This has had a positive impact on learning. Higher attaining students are developing sound algebraic skills. They can multiply two linear brackets and collect the like terms together. Middle attaining students demonstrate a sound understanding of equivalence between percentages and fractions and use this understanding to calculate simple percentages of amounts. A minority has difficulties in simplifying fractions. Whilst lower attaining students calculate volume of cuboids by counting the cubes, the middle and higher attaining students can calculate volume using formulae. The higher attaining students progress to calculating volumes and surface areas of cylinders and prisms. When learning about data handling there is a wide range of competencies. Higher attaining students construct cumulative frequency graphs and use them to analyse results from the median and quartiles. Middle attaining students construct bar charts from grouped data and lower attaining students can interpret pie charts. The labelling of graphs is a weakness seen in work by middle and lower attaining students.
155. The standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are below average. This is better than the 2002 GCSE results indicate. Temporary staffing and the attendance levels of a minority of students affected those results. An analysis of how well students attained at the end of Year 9 compared with GCSE results indicates that the achievement of all students is satisfactory. However, the overall rate of achievement for these students is good given that this cohort of students had well below average levels of attainment on entry to the school. The achievement of students with special educational needs is better than the rest of the students in Years 10 and 11. They are placed in small classes and classroom assistants work very well with teachers to ensure that students are integrated in the lessons, stay on task and have help in understanding difficult concepts. A good feature of students' work is the quality of their coursework. Students are developing good skills in investigations. The higher attaining students apply effectively the mathematics they have learnt previously. For example, when investigating 'T-totals', the higher attainers use mathematical symbols and language well and explain why their solution works. The lower attaining students work systematically through the task. In algebra and number work, higher attaining students can solve simultaneous linear equations by elimination and have a good understanding of inequalities. Middle attaining students decrease amounts by percentages, but their understanding of how to increase amounts is weaker, demonstrated by their problems in applying those skills to problems. Low attaining students demonstrate a good understanding of plotting

co-ordinates and they use them to reflect and translate shapes they have plotted. Whilst low attaining students can use facts relating to angles on a straight line and at a point to solve problems, higher attaining students progress to solving angle properties with circles. Students are developing sound data handling skills. Both high and middle attaining students demonstrate a sound understanding of compound and conditional probability and use tree diagrams appropriately. The lower attaining students can calculate the range of a set of data. Although they can calculate the median of a set of odd numbers, they do not understand how to calculate the median when the set is of even numbers.

156. Standards of numeracy are generally below average throughout the school. Students generally contribute well in class discussions. They confidently explain the methods they use to work out answers while the rest of the class listen attentively. When given the opportunity, students work well together discussing their work with each other usefully. Students use information and communication technology well in Years 7 to 9. It is less evident in Years 10 and 11 and needs to be developed further to support students in their work. In Years 7 to 9, students use spreadsheets to produce sequences of numbers by inserting formulae into cells and they explore the effect of changing the variables. Their understanding of data handling is enhanced by the use of databases.
157. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics and, in the better lessons, there is an enthusiasm for the subject that motivates students to want to learn. Students respond well to the good level of questioning of their teachers by answering questions clearly and this enhances their learning. In the majority of lessons, students are encouraged to explain how they arrived at their answers and this promotes better learning. This encourages students to explain what they are doing and this contributes well to the intellectual effort they make. However, this is not always the case. Teachers plan their lessons well. They identify clear objectives and effective use is made of the three-part lesson. The balance between different types of activities generally keeps students interested and motivated. Students are generally involved well in lessons. An example of good planning was in a lesson when the teacher used the starter sessions to ensure that there was secure understanding of equivalent fractions before progressing to calculating percentages of amounts. Teachers' explanations are clear so students start their work quickly.
158. The management of students is generally good in all years and the students respond accordingly; behaviour is good and students work well with each other. This was particularly evident in a lesson where students were investigating the relationships between edges, faces and vertices and discovering Euler's theorem. There are generally good relationships in the classrooms both between students and between students and teachers. This leads to a positive atmosphere for working. Students generally listen attentively to their teachers and respond well to questions. Homework is generally set regularly and supports the work that students do in class. There is some good quality marking when teachers indicate where students have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve; however, this does not always take place and there is little indication to students about how well they have achieved or how they are progressing.
159. The department is led and managed well, and there is a clear emphasis on improving standards. The school provides students with a wide range of opportunities to extend their mathematics. In Years 7 to 11, the National Numeracy

Strategy is used to raise standards and lunchtime sessions are arranged so that students can gain extra support in preparation for national tests. The information from assessments is analysed and used effectively to place students in groups so that the work set is at an appropriately challenging level for all students. The information from assessments are analysed and used effectively to set students according to ability. It ensures that all students are given the best opportunity by planning work that is appropriate for them. There is insufficient rigour in monitoring the performance of students. Procedures for tracking students' performance as they progress through the school are not developed sufficiently enough to guide students into how they can improve their performance further.

160. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Numeracy across the school

161. Students' standards of numeracy are broadly average for boys nationally. The majority of students have skills that enable them to have access to the National Curriculum. The contribution that other subjects make to develop students' skills in understanding and using number is satisfactory. All teachers have had training on the National Numeracy Strategy, but the whole-school numeracy policy is still in the developmental stage and not all departments have developed their own policies. In their geography lessons, students use their data-handling skills well. They are able to use their understanding to read and interpret discharge graphs. In another lesson, they collect and input data into computers to produce charts to show population destinations. However, their analysis of the data is weaker. There is good use of graphs in history to illustrate relative sizes of European armies prior to 1914 and to compare numbers of war dead by countries during World War I. Measuring skills are consolidated well in design and technology when students measure accurately, and in German lessons there is good use of their understanding of the 12-hour clock.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and students are now reaching better standards than might be expected from their test results when they entered the school.
- Students following the separate science course in Years 10 and 11 are enthusiastic and often demonstrate much better understanding than expected for students of their age.
- The science department works well as a team and is keen to raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- In a few lessons, the pace of learning is slow because teachers have to spend too much time reminding students that they need to listen and concentrate.
- The department does not make enough consistent use of information and communication technology to support and enhance learning in science for all teaching groups.

162. In the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds, results were below the national average; they were average compared with similar schools and well above average compared with schools where students had similar test results at the age of 11. The results obtained were below the national average points score attained by boys only.

Students' results in science were similar to those in mathematics and better than those in English. Results have broadly followed the national trend since 1997, even with the declining attainment of students on entry.

163. The overall 2002 GCSE examination results in science were well below the national average. Results in double award science were very low. However, one fifth of students took examinations in the separate science subjects, which are only taken by around five per cent of students nationally, mostly higher attainers. These results were average in chemistry, below average in physics and well below average in biology. GCSE results fell significantly, between 2001 and 2002, in double award science and biology but remained broadly the same in physics and chemistry.
164. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are below average in Year 9 and Year 11. These standards match those indicated by the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds but are better than the 2002 GCSE results would suggest. The 2002 GCSE results in science reflected the fall in results for the school as a whole and were also affected by frequent changes in staffing, particularly for the double award science groups. Standards in the current Year 11 are closer to those represented by the 2001 results.
165. There is a wide range of attainment across the different teaching groups. Students generally have at least satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the topics they are currently studying and can express their understanding adequately in broad terms. Lower attainers often find it difficult to recall topics they have covered earlier in the course. Many students, even some higher attainers, find it difficult to express themselves clearly when answering written test and examination answers. Students' skills in investigation work generally match their attainment in other strands of science. However, there is scope for improvement in this aspect of students' work because they currently have only limited experience of investigations in Years 8 and 9.
166. Higher attaining students, including those who are gifted and talented, sometimes achieve standards that are well above average for their age. For example, a higher attaining group in Year 10 have very good knowledge of the function of the kidneys and use their information and communication technology skills to good effect in extending their understanding of dialysis and transplants. Higher attainers in Year 9 have good basic understanding of the reactivity series of metals.
167. Students' overall achievement in science is good by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. These students entered the school with test results that were well below the national average and they are now achieving standards in Year 11 that are below average. Hence they do better than might be expected, given their attainment on entry to the school.
168. Teaching and learning are currently satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There are three main reasons for this difference in teaching quality. First, teaching is consistently good for students who take the three separate science subjects in Years 10 and 11. By contrast, there are some weaknesses in planning for lessons in Years 7 to 9 and students' books show that there are some very short topics which make it more difficult for students continuously to build up a secure understanding of the main strands of the course. Second, there are weaknesses in students' learning in the mixed ability groups currently operating in Year 7. Although learning in these lessons is usually satisfactory for the majority, higher attaining

students are not always sufficiently challenged by the lesson content and do not make as much progress as they might. Third, the lowest attainers, unless they receive additional support, find it difficult to keep up with the written work.

169. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully so there is usually a good match of learning activities to students' needs. Teachers often make good use of 'starter' activities to settle students down and get them thinking at the beginning of the lesson. In some lessons there is also a good summary at the end, in order to reinforce the new understanding that has been gained, but this aspect of lessons is not yet used as widely or effectively as it might be.
170. When teaching is good, teachers are enthusiastic and share their enthusiasm with students. Students concentrate well in these lessons and learn quickly. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on radioactivity, students were fully involved, both by responding to the teacher's lively questioning and by the need to listen to the output from the detector arrangement and watch the formation of the radioactive decay graph on the screen. As a result, they moved quickly from a slightly insecure understanding of atomic structure to having a good grasp of how radioactive nuclei decay. In the occasional lesson where teaching is unsatisfactory, and to a lesser extent in a few lessons when teaching is broadly satisfactory, the pace of learning is slow. This is usually because the teacher has to spend too much time asking students to stop talking and pay attention.
171. Teachers set interesting and useful homework tasks but middle and lower attaining students often do not fully complete these tasks, even after the teacher's comment in the marking asks them to do so. Together with some incomplete class work, this produces gaps in students' notebooks and in their understanding. The department makes some good use of computers in individual lessons, for example in showing interesting film extracts on how the universe may have been formed, and students sometimes use word processing when writing up investigations. However, the regular use of information and communication technology in science lessons is not yet fully established across all teaching groups.
172. The leadership and management of the department are good. The department has experienced many staff changes and difficulties in recruiting over the past two years. The department is now fully staffed and teachers and technicians are already working well together as team. Several teachers are relatively inexperienced and there are some weaknesses in teaching as a result. However, these teachers are being well supported, both by their more experienced colleagues and, at the time of the inspection, by an Advanced Skills Teacher. All teachers in the department are keen to receive and implement suggestions on how their lessons could be improved and there is a strong commitment to further development.
173. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards in the current Year 11 are similar to those described in the previous report but this has been achieved in a situation where students' attainment on entry to the school has fallen. There has been some progress on most of the issues raised in the previous report. However, the shortage of laboratories persists and there are still a significant number of science lessons that have to be taught in classrooms.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; lessons are well planned with good integration of theory and practical work.
- Teachers and students enjoy good relationships.
- The subject is well led.
- Display around school is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students' insufficient use of information and communication technology and ceramics limits media experience in Years 7 to 9.
- The development of assessment procedures relating to levels in Years 7 to 9.

174. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were above the national average. Results have improved steadily since the previous inspection report. Students do better in art and design than in most of their other subjects.
175. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are average by the end of Year 9. Students' achievements are good in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school, which is below average. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good and students' attitudes to learning are positive. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and are supported well in classrooms. Students are able to explore ideas and gain access to visual information, including images from different historical and cultural contexts. Little evidence was seen of the creative use of information and communication technology, although students sometimes use it in research for historical information. When students use first-hand observation as a basis for their work, greater perceptual depth is achieved. Evidence from sketchbooks shows that students successfully demonstrate the skills involved in exploring and assessing information. The ability to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings was evident. Positive responses were seen when students were actively engaged in debate about their work and clear about their immediate learning objectives. In a Year 9 lesson, students were able to arrange shapes for a three-dimensional composition and had a good understanding of spatial layout. They researched figurative forms from direct observation and made good connections to the work of Giacometti.
176. Standards are average by the end of Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory and students are able to show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists. They develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work and demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Sketchbooks are annotated and used effectively and technical language develops well. Students enjoy their art lessons and are well motivated because of the teachers' enthusiasm and good preparation of different levels of work, designed to cater for the levels of attainment found in the class. In a Year 11 lesson students were able to speak confidently about their work and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding.
177. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students within their charge. They use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect and lesson preparation is good at all stages. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time

spent reviewing and reinforcing the work of the previous lesson enabled students to build upon prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. The best teaching occurred when classroom organisation was adapted to the demands of the task and the differing needs of the students.

178. Teachers make good use of praise to encourage the participation of all students and make good use of question and answer to ensure students are actively involved. In Years 7 to 9, clear assessment objectives, based on the expected levels of attainment for National Curriculum art, which are shared with all students, would further improve the learning climate and lend rigour to ongoing assessment and authority to end of year assessment. A Year 11 lesson observed exemplified very good teaching with a well-structured and challenging observational printing task in which all students were absorbed in their individual work. Students showed the ability to refer to the work of the German Expressionists and apply this to their practical outcome. Teachers pay suitable attention to improving students' literacy: sketchbooks reveal that students are given active support with the development of their reading and writing skills. Homework is appropriate in subject matter and is used well to support project work in Years 10 and 11.
179. The subject is well led by a newly appointed head of department. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are now clear and appropriate priorities have now been established for the development of the subject. There is very limited access to computers within the department. Information and communication technology has not yet been developed sufficiently and further in-service training is needed. There is insufficient use made of working with clay for three-dimensional study. Technical support enables the teaching of a range of media activities to be possible. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of students' work. The library provision is good for quality reference books, meeting the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base.
180. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Written aims and objectives, which link programmes of study and teaching approaches, are now established. Art history connections and research have moved forward. Annotation of sketchbooks is good in Years 10 and 11 and work is now more structured to challenge students. Assessment procedures are being refined in order to ensure students have systematic opportunities to discuss their achievements and to set targets for future development more effectively. Work is well presented and displayed around the school.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- There is very good planning and co-ordination by the teacher in charge of the subject.
- Work is well co-ordinated across all subject areas.
- There is good respect for others and a feeling of community evident throughout the school.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for assessment need to be developed further.

• Community projects need to be developed across subject areas.

181. Standards seen at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above average and students achieve well. Students are aware of what it is to be a good citizen. They have a good knowledge of effective roles in society at the local, national and international levels. At present, citizenship is delivered specifically in personal and social education, religious education, assemblies and tutor periods. In personal and social education, students discuss the issue of having the courage to speak out for the good of society. They use articles such as 'Silenced by the rule of the gun' to explore issues of fear and prejudice. In Year 9, students study crime and punishment in good depth. They come to see the purpose and values of rules.
182. In Year 10 students are introduced to issues of prejudice and inequality and through drama they explore how these feel. The values of family life are discussed in Year 11. Controversial statements such as 'Marriage is out of date' are well used to engage students in discussion so that they look at all aspects of the topic. Students learn to appreciate the interdependence on each other at school, family, national and international levels. Global issues of the management of resources and conservation are well understood. Rights and responsibilities of consumers and in the world of work are studied in geography. In history, students look at modern conflicts and their historical content. This gives them a good understanding of what gives rise to conflicts. Opportunities to learn about citizenship are provided in careers, drama performances, theatre visits, drugs awareness, Industry Day, charity events, residential experiences, the German exchange, the prefect system, the school council and work experience.
183. Teaching and learning are good. The topics studied are made relevant to modern life. Lessons are lively and interesting with good use of debate, drama and discussion to involve all students. Students respond well as they understand how these issues affect their daily lives and future expectations. All students, including students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, take an active part in discussion. They make good progress. The strategies used make a good contribution to students' speaking, listening and thinking skills. These are well promoted as students respond to the ideas and opinions of others.
184. The subject is well led and managed. There is very good planning and co-ordination by the teacher in charge of the subject. There is a good policy for citizenship. This is well researched and in line with statements about citizenship adapted from the National Curriculum handbook. There is help for teachers in all subjects. Special resource materials have been purchased to enable teachers of other subjects to be aware of how and where they can educate students in citizenship. There is good planning for further inputs into education for citizenship. Special events, using relevant outside speakers, are planned to enable students to learn about local government, parliament, political parties and pressure groups. There are good links with the community. These enable students to have a sense of belonging and to exercise responsibility for their own welfare and that of others.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The attitudes and commitment of students are good.
- The quality of teaching in GCSE manufacturing is outstanding.
- The accommodation and resources provide a positive learning environment for students.

Areas for development

- Ensuring that the good practices recently developed are applied consistently across the whole department.
- Providing a greater challenge for higher attaining students.
- Developing more effective design, analysis and evaluative skills.

185. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were far below the national average. Students' results in design and technology are below those obtained in most other subjects. GCSE results in 2002 were substantially below the previous year and reverse a previously rising trend.

186. Students join the school with limited experiences of design and technology. Overall, students' standards are well below average although achievement is satisfactory during Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is broad and balanced and students are given a wide range of interesting learning experiences. The department has made positive links with local industry and a factory visit has been built into the Year 8 project on lorries. Information and communication technology is being well used and there is now provision for designing and making using computer-aided design and manufacture, largely as a result of recent investment. In general, design skills, evaluation and analysis are less well developed than making skills. This is evident in all material areas. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to other students.

187. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well below average. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations in manufacturing which represents very good achievement given students' prior attainment. As with attainment at the end of Year 9, practical skills are well developed. Students show confidence in using a range of materials and processes and are beginning to use product analysis as an effective research technique. The quality of making, particularly in graphic products and food technology, is often good. The higher order design skills of analysis and evaluation are often subjective and lack the rigour needed to achieve high levels of attainment. Design specifications and subsequent analysis is not being used consistently as the basis for performance criteria within projects: this is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects and often leads to superficial design activity. Both low attaining and high attaining students follow this pattern but the impact upon attainment is greater for higher attaining students as it precludes them from achieving the highest GCSE grades. The quality of students' presentation of work varies considerably and students are not given sufficient guidance or support on how to improve the standard of their work. There is clear evidence from the scrutiny of students work that the increased use of information and communication technology is having a positive impact upon standards.

188. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are well planned and the pace of lessons is usually brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment and students with special educational needs progress at a

rate which matches those of other students. However, work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of the students and higher attaining students are not consistently extended or fully challenged. The department has planned extension activities in Year 9 for students identified as being gifted and talented and has developed schemes of work with clear learning expectations. The use of information and communication technology, for example, within food technology for nutritional analysis and within resistant materials for producing jewellery designs is a positive development.

189. The carousel system used to deliver the National Curriculum programmes of study in Years 7 to 9 does not fully ensure sufficient planned progression to take into account prior learning between the units; this leads to a lack of challenge for higher attaining students in some of the material areas. The good practice established in the development of the new schemes of work should be embedded across the whole department. Homework is effective in Years 7 to 9 and is regularly set across the department and is used to reinforce learning; however, homework often remains unfinished and this results in gaps in students' learning. All students are assessed on entry to the school and targets for future performance are set and monitored as part of new assessment for learning policy. However, assessment is not consistent among all teachers. At its best, for example, in a Year 9 resistant materials group, clear attainment levels and effort grades were given together with achievable targets for future improvement. This represents good practice and should be established across the whole department. At its worst, however, comments such as 'Not much work here is there?' are negative and unhelpful.
190. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory overall. The standard of teaching on the manufacturing course is excellent and there is good teaching in graphic products and food technology, where students are actively engaged in activities, the pace of lessons is brisk, and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. Students' work is marked regularly against examination board criteria and closely monitored. Where assessment is effective, realistic grades and targets for improvement are shared with students on a regular basis. A good example of this is within food technology where rigorous marking and clear helpful comments lead to improved performance.
191. Students' attitudes to the subject are good. They are generally interested in their lessons and work co-operatively. This is particularly evident in graphic products and the manufacturing course. However, in a significant minority of lessons learning is affected because some students' approach to the lesson and their behaviour are unsatisfactory.
192. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of students' literacy skills by concentration on the use of technical vocabulary. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it in through wall displays in their classrooms.
193. The leadership and management of design and technology are good. There is a clear direction and a vision for education in design and technology. The new head of department is building upon an established platform, understands many of the current limitations in provision and has identified an extensive development plan for future improvement based around improving teaching and learning. A support programme for new teachers is in place and the monitoring of teaching and learning is beginning to ensure greater consistency. The department is beginning to use self-

evaluation as a tool for improvement, although closer scrutiny of individual student performance needs to be carried out in order to fully determine areas for improvement.

194. Overall, the department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Attainment at GCSE is now far below the national average and the weaknesses identified in designing are still evident. Assessment is still applied inconsistently and whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory inconsistencies still exist. However, since the appointment of the new head of department, clear signs of improvement are evident. The new head of department has been very active in developing strategies to improve all aspects of teaching and learning and the new policies and practices now in place are a very positive development.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to students achieving well.
- Students' knowledge of places is extended through fieldwork opportunities throughout the school.
- Information and communication technology is well used to support learning and improves the quality of GCSE coursework.

Area for improvement

- The day-to-day marking of work does not inform students enough about how well they are doing and how to improve.

195. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well below average for all maintained schools and for boys nationally. This was due to poor attitudes to learning of the significant minority of students and to weaknesses in coursework preparation. These issues are being addressed. The results declined compared to those of recent years and students achieved lower than they did in the other subjects that they studied.

196. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are well below average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement, given the students' standards when they entered the school. By the end of Year 9, many possess an appropriate range of geographical skills. They can use the atlas and read grid references on maps to locate places. Students know a range of terms such as 'intensive farming' but weakness in literacy reduces the quality of explanations in written work. Many write clear, structured notes but are weak in expressing themselves in extended writing, and explanations are not well developed. Practical work is good. In Year 9, for example, students recently constructed models of volcanoes. As a result they gained knowledge of terms such as 'crater' and improved their understanding of how they are formed. Many students make effective use of information and communication technology to support learning. In a Year 9 lesson on tourism, for example, all students were able to input data about the popularity of places and produce charts to illustrate their findings, although higher attaining students did not analyse the results to show the depth of their understanding.

197. The standards of work seen by the end of Year 11 are below average. This represents good achievement given their standards at the end of Year 9. Students

are knowledgeable about topics in physical geography, and know about global issues such as the impact of tourism in Kenya. They know about the Masai and Kikuyu people and understand how tourism is affecting the traditional way of life, but they do not develop their answers enough. Students understand why countries like Bangladesh are subject to flooding. They read newspaper articles and can organise information to show the impact of such natural disasters on the economic and social life of the people, but many find difficulty in explaining how climate and river processes cause flooding. The standards for the minority are lower than expected because they do not complete and submit work for marking. Higher attaining Year 11 students, on the other hand, produce high standards of GCSE coursework. In a research project about tourism in Bewdley, they integrated maps and diagrams well with a detailed commentary and the work was further improved by the use of information and communication technology.

198. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The aims of lessons are shared with students and teachers plan lessons carefully. They regularly consolidate work previously covered and enable students to improve their understanding of topics. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, students were able to recall knowledge of types of settlement and then to extend learning to a study of the reasons for the siting of places. Teachers make very good use of additional adult support for students with special educational needs and, as a result, they make sound progress. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the learning support assistant monitored the progress of students and helped them to address their writing difficulties. As a result they all completed the tasks and made very good progress. On other occasions, however, teachers do not make enough provision to ensure that more demanding work is available to extend the learning of higher attaining students. In a minority of lessons teachers do not manage less co-operative students well and learning is disrupted, resulting in slower progress being made than is to be expected. The marking of work is regular but not enough attention is given to improving students' use of language or to informing them about the quality of the work.
199. Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and this leads to students achieving well. Teachers are well qualified and experienced, and manage students very well. Learning was very good in a Year 11 lesson on river studies because the teacher engaged students actively throughout the lesson. The tasks stimulated interest in the topic and students' concentration was maintained by setting strict time controls to complete work. Students have confidence in teachers and are keen to learn. Many students regularly attend the after-school revision class, for example, and improve their understanding of topics and how to answer examination questions. Resources are well used to help students learn. Books, film and teacher-prepared reprographic resources are well matched to students' needs and, in addition to information and communication technology, contribute to the good progress that is made in the GCSE course. Students take care with written work and produce well-structured notes but not enough is expected of them to develop ideas orally. Teachers support students' learning well but do not give enough guidance in marking as to how they can further improve their understanding of topics.
200. Leadership and management are good. The morale of students and teachers is high. There is clear direction about the work of the subject through policies and detailed schemes of work. Teachers are well supported but the monitoring of marking is not fully satisfactory. There are good procedures for assessing students' progress but the use of information about students' National Curriculum levels is at an early stage

of development to be fully effective. The breadth of the curriculum is strengthened by the provision of opportunity for fieldwork for all years. The quality of the written reports to parents is unsatisfactory because there is not enough attention to what students can do and how to improve. Forward planning is good and the priorities for development are appropriate and are linked to those of the school.

201. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good. With the exception of 2002 the GCSE results in recent years have improved, particularly across the full grade range. Teaching has improved to good overall and the good achievement in Years 10 and 11 has been maintained.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers work hard and are committed to students achieving well.
- There is increasing use of teaching and learning strategies aimed at improving the literacy skills of students.
- Teaching rooms provide a good learning atmosphere with interesting displays to inform and encourage students.

Areas for improvement

- The range of student activities used by teachers in Years 7 to 9 is limited and a few lessons do not stimulate and excite students enough by the use of more challenging tasks.
- The quality of teachers' marking of students' work in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent.

202. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well below the national average as far as the higher grades were concerned. However, the number of candidates was very low and as the great majority were awarded the grades predicted for them, the results represent satisfactory achievement.

203. In the work seen during the inspection, students' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement, given that most students join the school with levels of attainment in history that are below the level expected. In lessons, students of all levels of prior attainment display, in their oral answers, their good knowledge and understanding of the topics being studied. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, students showed good understanding of why Britain's involvement in the slave trade in the 18th and early 19th centuries was known as the Triangular Trade and why huge profits were made from it, and they had strong views about its evils. Similarly, students in a Year 9 class impressed inspectors with their recall of work done in a previous lesson about how the early life of Hitler had great influence on the beliefs that drove him to gain power in Germany. The written work of higher attaining students is fluent and shows that they have developed the skills that enable them to analyse historical information and to select sufficient and relevant evidence to support their opinions, as in accounts of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 and its influence on events that led to World War II. However, lower attaining students struggle to include sufficient detail and depth to make a convincing case in written answers to questions. Teaching strategies that help such students to develop the important basic skills essential to greater success

in historical writing are increasingly used but are not yet fully embedded in the subject's practice.

204. The standards of attainment of those students who choose to continue with the study of history to the age of 16 are average and this represents good achievement. The proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 who study history is very small and numbers are far below the national average. There was no opportunity during the inspection to observe lessons in Year 11 because of the timetable, so judgements are based on the students' written work. In a Year 10 lesson on the reasons for America's anti-communist attitudes after 1945, students showed good understanding of the different styles of government and constitutions of the USA and the USSR. Students successfully sorted statements about the political systems of both countries and put them into separate columns accurately. The activity demonstrated a good level of oral knowledge that served as a basis for informed discussions among students. The differences in attainment between lower and higher attaining students again show in their written work. Students of higher attainment use their good grasp of topics to produce answers that use their developing analytical skills to successfully address the question, as in work requiring the evaluation of the extent of the success of Roosevelt's New Deal in the USA. Whilst the corresponding answers of students of lower attainment indicate knowledge and the ability to extract information from historical sources, they lack a well-planned structure and fail to select and prioritise the supporting evidence sufficiently well to produce coherent arguments that stay focused on the point. This difference is also evident in written work in Year 11. For example, in coursework on law and order in late 19th century London, higher attaining students made deductions from evidence available to present convincing opinions about why the Whitechapel murders of 1888 attracted so much attention. The answers of lower attaining students rely more on description of events than on analysis, use information that is superfluous, and sometimes wander off the point.
205. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. There are two main teachers of history and, at the time of the inspection, a temporary supply teacher was teaching during the long-term absence through illness of one of them. A non-specialist, who receives good support from the head of history, teaches one Year 7 class. Teachers have sound subject knowledge overall and they manage classes satisfactorily in terms of student behaviour. Lessons move at a satisfactory pace and students of all levels of attainment acquire good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. Whilst teaching strategies aimed at improving the literacy of students have been adopted in some lessons they do not yet feature with sufficient prominence in the work of all teachers. The use of students' activities is limited and a few lessons do not stimulate and excite students enough by the use of more challenging tasks; that may help to explain why so few students choose to continue with history after the age of 14. The assessment of students' work is accurate and satisfactory judgements are made about the National Curriculum levels reached by students. The quality of teachers' marking is, however, inconsistent. At its best it informs students clearly why they have been given the marks awarded and tells them what they should do to improve. There is still marking, though, that is restricted to brief and general comments about students' efforts that do not point the way forward.
206. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject, allied to the experience they have of the demands on students made by the GCSE course, mean that lessons are purposeful and well focused on examination requirements. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, the tasks

given to students throughout the lesson developed their learning very well. The brisk oral question and answer sessions that punctuated the lesson both reinforced students' grasp of the post 1945 hostility between the USA and the USSR and informed the teacher of how well students understood the topic. Furthermore, the tasks that students completed in pairs challenged them and their discussions were focused and animated. The teacher then provided a well-structured sheet to guide their thinking and to help them successfully plan the written answers that drew upon all the work they had done. The quality of teachers' marking is good and students benefit from comments that show why marks and grades have been allocated and what they should do to improve.

207. The management of the subject is good, whilst the leadership provided is satisfactory. Administrative procedures are thorough and effective but the documents that declare the subject's teaching and learning expectations are sound rather than inspiring. This helps to account for the varying quality of teaching and learning in the lessons of different teachers in Years 7 to 9 particularly. The information given to teachers about the range of learning styles and marking strategies they should employ is less specific than it could be and too much scope is given to individual interpretation of what is best for students. For this reason, and the fact that the formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching by the head of department are still in their early stages, the good standards of teaching that are a feature of the best lessons have not yet permeated to all lessons.
208. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection as the standards of teaching and learning, reported on then, have been maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students are given very good opportunities to use computers in subjects other than information and communication technology.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7 to 9 because using computers helps to overcome some of their literacy problems.
- Students have good opportunities to receive extra support outside of lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, so students are underachieving and standards are well below average.
- There are not enough specialist teachers so the curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
- The management is poor because the head of department has too many roles to fulfil.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not planned well enough to provide a coherent course.
- The assessment of students is unsatisfactory; students do not know how well they are doing and parents do not receive reports on their sons' progress.

209. There are no GCSE results; the current Year 11 students will be the first to take the examination.

210. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average and students are doing as well as expected given their standards on joining the school. Working with text is a strength in the students' work and standards in this aspect are above average. Students with special educational needs make better progress than others because the good work that is carried out with computers in subjects such as English and geography helps them to overcome their literacy difficulties. Work that involves numbers, such as using spreadsheets, is average, but work with databases is weaker, being below average. The biggest weaknesses lie in students' understanding of the applications of computers, and their use for making measurements, both of which are well below average.

211. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well below average and students are not reaching the standards of which they are capable, irrespective of their standards on starting the course or any special needs they may have; achievement is unsatisfactory. Students have an average knowledge of basic facts, but their understanding is very limited so they are unable to answer examination questions that involve explaining how or why computers are used. Practical skills are very poor with little progress made since Year 9, so the standards of text and graphics work, which is the best aspect, are similar to those expected of a Year 9 student. The effects of this lack of understanding and poor practical skill become obvious in the results of recent mock examinations. Only two students out of 29 obtained a GCSE grade higher than D and 12 failed to gain any grade at all; 21 failed to get a grade for the practical element.

212. Much of the teaching of information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9 takes place in other subjects. Teaching is satisfactory overall; it is satisfactory in information and communication technology lessons and good in other subjects.

Many subjects play a good part in developing students' skills and there are examples of quite outstanding teaching, such as in one English lesson where low attaining Year 8 students were taught how to include hyperlinks in a presentation, while the higher attainers learnt four different methods. Good quality work is to be found in most subjects, although there are not enough computers in music and students are not composing or modifying music using a computer. Nevertheless, this good work and good teaching are not bringing about the good progress in students' skills and understanding that they would merit, because they are not co-ordinated well enough. Some subjects will assess the work at the time it is carried out while others wait for the end of the year. So it is that a clear picture of a student's standards and progress does not become clear until the end of the year. Teachers are not aware of what is going on in other subjects so they are unable to build on a student's existing standards and students do not get a clear picture of how well they are doing.

213. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory and students are not learning enough. There is only one specialist teacher of the subject and too many examination classes for him to teach, so non-specialists teach half of the lessons for almost all classes. This has meant that the content of the syllabus has been split in two with all of the theory being taught by the specialist. The theory lessons, divorced from the practical work, are boring and consist mainly of listening to the teacher and copying notes from the board. The result is that students become frustrated with the slow pace and the lack of variety and 'switch off'. In the most extreme cases students start to misbehave, although this is usually after they have tried to maintain their concentration for as long as possible. The resulting notes allow students to have a satisfactory knowledge of facts, but little or no understanding, as students play no active part in learning the work. Practical lessons are generally satisfactory and students learn as much as is usually seen in an individual lesson. Nevertheless, there are still weaknesses in the teaching, such as the way that practical work is not marked so errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not corrected. Homework is often used well to extend the time available in lessons, but many students do not complete all their homework and are not made to do it by teachers. Time is also wasted in practical lessons by the way the curriculum is planned so that students carry out practice work before going on to their coursework, rather than developing their skills at the same time as doing their coursework. Overall, the students in Year 11 have had a succession of temporary teachers and have not made the progress that they should have. Students are now making better progress because they are being provided with opportunities to have extra lessons after school and some are supported by an aspiring Advanced Skills Teacher who has joined the school for a short time to help overcome some of the problems.
214. Leadership is unsatisfactory and management is poor. The very hard working head of department has so many roles to carry out, with no other specialist for support, that the priorities for development in the short term are not being identified clearly enough. Assessment, for example, shows up the weaknesses in students' understanding, but there is not enough time allocated to change the content of lessons or the way that they are taught to overcome such deficiencies. There is no time for the head of department to check on the work of the several other teachers who play a part in teaching examination courses, let alone those who teach in Year 7 or who teach information and communication technology through other subjects. There is little technical support available, so the head of department has to carry out many of these duties. No reports are issued to parents to tell them how well their sons are doing outside of GCSE classes. The examination courses were introduced without any increase in teaching staff so the only specialist does not have enough

time to teach all of the lessons. The school is well aware of these deficiencies and now has good plans to do something about them.

215. Improvement since the last inspection has been poor. The teaching is now worse and standards are lower.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching.
- Students enjoy the lessons and are expected to complete a great deal of work.
- Students, especially those with special educational needs, make very good progress in their ability to understand spoken German.

Areas for improvement

- Lessons are often very long and students sometimes lose concentration.
- Students do not always record work well in their exercise books so that they can use it for revision later.
- Students do not always complete homework.

216. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 students attained results that were below the national average for all schools and below those for boys. A small minority of boys were affected by prolonged absence during Year 11 and did not perform as well as they could have done. The number of students entered for the examination has risen to the point where almost every student takes German and results have risen significantly over the past three years. Students do significantly better in German than they do in most of their other subjects they take in the school. In Spanish, which has only recently been taken by a small minority of students in Years 10 and 11, no student has yet been entered for an examination. There was no difference in the attainment of different groups of students.

217. Standards attained by students in German in the current Year 9 are below average for all students, but around average for boys. This represents very good achievement; students enter the school with some weaknesses in their literacy skills but they are very well taught and they therefore make very good progress. Most progress is made in their ability to understand spoken German, both from tapes and instructions from the teacher where expectations are consistently high; students are regularly doing work that would more often be expected of students in Year 10. Students with special educational needs make particularly good progress in listening because they are given some very carefully planned help. Reading is slightly less well developed but is, nevertheless, good. Students can read passages from textbooks, which are several paragraphs long, and sometimes read even longer texts and stories. Students' writing improves during Years 7 to 9, but overall, it is weaker than would be expected nationally. Students can write about what they have done as well as what they are going to do if they are given sufficient help but work is often quite short and the sentence structure is simple. Most writing is basically accurate, but only the higher attainers are more adventurous in their use of language from a range of topic areas. Students are able to hold short conversations but

pronunciation is sometimes weak and they lack fluency. Students from all ethnic groups perform as well as their peers.

218. Students in the current Year 11 are attaining standards below average for all students but around that expected nationally for boys in German. Standards in Spanish are well below what would be expected nationally but this reflects the fact that they have only been studying Spanish for a very short time. They are able to write menus and to describe their school day but the range of topics they have covered is limited. Students are achieving very well in German because far more students study this language in Years 10 and 11 than would be expected nationally and they continue to make very good progress in lessons through being given challenging tasks. Students continue to develop good listening skills; they can understand some long conversations on tape and are expected to understand the almost constant use of German by the teachers during lessons. Students with special educational needs make very good progress in listening and reading because they are given extra support sheets, which have been specifically designed by the teachers. There are, however, few resources to encourage wider reading in Years 10 and 11, so students have a rather restricted diet. Students can speak and write on a range of topics such as their work experience and where they spent their last holiday. The higher attaining students do so at greater length although they often keep to a limited range of expressions and structures. Pronunciation is generally good because students are exposed to so much German during the lesson that they hear the correct version often enough to learn how it should sound. Lower attaining students perform very well within a tightly structured framework but higher attainers are reluctant to go beyond the minimum and are sometimes very hesitant in their replies.
219. The quality of the teaching is very good in all year groups and this brings about very good learning in German. It was possible to see only one lesson of Spanish during the inspection. Teachers plan lessons very well and have developed especially good relationships with their students who enjoy the games and fun activities which are a regular feature of the lessons; students participate enthusiastically when pretending to be the teacher, for example. Lessons are very well organised; students know what they are going to be doing and that they will be expected to prove they have learnt something by the end of the lesson. Teachers have established some very effective routines that help to ensure that students start the lesson calmly and promptly and it is rare for any poor behaviour to occur.
220. Teachers use a great deal of German during the lesson so that students get the opportunity to listen to a wide variety of language so that even from early in Year 7 students are expected to understand the instructions for their work which are given entirely in German. Similarly, students are expected to use German to apologise for being late or other minor misdemeanours. Instructions are always clear and are almost exclusively given in German; students know exactly what they have to do and they start willingly on the work as soon as they are told to do so.
221. The pace of lessons is good; teachers expect students to complete a lot of work but lessons are often very long and although teachers do their best to have a range of activities and exercises, sometimes enthusiasm flags by the end of a long afternoon session. On occasions, teachers spend too much time making students listen to tapes at the expense of allowing them to practise speaking the language. This is, nevertheless, countered by the regular intensive practice they get with the foreign language assistant. A small minority of boys is happy to do as little from memory as

possible and teachers work hard to encourage them to make more effort when speaking German.

222. Teachers know their students extremely well and plan carefully to give extra support to those who need it. This is especially effective in helping those students with special educational needs. Marking in books is very good and often tells students what they need to do to improve their work in quite specific terms such as including more opinions or looking carefully at the accuracy of their spellings. Students are also given very helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons and are encouraged to reflect on their own and others' performance.
223. Students are very carefully prepared for the demands of the examination and they are taught to work from memory but they do not always complete work at home. For example, some students do not put enough effort into learning what they have been taught and so tests are done badly.
224. Currently, some information and communication technology is used in lessons, as access to computer rooms has become easier, but this is an area that the department recognises still needs further work. Most students do some redrafting of their work to improve accuracy or presentation when they use information and communication technology but few do language-based activities such as vocabulary or grammar-building exercises.
225. The department is very well led and managed and the department has made good progress since the last inspection especially regarding the management of behaviour. Schemes of work and resources are regularly updated and there is much consistency in approach across all members of staff. Staff regularly observe each other teaching and share ideas. Another strength is the assessment of students' performance, which enables teachers to keep a check on how students are progressing and to tell students what they have to do next. GCSE results are monitored to ensure that particular groups of students are performing as well as they should be but there is little information about the performance of different groups of students. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and there are plans to increase the range of information and communication technology used.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Students learn well because of the good quality, enthusiastic teaching and well-planned lessons.
- The department is led and managed well; this has ensured good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject, are keen to learn and enjoy good relationships with teachers.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for students to access music technology equipment within lessons.
- The poor soundproofing of the music room results in lessons being frequently disturbed.
- There is a narrow range of extra-curricular musical opportunities available to students.

226. There were too few candidates for GCSE in 2001 and 2002 to allow valid statistical comparisons with national figures.

227. By the end of Year 9, standards are generally below average, but students are achieving well when compared to their low musical levels when they join the school in Year 7. Students can work together in small groups and create simple pieces as was seen in one Year 9 lesson where they produced short question and answer musical phrases based on *The Entertainer* by Scott Joplin. The higher attainers can perform melody lines in time with the bass part on the keyboard, whilst the lower attainers struggle to maintain rhythmical accuracy. The more musically talented understand simple musical language, such as tempo, pitch and dynamics, but lower attainers have a poor vocabulary of technical language, which prevents them from accurately appraising music. Listening skills are generally good and students show respect for each other's work as they perform to each other. Musically talented students make good progress because of the good quality support they receive from the visiting instrumental teachers. Students with special educational needs make good progress because of the good quality support they receive from the teachers during lessons. Students sing with real enthusiasm, particularly in Years 7 and 8, but the quality of their singing is generally weak with many struggling to maintain accurate pitch of the melody. Students do not have access to computers with music software. This prevents them from creating, refining and developing their own compositions using information and communication technology.

228. Standards by the end of Year 11 are below average; all students achieve at a satisfactory level in relation to their work in Year 9. It was not possible to observe any Year 11 lessons during the inspection. However, the work folders and recordings of practical work of all GCSE students were evaluated. In Years 10 and 11, students compose short simply structured pieces and can notate them by hand, but do not have enough access to music software to refine and present their work to the standard expected. Only a few students show understanding of how melody and chords fit together within their pieces. Two Year 11 boys composed short raga style pieces using the sitar voice on the keyboard. They demonstrated a good understanding of structure and melody but did not develop their pieces further. Students are very good at working on their own and can also work collaboratively in pairs. They are eager to learn and enjoy the practical aspects of the course. Students are supportive of each other and work productively at a good pace in lessons.

229. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Music teaching is enthusiastic and characterised by excellent musicianship and knowledge of the subject, high expectations and high pace learning. There is innovative use of interactive teaching resources including webcams and multimedia presentations. These enhance the students' learning by allowing the teacher to demonstrate each part of the lesson clearly. A wide range of very good teaching and student management techniques is employed in lessons to ensure all students understand the topics and remain fully focused on learning. The high quality of

relationships in classes results in both students and teachers striving together for improvement and ensures a good balance between hard work and enjoyment. Time and change of the many musical activities are managed crisply to maintain a high pace that ensures all groups of students are challenged and make good progress. Contributions to literacy skills are good with reference to key musical vocabulary and opportunities for students to read out loud. Numeracy is less developed, but links are regularly made during lessons. Planning for lessons is very good; students are made well aware of what they are going to learn at the start and the lessons end with a fast-paced question and answer session which enables teachers to assess what students know and understand and also enhances students' speaking and listening skills. Students enjoy music lessons very much because of the exciting and enthusiastic teaching. They are keen to learn and strive to do well in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Occasionally, too many tasks are squeezed into the lesson, with the teacher having too much direct input. This results in less time for students to be creative and take responsibility for their own learning. At times the pace of lessons drops, as lessons are too long for students to sustain the level of concentration demanded of them.

230. The leadership and management of music are good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future of the subject and is committed to raising standards and encouraging students to take part in music making. He has effectively developed a range of tasks that involve and interest students of all abilities. His focus has rightly been on raising the profile and popularity of music lessons. Consequently extra-curricular work has not been developed as much as it could have been. However, music groups are increasing in number, including a steel band and a Dhol band, and there have been several recent performances in school. The department is well supported by a team of good quality and highly valued visiting teachers from the Birmingham music service. The marking of students' work is regular but the comments do not always indicate to students what has been done well or how to improve.
231. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Teaching and management of the subject have improved. Enthusiasm for the subject is high and there is an increasing range of musical activities, which are valued highly by students. Links with other departments are flourishing and music is beginning to have a positive impact on the whole school. The lack of soundproofing of the main teaching room remains an issue and results in frequent interruptions from the noise of the adjacent dining room and practice rooms.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Low attaining students achieve well at GCSE.
- Extra-curricular sport provides good opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel.
- Strong links with local sports clubs and organisations extend and enhance standards in extra-curricular sport.

Areas for improvement

- Risk assessments in physical activities have yet to be completed.

- Opportunities for students to develop their numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology skills are inconsistent.

232. The 2002 GCSE results were well below average, but they are an improvement on the 2001 results. All students gained a grade, and students did better in physical education than in many of their other subjects.
233. Students enter the school with well below average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 9, most students, including those with special educational needs, attain below average standards and their achievement is good. They show competence in a variety of skills and understand the principles of play in invasion games. This is well illustrated in basketball, where high attainers anticipate the game and move the ball, with skill around their opponents, and in football, where low attainers make good progress and take pride in their skill at controlling the ball. The performance of high attaining students is well illustrated by the Year 7 football team, which reached the final of the district schools' championships. Students' attainment in their health-related fitness coursework is below average. Year 9 students know how to warm up before exercise and understand the reasons why they do it, but they are not equipped to take responsibility for doing this independently. Most students know and can perform the correct technique of fitness-promoting exercises singly, but only a few can sustain this accuracy under the pressure of repetitions. Students have some opportunities to evaluate and improve their own and others' performance, but their skills are underdeveloped, as reported in the last inspection. Students' evaluation of their own work is not central to their learning in some classes. Students' literacy and numeracy skills develop satisfactorily in the majority of lessons, with some good examples of students' knowledge and understanding of the specialist vocabulary of the subject.
234. Standards in Year 11 are average, overall, and this represents a good level of achievement given their prior attainment. Good progress is particularly evident in games. In football, students demonstrate good quality passing skills, which they apply with consistent precision and fluency to the demands of the game. The performance of high attaining students in Year 11 is well illustrated by the significant number of athletes who annually represent the school and district in the West Midlands Schools' Athletics Championships. Standards in GCSE practical coursework are above average, but these high standards are not evident in the theoretical aspects. Written coursework reflects a range of abilities and attainment is broadly average. However, students' files show a careless approach to study and a lack of organisation in their work. Significant numbers fail to complete their homework.
235. An extensive extra-curricular programme provides good opportunities for all students, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel in their chosen sports in school and beyond. Students benefit from strong links with local sports clubs, which provide coaching, and extension opportunities. Individual students and school teams gain representative honours at district, county and regional level in a variety of sports, well illustrated by the current Year 10 basketball team, which reached the final of the Birmingham Schools' Basketball Championships and the semi-finals of the West Midlands Schools' Cup.
236. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. A major strength of teaching is the very good management and organisation of students. Relationships between staff and students are very good, contributing significantly to the good attitudes of the students, reflected in high levels of participation, smart standards of dress and

good behaviour in lessons. Students respond well to the good-humoured encouragement of the teachers, putting good physical effort into their work and supporting extra-curricular activities. All teachers have good specialist knowledge, but some are less secure about what is needed by the National Curriculum and the methods that enable students to take a more active role in their own learning. Teachers have high expectations of students, and lessons usually proceed at a lively pace, resulting in good learning, as seen in a basketball lesson, where very good planning ensured that increasingly demanding tasks rigorously tested all levels of ability. There was just one exception to this, where the lack of clear objectives resulted in a slow pace and students did not learn enough. In the best lessons, tight learning targets are set and a range of teaching methods gives students a share of responsibility for their own learning, such as in a GCSE theory lesson where students were motivated by their success in creating and sharing their own definitions of key specialist words. Marking is sound, but not enough rigour has been given to monitoring the quality of students' files, which are currently unsatisfactory as a revision resource. Provision of opportunities for students to observe, evaluate and comment on performance and to develop their numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology skills are inconsistent.

237. Leadership and management of the subject are good overall, and the staff form a strong, committed team. Very good leadership is moving the department forward with a clear sense of educational direction, reflected in the strategies to improve standards of attainment at GCSE, which are already taking effect. There has been good progress since the last inspection, but there is still more to be done. Standards of attainment have been maintained. The quality of teaching has improved, and teaching is now good, with examples of very good and excellent teaching. The department does not yet have strategies for the development of literacy and numeracy in the subject. Although monitoring and evaluation of teaching have begun, stronger emphasis on development is now required. Risk assessments for physical activities have yet to be completed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and ensures that students make good progress in lessons.
- Students gain good skills in debating and argue logically.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Aspects of citizenship are taught in good depth.

Areas for development

- There is insufficient time for religious education in Year 11.
- Despite teachers giving good guidance about completing homework, students do not do this well enough.

238. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average. Standards in GCSE have fluctuated from well above average in 2000 to a little above average for boys in 2002.

239. For students in Year 9, the standard of work seen is average, reaching the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in both attainment targets; achievement is good. They understand some of the beliefs and practices of the religions they have studied and can correctly identify key features of Christian teaching, beliefs and festivals. A strength is their ability to express their own beliefs and understanding of a religious point of view about such issues as the purpose of life and stewardship of the environment. This results in some thoughtful and perceptive writing in both prose and verse. They are developing their own sets of values and beliefs and can express these well, especially in oral work. By Year 9 they can consider issues such as crime and punishment and relate these to religious teachings. Students in all years take the subject seriously. They are particularly good in debate, speaking readily and at good length. They are aware of the need for logical argument. They show respect for the opinions of others.
240. In the present Year 10 all students are taking the short course GCSE in religious studies for the first time and standards are average. These students learn to examine injustice and prejudice in detail. They learn how equal rights can be breached in a range of subtle ways. In Year 11 students taking GCSE explore Bible teachings on issues such as family life. They can apply these teachings to modern controversial statements such as 'Marriage is out of date'. The remainder of students in Year 11 are taught religious education within the personal and social education programme of work. This is done in two units of work over two five-week periods. Although the work done is covered in good depth, there is insufficient time given to study the required aspects of the locally agreed syllabus and, therefore, the achievement of these students is unsatisfactory.
241. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Work is planned imaginatively to capture and maintain students' interest. From Year 8 onwards there are very good strategies to encourage debate. Students move sides as they are persuaded by the challenges, arguments and counter arguments of others. The debates provide very good opportunities for the gifted and talented students to extend their thinking. This benefits the whole group. The teacher ensures that all students are involved and that they justify their positions whether they are for, against or neutral on the statements. This form of debate also ensures that students with special educational needs are fully involved and learn from the arguments of others. Students with below average skills in literacy are not unduly hindered. The setting in Years 8 and 9 is used well to target work at a level that interests and challenges students. When teaching is less than satisfactory, the work is too abstract to maintain the interest of lower attaining students.
242. There is good use of information and communication technology to research topics and present work. There is some impressive work, especially from higher attaining students in Year 9.
243. The department is well led and managed. There are impressive schemes of work using interesting readings that engage students' interest. Assessment and marking are good. Teachers indicate clearly what has to be done to improve standards. However, in many cases students do not do this well enough. Marking supports students' skills in literacy as spelling and grammatical mistakes are pointed out for correction.
244. Overall, there is unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. There is still inadequate time for religion in Year 11.

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

In the inspection, five subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Other Social Studies	1	100	74	0	11	2.00	1.47

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	6	100	87	17	43	5.0	5.8
Chemistry	10	90	90	40	43	5.8	5.9
Biology	8	100	88	25	34	6.3	5.3
Physics	8	88	88	25	40	5.0	5.7
Other sciences	7	100	90	0	30	3.7	5.2
Business studies	1	100	92	0	32	4.0	5.5
Art and design	3	100	96	67	46	7.33	6.6
Geography	11	73	92	9	38	2.7	5.7
History	1	0	88	0	35	0	5.4
Other social studies	15	80	87	13	34	3.3	5.3
General studies	13	100	85	38	30	5.7	4.9
Sociology	7	14	86	0	35	0.9	5.3
English language	10	80	92	20	30	4.6	5.3

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics and chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled. Results in the 2001 examinations at A-level were well above average in biology and average in physics. In a Year 13 physics class, students were investigating the discharge of a capacitor circuit using data-logging equipment. The teaching was good; students made good progress and attained average standards. In a Year 13 biology class, the teacher planned a good revision session. Students were able to record information from work they had covered in Year 12. The teaching was good and students made good progress.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- Teachers provide good guidance when reviewing the quality of work and there is good use of target setting so that students are particularly keen to improve their attainment.
- The wide range of topics within the mathematics curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject, ensuring that interest and motivation are maintained and extended.

Area for improvement

- Students have limited opportunities to develop study skills, to read about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own study.

245. The school offers mathematics at AS-level and A-level and it is very rare for a student not to complete the course. This year there is a total of 12 students studying the subject in the sixth form, of whom three students are studying it at A-level. The school offers AS and A-level in three areas: pure mathematics, mechanics and decision mathematics. The school also gives students the opportunity to retake their GCSE.

246. In 2001, results were broadly average. However, there were too few candidates to make national comparisons reliable. Results fluctuated over the past four years and are dependent on the level of attainment of students when they entered the course. In 2001, students' performance in mathematics was in line with most of their other subjects. Only two students took A-level in 2002 and therefore statistical comparisons are not valid, although both students achieved well. In 2001, ten students were entered to retake their GCSE in mathematics and 10 per cent attained grades A* to C.

247. Standards in Year 13 are above the level expected and achievement is good. The very good attitude of students contributes well to their level of commitment in lessons. When working through a linear programming problem in decision mathematics, they create and identify initial, intermediate and final tables and can work out when the solution is optimal. They have a good understanding of the Simplex algorithm and, using this, can interpret the solution produced. In pure mathematics, students demonstrate a good basic understanding of calculus. They

progress to extending and applying those skills to differentiating composite functions and trigonometric functions.

248. The standards of work seen in Year 12 are broadly in line with the level expected and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement given their attainment on joining the sixth form. Students are successfully extending their GCSE work into new areas. For example, they have the opportunity to study mechanics and extend the work on the pure mathematics that they began on their GCSE mathematics course. Students are developing a good understanding of mathematics and they make effective use of previous work. For example, when introduced to algebraic fractions, they build on their understanding of numerical fractions and factors to manipulate and simplify algebraic fractions.
249. Teaching is good and all students learn well as a result. The best feature of the teaching is the good knowledge and understanding of teachers. Subject content is accurate and teachers explain principles well. This promotes the students' confidence and respect for their teachers. Teachers structure lessons well, keeping up a brisk pace of learning. In a lesson where students were revising for their examination, good techniques were used to promote a faster pace of working through a sample examination paper. By the end of the lesson, the students had increased their own pace of working. The relationships between teachers and students are such that students readily contribute actively in class discussions and demonstrations. This was particularly evident in Year 13 when students confidently demonstrated methods for answering examination questions to each other. Where expectations are high, teachers ask challenging questions and this increases students' learning significantly. Teaching methods are generally good; teachers ask probing questions that develop good thinking skills. However, this is not always the case. There are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons, and to develop their capacity for independent study and research, partly because there are not enough text books in the library and insufficient use is made of computers. Good use is made of homework to consolidate new learning, but there is little evidence of questions that would challenge students and broaden their understanding of the mathematics. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work are generally good.
250. Students are attentive in lessons and show a keen interest in the subject. In the better lessons, the teachers conduct lessons at a stimulating pace, resulting in very rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. The higher attaining students respond well to the challenging level of work and this enhances their learning. The students in Year 13 have a mature approach to mathematics and are well motivated. Consequently they put in a high level of intellectual effort and acquire new knowledge expeditiously. Students are generally alert throughout the lesson and a high level of concentration is maintained. In the better lessons, they generally participate very well in discussions, responding well to questions and volunteer suggestions in articulate ways.
251. The good achievement in A-level mathematics is the result of the subject having a good quality of leadership and management, with a perception of what is needed for students to succeed. There is a strong commitment to improving standards by raising achievement for all students and the high quality of support. The range of topics provides students with good opportunities to study new areas of the subject ensuring that their interest and motivation are maintained and extended. There are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through

the sixth form. Teachers provide good guidance to students on the quality of their work and in supporting individual students. The outcome is that students are particularly keen to improve their attainment. Although the level of resources is generally satisfactory, the students have limited opportunities to develop study skills, to read about topics in preparation for lessons and to undertake their own study.

252. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards and teaching have improved.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Students in the current Year 13 are achieving standards that are above the national average.
- Students do well in chemistry because teaching is well planned and skilful and there is always extra help available outside lessons if required.

Areas for improvement

- The department does not make enough use of information and communication technology to support and extend learning in chemistry.
- There is not enough analysis of examination results to identify variations in the achievement of different groups of students in the various modules of the course.

253. The department offers courses in AS-level and A-level chemistry. There are 11 students taking the subject in Year 12 and nine in Year 13, making chemistry one of the most popular AS-level and A-level subjects in the school. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year, take the examination and choose to continue with the subject in Year 13.
254. Results at A-level matched the national average in 2001 and students gained much better results in chemistry than they did on average in their other subjects. Results were not as good in 2002 and some students did not do as well as they should have done. Changes in staffing produced some problems for that group; students became unsettled and their module grades were not as good in Year 13 as they had been in Year 12.
255. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average in the current Year 13 and students are achieving better standards than might be expected, given their GCSE results when they came into Year 12. For example, students are generally successful in interpreting infra-red absorption spectra and mass spectra to deduce structural formulae for various organic compounds. These students' investigation work from Year 12 is also above average. The reports of their investigations are well presented, calculations are generally correct and graphs are carefully drawn and accurately interpreted. However, some students have difficulties in expressing precisely what they mean when writing evaluations of their experiments.
256. Students in Year 12 are achieving standards that are broadly average for this stage in the AS course. This represents good achievement for the group because they began the course with GCSE results that were below average for students taking AS

chemistry. Their practical skills are satisfactory; most succeed in making up a standard solution and are suitably adept in carrying out titration experiments. They identify the possible sources of error in their experiments. Students' notes are appropriately detailed but some of their files are not as well organised as they might be and so less useful for reference and revision.

257. Teaching is good and students learn quickly as a result. Students particularly appreciate the relatively small groups in which they are taught and the extra help that teachers give, when necessary, outside lesson time. Lessons are carefully planned, skilfully presented and demanding. For example, students in Year 13 were expected to answer A-level questions, on a revision topic, without relying on notes or textbooks. They enjoyed the challenge that this exercise provided, asked for any help they needed and made genuine gains in understanding. In a Year 12 practical lesson, the teacher provided clear instructions and was quick to spot any weaknesses in technique that needed to be overcome. Occasionally the teacher's explanation of how to do a calculation, although satisfactory, lacked the clarity and emphasis of other parts of the lesson. Students use a computer package of examination questions as part of their revision but otherwise the department makes little use of information and communication technology to support and extend students' learning or to develop their independent learning.
258. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The department makes good use of the flexibility offered by the modular syllabus. Year 12 take their first module examination at the beginning of the second term. Their results are not particularly good but the experience is valuable in showing students the standards they need to reach. From then on, they work harder and their results are much better in later modules and when many of them retake the first one. The head of department is well aware of whether individual students achieve as well as they should, but she does not yet make enough use of examination results to identify any trends in the achievement of different groups of students in the various modules.
259. The head of department currently teaches almost all of the lessons for Year 12 and 13. A second teacher, who is inexperienced in teaching this particular course, is gradually taking over some Year 12 lessons. This situation is being well managed with time set aside for the head of department to help the new teacher with her planning.
260. There has been good progress in chemistry since the time of the previous inspection. Standards have improved from broadly average in 1997 to above average in the current Year 13.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on computer studies.

Overall, the quality of provision in computer studies is **poor**.

Strengths

- The school has made a temporary appointment of an extra teacher who is helping to raise standards.
- Students have many opportunities to get extra help outside of lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is poor so students are doing badly and standards are very low.
- The curriculum is poor; the chosen course is inappropriate and some students cannot attend all lessons.
- Management is poor; the implementation of the courses has been rushed.

261. The school offers courses at AS-level and A-level in computer studies. The AS-level course is popular in terms of numbers, but the poor results at AS-level mean that there is only one student studying to full A-level this year. The school entered candidates for the first time in 2002; as yet there are no national statistics with which to compare the results. Results at A-level were very disappointing with two students gaining E grades and two being ungraded. Results in the AS-level examinations were even worse; one candidate gained an A grade and one an E grade, but the other seven were all ungraded. Out of all the subjects studied, all but one student gained their worst result in computing. Given the students' standards at GCSE, the great majority performed much worse than they should have.
262. The student studying for the A-level examination is attaining very high standards; he is very able and is achieving as well as he should do. The standards of the other students are very low and their achievement is poor. All have a basic knowledge of the topics they have studied, but their understanding is very poor so they are unable to apply their knowledge in new situations or explain why or how something happens. They can, for example, name the ways that master files can be up-dated but are unable to explain how this happens. Even some of the simplest work contains basic errors, such as confusing files and records, or imprecise language, such as using 'words' instead of 'text' or 'pictures' instead of 'images'. The students' files are full of notes that have either been dictated or copied verbatim from the board. The files are disorganised and scruffy; they do not provide a good enough resource for revision. The students' mathematical skills are not up to the demands of the course, so they make basic errors in their calculations.
263. Teaching and learning are poor. Teachers do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of the subject to meet the demands of the course. Too much time is devoted to simply dictating or copying notes, without any link to developing the students' understanding. Students are usually very passive in lessons, simply copying work or answering the odd question with a one-word answer. The notes are not marked or the organisation of files checked. Students are not asked to do enough work in terms of research outside of lessons and are not developing the skills that would be of help in later life. The lessons divorce the theory from the practical work so students do not get enough opportunities to apply their skills. Students have good opportunities to get extra help outside of lessons. The school has recently improved its provision by enlisting the help of an aspiring Advanced Skills Teacher, who is having a big impact on raising standards by employing an approach that combines teaching facts, developing understanding and applying newly learnt skills in the same lesson.
264. The management of the subject is poor. The implementation of the course has been rushed so the teachers were not prepared or trained. Students are unhappy with the course because it is not the one that is most appropriate to their needs; it is far too academic and theory-based. Some students are unable to attend all lessons because of timetable clashes with other subjects. The assessment system correctly identifies weaknesses in students' understanding, but no changes are made to

lessons in order that deficiencies can be overcome. The head of department works extremely hard, but he is carrying out too many roles so all of them are suffering. On top of this there is not enough technical support so he has to do much of this as well. There is only one specialist in the school, so the head of department has nobody to help with the very heavy workload, provide a different view or supply new ideas.

265. There was no report on the subject at the time of the last inspection from which to judge improvement.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography but government and politics was also sampled. In a Year 13 politics class on the evolution of the European Union, the teacher asked searching questions and students illustrated a sound knowledge and understanding of the Single European Act of 1987. The quality of teaching was good and students made good progress.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Good teaching leads to students achieving well.
- Fieldwork opportunities enrich students' curricular experiences.

Area for improvement

- Students lack self-confidence in discussing their ideas in oral work; as a result answers are short and lack reasoning.

266. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were well below the national average and students did less well in geography than they did in the other subjects that they studied. The most recent results, however, albeit from a small number of students, improved on those of 2001. All students completed the course.
267. The standards of work seen during the inspection are average in both Year 12 and Year 13. This represents good achievement, given their standards when they entered the course. Students have a foundation of knowledge. In Year 12, for example, students applied skills gained at GCSE level to plan a research project in Birmingham, whilst Year 13 students used knowledge gained earlier about contrasting global areas to prepare responses as to how countries manage developments in such environments as the tropical rain forests in Brazil. Most students are competent in using information and communication technology to obtain knowledge but do not use case studies enough to show the depth of their understanding of global development and how they will use it to progress the assignment. Students are aware of the interdependence of countries and of the need for global action to manage the inequalities of food supply. They understand the contribution of aid agencies, but recognise that the wider solutions will require inter-government co-operation, particularly from the more economically developed countries. Students lack specific knowledge of conditions in such countries as Somalia, however, and are unaware of developments in the region and what the longer-term needs of the country are.

268. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are well qualified and have very good understanding of the topics that are covered in the course. Year 12 students improve their fieldwork skills through greater awareness of the different methods of data collection, but lack self-confidence in discussing their ideas in oral work. As a result, answers are short and lack reasoning as to why some methods would be more appropriate than others. Teachers' planning of lessons is very good and they set challenges to make students think about their responses to topics. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, the students prepared a statement on essay planning techniques and were challenged to evaluate each other's contribution. The teacher reinforced understanding of key words prior to setting a task to formulate an essay plan and assessed each one's level of understanding through individual consultation. Students listen carefully to explanations but do not contribute enough to discussion and consequently do not improve their knowledge and understanding fast enough.
269. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The schemes of work have been revised and provide information about learning to students. The book resources are very good and are supported by a sixth form library that provides a good range of current reading material. The students have good access to computers, enabling them to gain current information via Internet websites. Student morale is high because they feel well supported and make good progress in their studies.
270. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards continue to be average and students continue to achieve well.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English.

English

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they ask telling questions to make students think.
- Marking is very good; this helps students to improve their written work and achieve well.
- In lessons, students have excellent attitudes to their work; they take an active part and learn from one another in group work.

Areas for improvement

- The conclusion to lessons, where not enough time is given to reviewing what students have learnt.
- The way students develop their ideas in written work: opinions are not supported in sufficient detail to reach the requirements for the higher grades A/B.

271. The department offers courses in AS and A-level English, and a GCSE retake course. There are ten students taking AS-level in Year 12, and seven Year 13 students taking A-level. Most of those who begin the AS course complete the year, take the examination and choose to continue with the subject in Year 13. In the GCSE retake group, 17 students are working to reach grade C or above in English.
272. Results in the A-level examinations in 2001 were below average. More students achieved an A grade than in recent years. Overall, students gained similar results in English to their results across their other subjects. Results in 2001 were below those of 2000, but represented good achievement in relation to prior attainment. In 2002 results fell, but only six students took the course and one higher attaining student withdrew a few weeks before the final examination. Overall, achievement was satisfactory. In the 2001 and 2002 GCSE resit examinations, students achieved well, with many reaching at least grade C.
273. Standards are now average in the Years 12 and 13 classes. Students in Year 12 are acquiring the appropriate vocabulary to describe and analyse language. They give well-prepared presentations, using overhead transparencies, on Simon Armitage's *The Dead Sea Poems*, and show the ability to comment on structure and metaphorical devices. In groups, they identify features of the opening paragraphs of *Emma* (Jane Austen), *Hard Times* (Dickens), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Margaret Atwood). While higher attaining students write with flair and accuracy, many do not develop ideas fully enough and move away from the topic. Expression is sometimes vague, so that points are not effectively made. Students respond in different styles – for example, when analysing the language of children's stories or presenting a counter-argument to that expressed in an article on random killers. In Year 13, students discuss the use of language and sentence structures in a scene from *Othello*, and in groups prepare and present a discussion between Iago and Cassio. They employ appropriate gesture and facial expression, showing good understanding. Students analyse texts orally for purpose, audience and context, using precise language. Many find written expression more difficult than oral work. They write a modern version of a dialogue from *Othello*, and compare the ways in which Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker in *Dracula* use language to convey impressions of the creature and the Count respectively. Students structure character studies well – for example, of Jonathan Harker (*Dracula*) – and write about what motivates people to act as they do. While higher attaining students justify their views and structure essays carefully, others do not use sufficient quotations to support a point of view and fail to emphasise key points fully. Vocabulary is sometimes repetitive and expression imprecise. Year 12 GCSE students distinguish between fact and opinion in a passage about all-year fireworks. In writing, students comment on non-fiction texts, such as an extract about Tony Bullimore's yachting expeditions, and engage in creative writing. While they communicate clearly, expression is awkward and vocabulary repetitive. When writing about a text, there is insufficient attention to detail.

274. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this enables them to ask telling questions to make students think. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the teacher's questions drew students' attention to key images in *The Dead Sea Poems* and helped them better understand phrases such as (driving) 'a river of goats towards clear water' and 'a breath of musk and pollen'. Another very good aspect of teaching is the use of small group work to promote independent learning and to involve all students actively in their work. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students learnt from one another in discussion on the opening paragraphs of novels. They commented on the authors' language in *Emma*, *Hard Times* and *The Handmaid's Tale* and came to a good understanding of meaning. Group work is particularly effective because relationships and attitudes to learning in lessons are excellent, though a few students are less than enthusiastic about putting pen to paper. Teachers introduce a variety of resources to vary teaching strategies. For example, in a Year 13 lesson the use of a video camera motivated students preparing a scene from *Othello* to work hard in rehearsal. This led to a very good understanding of the characters of Iago and Cassio. Teachers plan lessons well, though insufficient time is given at the end of lessons for reviewing what students have learnt. The effect is that lessons lose some of their impact. Marking is very good. Teachers make it clear what students need to do to gain a better grade, but also identify strengths. This encourages students to improve their writing, though this does not always transfer to the examination situation.
275. Leadership and management are good. The head of department co-ordinates well the work of four teachers taking classes in Years 12 and 13. Teachers are well deployed, according to their particular expertise, so they enjoy their teaching. There is a shared commitment to raising standards through strategies, which involve students actively in learning. Results are carefully scrutinised to pinpoint weaknesses. Since the last inspection, improvement is good. Expectations, which were low, are now high and students are given more opportunity to respond in class through whole class and small group discussion.