

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **ST EDWARD'S SCHOOL**

Poole, Dorset

LEA area: Poole

Unique reference number: 113893

Headteacher: Mr D Richmond

Reporting inspector: Mr M Pavey  
17650

Dates of inspection: 27 - 29 January 2003

Inspection number: 253026

Short 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: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 12-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Dale Valley Road  
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Appropriate authority: Poole

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Lucas

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12121	Mr J Mallinson	Team inspector	English	
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Edward's is a 12-18, co-educational, joint Roman Catholic - Church of England voluntary aided comprehensive school, in Poole, Dorset. The school provides a Christian education, and is established as a partnership between the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. It also admits a number of pupils from Free Church families. There are 801 pupils, including 99 in the sixth form. There are 111 pupils on the register of those with special educational needs (SEN), of whom 18 have statements. There are fewer pupils than average on the SEN register, but more than the average with statements. The great majority of pupils are of white heritage background. No pupils speak English as an additional language, though two sixth formers are from a bilingual background, and the percentage of those entitled to free school meals is lower than average. The attainment of most pupils entering the school, and the social circumstances of their families, are average. Though there are rather more pupils of above average ability than below, the whole range of ability is present, including a number of pupils who have complex problems and learning needs. The school has grown since the last inspection, when there were 550 pupils. It now has its own sixth form, having previously educated sixth formers in partnership with another school.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a very good education. Standards of achievement and test and examination results are high for pupils aged 12-16. In the sixth form, they are in line with the national average and improving. Leadership and management are very good. Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. The school has an excellent ethos and gives very good value for money.

#### What the school does well

- There is an excellent team spirit among staff and between staff and pupils. Inspectors agree with governors, parents and pupils that the school has a first rate ethos.
- The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is very good. For example, senior staff plan very well for the school's further development and give positive encouragement to pupils' welfare and personal development.
- Very good relationships and good teaching produce high achievement in tests at the end of Year 9. GCSE results are generally good.
- The professional development of teachers and teaching assistants is very effectively managed.
- With few exceptions, the school enables its pupils to feel strongly included in the education it provides. This is seen particularly in the work of the special educational needs (SEN) department.
- The school manager and the teams of support staff provide a very good service to teachers and pupils.
- The sixth form is developing strongly. It is now very successful and is having a positive impact on the quality of the main school.

#### What could be improved

- Good new accommodation has been built. More is to be provided, but the school will still be very short of space, particularly for sixth form teaching.
- Despite a good plan for the management of behaviour, the school has a small group of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory. At present, it excludes too many, if only for short periods. The school wants to help these pupils in school, but there is no space outside normal classrooms to do so.
- Further improvements are needed in the monitoring of teaching and the work of subject departments.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is good, but needs further development in the setting of specific targets, so that pupils' work is improved even further.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 lacks enough vocational opportunities.

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

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

The school was last inspected in May 1997. Since then, improvement has been good. The key issues for improvement, to develop good teaching practice, the library and ICT, have been well achieved and the school has developed strongly in its financial management and the quality of its sixth form. The high standards reported in 1997 have been well maintained.

## STANDARDS

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

Note: National average results for AS and A2 examinations in 2002 were not available at the time of the inspection.

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

Over the two years until the national tests are taken at the end of Year 9, pupils achieve very well, making rapid and confident progress. In the tests in 2002, overall results were well above the national average. English results were strongest, followed by mathematics, then science. In lessons seen during this inspection, pupils were making assured, rapid progress, thanks to good, sometimes very good, teaching.

Pupils maintain their good progress over the two years to GCSE examinations. In 2002, results for pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C were above average, and were well above in the previous three years. Results measured in points scored, for both boys and girls, were well above average in 2002 and for the previous three years. However, not all GCSE results were above average. Those for German and physical education studies (PE) were below average. In English language and literature, boys achieved far fewer top grades than girls. Work seen during the inspection was of high quality and pupils were making good progress in their lessons and over the course. Their achievement, both at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, was well above average when compared with that of pupils with similar results in previous national tests. Pupils with SEN, including those with hearing impairments, make good progress, at all stages, thanks to good teaching and the very good support they receive from the SEN co-ordinator and teaching assistants. Pupils identified as gifted and talented make good progress also.

In the A level examinations, results have been improving over recent years. In 2001, attainment was overall in line with the national average. 2002 was the first year that results have reached average levels at top grades. The percentage passing at all grades A-E in 2001 was just above average, but in 2002 this result was well above the 2001 average. Many subjects achieved 100 per cent success, with no students failing to achieve a grade and a remarkable 97.5 per cent passing their examinations across the whole A-E range. In the last two years, strong results were recorded in mathematics and performance studies, while physics results were good in 2002. In several subjects, however, numbers were not large enough to make secure comparisons. Standards seen during the inspection were good.

In 2001, the school reached its targets for GCSE performance. Against its demanding targets for 2002, results were rather below target for five or more passes at grades A\*-C, though in line with targets for all grades and the total points scored.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like their school and are happy to be there.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils generally behave well, sometimes very well. In a few lessons seen, behaviour and attitudes were unsatisfactory.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are a strength of the school, at all levels. Pupils develop very good values of respect for each other and their teachers.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall, and good in the sixth form.

The school's excellent team spirit and ethos are its leading characteristic. The great majority of pupils support the school's activities strongly. A small group of pupils, however, does not behave well, and these pupils are responsible for the high number of temporary exclusions.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 8 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very 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.*

In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, teaching is good overall, and very good in the sixth form. Across all stages, there was almost no unsatisfactory teaching and there was much which was very good. Teachers' particular strengths are their subject knowledge, very effective planning, high expectations and good management of lessons. Pupils therefore acquire knowledge and skills rapidly, and in many subjects have a very good grasp of how to learn effectively. The teaching of the key skills of literacy, and information and communications technology (ICT) is good at all stages, while the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Teaching of key skills is very good in the first year of the sixth form. The school meets the needs of all its pupils well, especially those with SEN.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, though there is not enough vocational education as yet for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The SEN department is very well organised and provides a very good service. Help for pupils with hearing impairment is also very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for spiritual development is excellent, while that for all other aspects is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school has a very good year and tutor system which ensures that pupils are looked after well. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, attendance and academic progress are good.

The school has a wide and well planned curriculum, which provides particularly well for pupils with SEN. The sixth form curriculum has grown rapidly and has already become a successful aspect of the school. The school makes good use of its contacts with partner institutions, particularly the other schools and colleges in the local sixth form 'collaboration'. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in drama and music.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has analysed the school's current and future needs very well. The deputy head and assistant heads lead their areas very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors have led the school very well in the development of its Christian ethos, its sixth form and the improvement of its buildings.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Planning for development is very good. The monitoring of teaching is already good, but could be further developed.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Staffing resources are well deployed, very well in the case of SEN teaching assistants. Resources for learning are well allocated and used. The school makes the best use it can of its limited accommodation.

There is very good teamwork, at senior level and in subject departments and years. Through good support for all teachers and support staff - for example in the very good provision for professional training and development - the school helps all staff to realise their potential. All groups of support staff manage their areas very well. The school successfully seeks the best value when purchasing goods and services. It manages its limited accommodation well, and has argued persuasively for the extra space it needs.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most parents are glad that their children like school and almost all are pleased with the good progress they make there.</li> <li>Parents think that teaching and behaviour are very good and that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>Parents feel well informed, feel that the school works closely with parents and would feel comfortable in approaching the school for advice.</li> <li>Parents think the school is very well led and managed, and that it is helping their children become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some parents do not think the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>In the parents' meeting, some felt that the average pupil was not receiving as much attention as the ablest and less able.</li> <li>Some parents in their questionnaires and in the meeting felt that homework was too variable in quantity and quality.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They find that the school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities, especially in music and drama. They do not agree that the average pupil is not getting enough encouragement, though some boys in Years 10 and 11 are not getting the practical, vocational curriculum they need. Inspectors agree that homework is not always regularly set and that a minority of homework diaries is not kept up to date; generally, homework is well set and adequately marked.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form has 99 students, the great majority of whom join from Year 11. It was granted its own sixth form status in autumn 2001, having before educated its sixth formers under a franchise with another local school. Since the last inspection in May 1997, the sixth form has grown steadily and now offers 15 subjects, as AS, A2 and ACVE courses in the school and eight link courses with the post-16 consortium in Poole. From September 2002, the Year 12 general studies programme has incorporated the key skills elements which are taught through the various subjects. Students entering the sixth form are expected to have gained five or more A\*-C grades in GCSE, though a small number who do not attain this standard are accepted. In Year 12, girls outnumber boys, but in Year 13 the proportions are even. One student has special needs (a hearing impairment). No students have English as an additional language and there are no students from ethnic minority backgrounds.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

This successful and cost-effective sixth form provides a very good quality of education for all its students. Teaching is very good, so that students learn very well. In relation to their starting points, they achieve high standards in their daily work. Examination results were broadly in line with national averages in 2001 and rose further in 2002. Leadership and management are of high quality. The head of sixth form and tutors support students very well.

**Strengths**

- The leadership and management of the new head of sixth are very good and generate an ethos in which all students receive a high quality of education.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and enables students to reach high levels of achievement.
- The support for students' academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Students have excellent attitudes to school and their work: they contribute very positively to their learning and to the wider life of the school.

**What could be improved**

- Accommodation is highly inadequate, for all aspects of sixth form life and work.
- Despite considerable progress in providing information and communications technology (ICT), teachers and students lack sufficient facilities to exploit it fully.
- Access to vocationally based courses is limited.

*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	<b>Very good.</b> Standards in mathematics are well above average. Teaching is very good, as are relationships, resulting in a very good learning partnership. Thorough, regular monitoring ensures that students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> Results have been improving year by year and are now well above average. Teaching is very good and staff share their enthusiasm for the subject with their students.
Performance studies	<b>Very good.</b> Students' standards of performance are high. Teaching is very good, with effective use of professional experience and expertise.

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
History	<b>Good.</b> Standards have risen since the last inspection and all teaching seen was at least good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are encouraging students to learn in a positive way.
English	<b>Very good.</b> A level results in English literature have been above the national average in three of the last four years. Results in A level English language were equally high in 2002, the first year of entry. Teaching is consistently good.

Other aspects of post-16 provision were sampled. One lesson was seen in each of biology, business studies, chemistry, French, general studies, geography, psychology, and the Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education (ACVE) course in leisure and recreation. Teaching was good or very good in most lessons. All students are prepared for AS general studies, where teaching seen was never less than satisfactory. The teaching of key skills is becoming an integral part of subject areas. Teaching and learning in the key skills tutorial seen was good. It was not possible to observe any lessons in art or music.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Very well.</b> A new and very effective system for individual monitoring and guidance has been introduced in Year 12. Students and tutors work well together. Students' strengths and weaknesses are identified early and discussed with parents at a counselling day in their first term in the sixth form. The proportion of students continuing into Year 13 is high, and increasing.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<b>Very good.</b> The head of sixth form leads very well. Since the last inspection, the demand for sixth form education in the school has developed significantly. Through its good teaching of key skills and the clear review of students' performance at regular intervals, the school ensures that standards of work are maintained and improved. All students have equal access to the activities available.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

<b>What students like about the sixth form</b>	<b>What they feel could be improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They enjoy being in the sixth form and appreciate its friendly atmosphere.</li> <li>• They are taught well and teachers are accessible.</li> <li>• They are provided with very good, clear information about the post-16 courses offered.</li> <li>• The wide choice of courses allows students to follow a programme suited to their talents.</li> <li>• They are helped and encouraged to study and research topics independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation is the only major anxiety. Sixth formers report that they lack facilities for study and recreation.</li> <li>• Some students would like a better range of worthwhile activities outside main subject areas.</li> </ul>

The team agrees with the positive views of students, who were very complimentary about the academic education they are receiving and the opportunities they have to share in the life of the school, particularly through community service. The team agrees that the present accommodation is inadequate and is pleased that additional buildings for sport and ICT are soon to be provided. Inspectors find the range of extra activities worthwhile and very well supported.



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

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

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

**There is an excellent team spirit among staff and between staff and pupils. Inspectors agree with governors, parents and pupils that the school has a first rate ethos.**

1. Working together is a key element of the school's mission. Senior staff have succeeded in creating the team spirit which has made this aim a reality. The school talks of leaders rather than heads, seeking to include all teachers in the decisions of its teams of subject and year staff. The result is a very dedicated group of adults - teachers and support staff - who support each other well and succeed in giving the same generous support to their pupils. This is the source of the school's high achievement – teachers want to help pupils develop their potential and pupils want to learn. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson on the use of calculators, the teacher's rapid, humorous questioning produced much happy cooperation, and pupils responded very willingly to his style of teaching.
2. Governors warmly support the school's aims and feel that this team spirit is the essence of the school. At the meeting before the inspection, parents commented very positively on the school's ethos. In a questionnaire, one parent wrote 'My children consider themselves very fortunate to be at this school; they have pride in their school and achieve accordingly'. The many pupils interviewed during the inspection said how happy they were at St Edward's and how they liked coming. Three sixth formers, who had gone elsewhere for particular courses, returned to join the sixth form of this school because they knew they would be well guided and supported, among friends.
3. A few further examples show how widely this team spirit extends. The school is extremely crowded, but the cooperation among staff and pupils allows learning to flourish despite the pinched accommodation. In the very small library, no fewer than seven activities were going on in one lesson: a useful ICT lesson was in progress, three groups of sixth formers were working or talking quietly, two individual tuition sessions were in progress, while a video of the summer activity week was being played. Subject leaders feel that senior staff take a real interest in the welfare of their colleagues, for example providing them with very good opportunities for their professional development. Sixth formers are invited to make a positive commitment to the school as part of their admission to Year 12, and report warmly how involved they feel in its work. The team of chaplains and other staff work very creatively with pupils to present the Christian faith in new liturgies and acts of worship. There is a real sense that the school belongs to its pupils and families, who value it accordingly.

**The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is very good. For example, senior staff plan very well for the school's further improvement and give positive encouragement to pupils' welfare and personal development.**

4. The headteacher, who joined the school in April 2002, gives very good leadership, and is well supported by a dedicated and experienced governing body. Taking over an already very successful school, the headteacher has dedicated himself to preserving its distinctive and much valued ethos, and to very wide consultation to discover how it can be improved yet further. After seeking the views of governors, parents, staff, pupils and the school's community, the headteacher has produced a draft development plan, carefully weighed but challenging, which has very good potential to take the school further forward. He has been able to build on the very good development planning of recent years, which has been marked by close consultation and very clear evaluation.
5. The draft plan is based on the principle of 'working smarter through evidence-based practice'. The intention is to measure its success by applying the principles of best value. Leading aims of the plan are to achieve a minimum of 70 per cent of lessons judged good on Ofsted's criteria; further to develop the quality of how pupils learn; to review the curriculum for pupils aged 14-16; and to extend the effectiveness of teachers' assessment. The plan, reflected in the key issues for action in this report, aims to build further on the school's already very good staff training and development.

6. Senior staff are highly experienced, work very well together, and have built up a very good programme of support for pupils and their personal development. For example, acknowledging the challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils, they have consulted widely and reviewed the school's behaviour policy, which now has clear procedures, arrangements for review and provision for further training in the management of behaviour. The deputy head, assistant heads and head of sixth lead the teams of year tutors very well, so that all aspects of pupils' welfare are well managed. For example, the clear and detailed staff handbook contains all essential policies and procedures for the good management of pupils; policies reflect the school's mission very well, and result in professional and compassionate management of pupils.
7. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Though inspectors did not see much overt spiritual content in the lessons they inspected, the school's care for pupils' spiritual development is everywhere – in the chapel which is open, prominent and welcoming; the work of the chaplaincy team; the organisation of assemblies; the pilgrimages and retreats; and the school magazine which has many articles on the school's Christian and charitable activities. The school's moral and social leadership comes from its Christian aims and is again very good. At the parents' meeting, there was very strong satisfaction with the attitudes and values which the school promotes and with the very wide range of social opportunities it gives. Pupils say they just like being at school, because the atmosphere created by the staff is supporting and friendly.
8. The school provides the right environment for moral and social development, which leads teachers to offer a good range of practical opportunities, often cultural, for this to flourish. The school's music is outstanding and its drama active, outgoing and very popular. A number of pupils play in regional orchestras, and the commitment of musicians - staff and pupils - is first rate, seen for example in an exciting, well-attended choir practice for some 50 pupils of all ages. Drama lessons are often highly successful social and cultural events, in which high achievement comes from the intriguing content; for example, in a Year 12 theatre studies lesson, students made huge progress in movement because they were so involved in the business of tying themselves together as pairs of laces. In a lunch queue, two boys were overheard complaining that they had not been quick enough to get walk-on parts in *Oklahoma!* There is a highly successful link with a school in South Africa, with much money raised for exchange visits and support for the education there. The school's provision for multi-cultural education is good in its daily life as well. For example, Year 8 pupils have searched the internet for material on a debate about the clash of interests between oil companies and the local populations of Nigeria; the school is preparing for a cross-curricular global citizenship day, and a recent sixth form student returned to make a presentation on the AIDS crisis in Zimbabwe. The post-inspection meeting of inspectors and senior staff was happily enlivened by a spirited rendition of South African dancing, as pupils came joyfully out of a rehearsal.

**Very good relationships and good teaching produce high achievement in tests at the end of Year 9. GCSE results are generally good.**

9. It is the very good relationships, already described, which produce the desire to learn and the atmosphere for good teaching to flourish. This leads to higher results than would be expected for these pupils, who join the school with an overall average level of attainment; some pupils are above average, but there is a minority whose attainment is below, sometimes well below, average.
10. Over the two years until the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils achieve very well, making rapid and confident progress. In the tests in 2002, overall results were well above the national average. English results were strongest, followed by mathematics, then science. On the basis of the performance of these pupils in their tests at the end of Year 6 in middle schools, and of the performance of schools nationally with the same percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the achievement of these pupils was well above average. At this key stage, there is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. In lessons seen during this inspection, pupils were making assured, rapid progress, thanks to good, sometimes very good, teaching. A striking example of good teaching and learning was seen in a Year 9 geography lesson on the AIDS/HIV situation in Lesotho. The teacher had prepared a very effective lesson, using ICT powerpoint presentation. As charity workers, pupils prepared presentations, using the department's intranet pages, successfully producing slides which they then saved for marking by the teacher. They made very good progress in ICT skills and in their understanding of moral issues. Teaching

and learning of this order lead to real involvement and good learning. Almost no unsatisfactory teaching or learning were seen at this key stage. Where lessons were satisfactory rather than good, pupils were orderly and made useful progress, though the inspiration which makes for exciting learning was sometimes lacking. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on the book *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*, the teacher conducted an orderly, well prepared lesson and pupils wrote adequate notes on the worksheets provided.

11. Pupils, including those with SEN or who are gifted or talented, maintain their good progress over the two years to GCSE examinations. In 2002, results for pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C were above average, and were well above over the previous three years. Results measured in points scored, for both boys and girls, were well above average in 2002 and for the last three years. Pupils achieve results well above average, both on the basis of their national test results at the end of Year 9 and the achievement of pupils in other schools with a similar entitlement to free school meals. At this key stage, girls make better progress than boys; a far higher proportion of girls gain five or more passes at grades A\*-C. In English language and literature particularly, boys achieve far fewer top grades than girls. Not all results are above average, and those for German and GCSE physical education studies (PE) are below average. Overall, though, results are good, and good teaching leads to positive attitudes and effective learning. For example, in a Year 11 lower set mathematics lesson, the teacher took pupils rapidly and confidently through a revision session on numbers. Confidence grew as pupils realised how much they had remembered, thanks to the teacher's encouragement and the good support given by the assistant to two pupils with hearing impairment. One boy said at the end, 'I've done well this lesson; I've learnt a lot'. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11.

### **The professional development of teachers and teaching assistants is very effectively managed.**

12. The school has a good policy for the professional development of its staff, which begins with a clear statement of belief that the school 'is committed to supporting all staff and recognises that they are its most important resource'. Good training is therefore a priority for the school, and features strongly in its draft development plan.
13. The school ensures that training is well linked with development planning and the performance management of staff. It intends to give training a high priority, and has therefore provided a training session for all staff, once a fortnight after school. Some of these sessions are reserved for school-wide training, and some for the use of subject or year teams. Departments bid for the funding to secure the training they have identified to carry out their planned developments.
14. The school's major initiatives are very strongly supported by effective training. Perhaps the best example of this has been the training for all staff in ICT, through the very effective use of the government's New Opportunities Fund programme and the 'laptops for teachers' scheme. Senior staff rightly perceived that many teachers were reluctant to commit themselves to using ICT, and so set up a training day in which fellow teachers demonstrated what they could do with the new technology. This gave a major boost to confidence, so that a large number of staff now use ICT very well. The present restriction is not time or knowledge, but simply space to accommodate all the computers which teachers now want to use. Use of ICT is now a strength of teaching in several areas. For example, a science teacher encourages younger pupils to do homework with the help of new technology; pupils complete homework on line and e-mail it to their teacher, who may return them their work by e-mail, marked and with comments. The science department website is an alluring place to visit, with its songs composed by staff and pupils to popular tunes. Other successful examples of training for all staff include a recent session on examination results and target setting, and days spent on the new requirements for literacy and numeracy provision, and the new SEN code of practice.
15. The school keeps careful records of the training received by teachers and assistants. These cover a wide range of relevant subjects. It provides well for the training of its newly qualified teachers, making use of the borough's careful and detailed scheme. It provides induction sessions for more experienced teachers new to the school, and intends to do more in this area. Its development plan for training includes some valuable further improvements, for example in the programme of classroom observations and follow-up work.



**With few exceptions, the school enables its pupils, staff and parents to feel strongly included in the education it provides. This is seen particularly in the work of the special educational needs (SEN) department.**

16. The school's motto is 'learning together', and the ethos of the school, described above, is particularly warm and inclusive. The school's aims stress the equal value to be placed on all children in its care, and these aims are very well expressed in its daily life, for example in the wide range of activities which are open to all. Pupils recognise that they are well cared for, and like feeling part of the school community. Parents, whose role is well recognised in the first sentence of the mission statement, see themselves as well included in school life. They are happy to approach the school and consider that it works closely with them. Teachers and support staff feel that they manage the school together, and have a warm regard for each other. The outcome is a successful and friendly school; this is seen in the good behaviour of pupils and the very good relationships among all its community.
17. The work of the SEN department is the single most practical expression of the school's success in including all its pupils in the education it gives. Great care is taken to assess pupils on entry to the school, and the department publishes very full details of all pupils on its SEN register. A noteworthy feature is the detailed assessments of pupils needing special care and the painstaking records of how the school has given priority to those who most need it, and has succeeded in changing the prospects of some pupils with complex learning and behavioural needs. The department stresses that it is not to be seen as a separate service, but as a help to the whole school, with most of its support given in the classroom. To this end, it provides very well for the training of its teaching assistants, who make a very positive contribution to the pupils' education. Training of assistants is taken as seriously as that of teachers; for example, there was a very useful talk during the inspection, by the borough behaviour support officer, who gave a good overview of how assistants could recognise and help with problems of behaviour. Many assistants are very experienced, and one in particular has experience of the management of severe behavioural problems. Statements of SEN are very carefully prepared and the progress of statemented pupils is closely monitored. A notable feature of SEN provision is the open, constructive approach taken by pupils to each other's needs. For example, sixth formers enquired very naturally whether one of their number had a statement for dyslexia, while two pupils in the library (nowhere else was free) seemed content to learn from their assistants while other activities went on around them.
18. The school provides very well for the needs of pupils with hearing impairment. Specialist teachers provide training to help classroom teachers support pupils effectively, and give expert guidance in lessons when appropriate. For example, a hearing impairment specialist led an A level physics lesson on the subject of decibel loss in the physics of sound. Remarkable success is reported with individual pupils. The school also provides well for its gifted and talented pupils, giving them the stimulus of the 'world class tests' and providing an event every half term for a special group of pupils. Two aspects which detract from the otherwise very good provision for educational inclusion are discussed in paragraphs 24-26 and 31-32 below. The school is well aware of them and is hoping to solve these problems.

**The school manager and the teams of support staff provide a very good service to teachers and pupils.**

19. The school manager has a very wide remit, including the daily provision of cover for absent teachers, the school calendar, acting as clerk to the governors, all aspects of the admission of pupils, open evenings and the recruitment of new staff. All these aspects are managed with skill and very good attention to detail. The school's finance manager administers all aspects of financial budgeting and control very well. With prudent financial management, a deficit of £87000 two years ago has now been converted into a surplus, and funds have been built up to pay for the school's share of the recent building programme.
20. The school is fortunate to have staff of this calibre, but in fact all support staff give very good and much appreciated service. For example, technical and administrative staff provide very good support, the librarian and her team give helpful and well-informed service, and the site manager and caretaker look after the school with efficiency and cheerfulness. Kitchen, dining room and cleaning staff provide valued support. All are well managed by the school manager. The very helpful work of

the teaching assistants, managed by the SEN co-ordinator, is described above.

**The sixth form is developing strongly. It is now very successful and is having a positive impact on the quality of the main school.**

21. The sixth form is discussed in detail in paragraphs 33-65 of this report, and these paragraphs are summarised in the annex document on the sixth form. Briefly, it has developed strongly since the time of the last report, and now offers a good range of courses. Results are improving. Sixth form students now play a significant role in the life of the school. The sixth form is very well led. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Students learn well and relationships are very positive.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**Good new accommodation has been built. More is to be provided, but the school will still be very short of space, particularly for sixth form teaching.**

22. In recent years, the school has done well to secure some much needed additions, including a new science and technology area and English, drama and languages classrooms. These rooms, constructed to provide for an extra 30 pupils in each year, are well designed and attractive, but have not relieved the school's gross overcrowding, estimated at 21 per cent. Partly to meet this, more building has been agreed, and the school will soon have a new sports hall and several well planned refurbishments, so that areas such as library, art, ICT, science and central administration will be relieved from their present overuse.
23. The school has been over-subscribed for many years, and successful appeals have led to higher than planned numbers in Years 8-11. The school was granted its own sixth form, which is now growing rapidly towards its planned capacity of some 150 pupils. Sixth form accommodation is already inadequate, with social and study space almost non-existent. Though the school's most recent bid has been refused, it has now submitted a fresh bid, particularly for sixth form and SEN accommodation. Even this would not wholly relieve the pressure, for example on dining and assembly space, which is at present severe. The school is desperate for space to help those pupils whose behaviour requires them to be withdrawn from lessons. This problem is discussed in paragraphs 24-26 below.

**Despite a good plan for the management of behaviour, the school has a minority of pupils who behave poorly. At present, it excludes too many, if only for short periods. The school wants to help these pupils in school, but there is no space outside normal classrooms to do so.**

24. The school works very hard to include all its pupils in the education it provides. However, it receives a number of difficult pupils who, despite the best efforts of the SEN department, teachers and tutors, sometimes behave poorly and challenge the good order the school insists on maintaining. Rightly, senior staff require a good standard of behaviour, so that teaching and learning can proceed without threat. In a few lessons seen in this inspection, for example in German for Years 9 and 11, behaviour was unhelpful, with some pupils being as difficult as they dared. They managed to slow down progress, thus rendering the lesson unproductive, to their satisfaction.
25. Records show that some pupils go further, and that there have been threats to staff and pupils, disturbances and breaking of essential rules. Over the last year, the school has excluded 22 boys and five girls for fixed periods. Several pupils have re-offended, so that the total number of fixed period exclusions was 55 in the last 12 months. All staff, including the SEN co-ordinator, are well aware of a group, mostly disaffected boys now in Year 11, which does not want to see itself as part of the community, and for whom exclusion, though necessary, is not the real answer. The school has a good programme for the re-integration of excluded pupils, and the SEN co-ordinator offers good guidance to staff on the management of behaviour.
26. At the moment, the school has nowhere to send pupils whose conduct means they must leave lessons. It wants to include, not exclude them, but has no alternative. Accommodation is urgently needed for an inclusion centre, so that disaffected pupils are given the attention they need, rather

than be excluded from school. Given this facility, governors and staff estimate that the great majority of exclusions could be avoided.

**Further improvements are needed in monitoring teaching and the work of subject departments.**

27. The school has a well designed and effective scheme for the management of teachers' performance. As well as the annual monitoring of teaching for which this scheme provides, the senior team and subject leaders monitor teachers' work as part of the school's process of self-review. As a result, the senior team is well informed about the calibre of its staff, and the linking of senior staff to clusters of subject areas makes for a good sharing of information. However, the well-established autonomy of subject areas, while greatly helping staff to share equally in the running of the school, has led to differing standards of expectation and practice. For example, the regularity and effectiveness of monitoring by subject leaders varies; assessment procedures vary widely in detail and usefulness; some departments make better use of their time for shared professional development than others; and department documentation is good in some areas, while poor in a few others.
28. The school's draft development plan rightly stresses the need for evidence-based practice, which requires rigorous self-evaluation and review. The headteacher's self-evaluation report for this inspection is a very good example of evidence-based research and analysis. A similar approach is now needed in departmental review, so that all areas of the school can be confident that they are working to the best standards.

**Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is good, but needs further development in the setting of specific targets, so that pupils' work is improved even further.**

29. The school's central assessment policy and practice are good. Very extensive records are maintained on every pupil, including baseline data, half-term monitoring assessments, report grades, test and examination results and target grades at each key stage of education. These records are available to all teachers as spreadsheets on the school network. Records are already being well used by teachers to refine the target grades proposed by the assistant headteacher, and the result is a set of target grades for subject, class and pupil. Tutors are informed of the target grades for their pupils, and this has enabled them to hold the first of what will become an annual meeting with individual parents, in which target grades and progress are discussed. Parents welcome this development and are keen to be further involved in the process.
30. Within departments, assessment practice is generally good, but there is much variation between subjects, particularly in the use of assessment to help pupils improve their work. The school is anxious to develop its target-setting procedures further, and to give training to teachers on how best to set individual pupils defined, measurable tasks which will help them to reach and exceed the target grade. To do this economically, it is keen to develop the already good sense of responsibility which pupils feel for their own learning, so that pupils become better at their own self-assessment, rather than relying on the teacher to supply all the effort. There are already good indications that this approach can develop well, for example in the close interest of parents, the generally good use of homework diaries, and the exciting prospects of the internet and e-mail, already being realised in science.

**The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 lacks vocational opportunities.**

31. The curriculum for the GCSE years provides a good range of opportunities within the normal range of subjects. There is the chance to take two option subjects, and the curriculum is broad enough to allow for a range of practical subjects, for example science, design and technology, art and design, PE, and drama and theatre arts. There is a generous range of extra-curricular activities. Work experience is well provided and the school belongs to the local 'connexions' partnership for the 13-19 age group.
32. Although there is a link course in art and design and some pupils attend college courses, the curriculum does not yet provide sufficient vocational courses at this stage, which can make a good bridge between school and college or work. There is a need for a greater variety of such courses,

particularly for young people who are not finding the school experience a rewarding one. Some of these pupils are already attending a key skills course rather than taking a modern foreign language, but most do not have the chance to branch out into vocational courses. The school has already discussed the exciting prospect of making a link with a local college, which is prepared to offer a choice of up to seven such courses. Depending on issues of cost and transport, the school hopes to be able to make some of these courses available to its students from September 2003.

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

33. The school should now:

1. Continue to press for the accommodation it still urgently needs, particularly for sixth form teaching. (see paragraphs 22-23)
2. Reduce the number of exclusions, as soon as accommodation can be found in the school to provide for difficult pupils who cannot remain in class. (see paragraphs 24-26)
3. Further improve the monitoring of teaching and of the work of subject departments. (see paragraphs 27-28)
4. Further develop the target-setting process, setting pupils specific targets in order to help them to improve their work still further.  
(see paragraphs 29-30)
5. Provide further opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to follow vocational courses. (see paragraphs 31-32)

### **Sixth form**

1. Continue to work for improved accommodation. (see paragraphs 22-23)
2. Whenever possible, provide better facilities for ICT. (see paragraph 70)
3. Further widen the curriculum to include better opportunities for vocational courses. (see paragraph 51)

The above eight issues are known to the school and most appear in its current work or development planning.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 8-11	39
	Sixth form	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		44

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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#### **Years 8 - 11**

Number	1	13	15	9	1	0	0
Percentage	3	33	38	23	3	0	0

#### **Sixth form**

Number	5	9	10	2	0	0	0
Percentage	19	35	38	8	0	0	0

### ***Information about the school's pupils***

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>		Y8-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll		702	99
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		44	5

#### **Special educational needs**

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	17	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	111	1

#### **English as an additional language**

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

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	No of pupils
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### ***Attendance***

#### **Authorised absence**

School data	%
	7.7

#### **Unauthorised absence**

School data	%
	0.4

National comparative data	7.8
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National comparative data	1.2
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	95	83	178

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	80	80
	Girls	79	67	68
	Total	157	147	148
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89 (79)	83 (76)	83 (75)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	60 (33)	62 (51)	42 (41)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	76	77
	Girls	65	66	76
	Total	117	142	153
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (63)	80 (71)	86 (79)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (23)	45 (39)	43 (39)
	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	75	78	153

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	34	73	74
	Girls	54	77	79
	Total	88	150	153
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (67)	98 (99)	100 (100)
	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	School 48.6 (50.7)

per pupil	National	39.8 (39.0)
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*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	13	27

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All
School	13.9	16.6	15.2
National	16.9	17.7	17.4

*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	781	55	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

## **Teachers and classes**

### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y8-Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

### **Education support staff: Y8 -Y13**

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked per week	700.5

### **Deployment of teachers: Y8-Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.9
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### **Average teaching group size: Y8 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	21.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	2047819
Total expenditure	1977152
Expenditure per pupil	2581
Balance brought forward from previous year	84972
Balance carried forward to next year	155639

## **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	801
Number of questionnaires returned	205

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	43	6	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	46	4	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	52	10	1	0
The teaching is good.	53	43	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	46	5	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	34	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	22	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	44	4	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	38	2	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	45	14	0	9

## PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

33. When students join the sixth form, their standards are broadly average. In the AS level examinations taken at the end of the first year in the sixth form, results in 2001 were higher than the national average for A-B grades, though below this level in 2002. The percentage passing at all grades was higher than average in 2001, and in line with that average in 2002.
34. In the A level examinations at the end of the two year course, results have been improving over recent years. In 2001, results were overall in line with the national average. Results for grades A-B reached average levels, based on 2001 performance, for the first time in 2002, when the percentage passing at all grades A-E was well above the 2001 average. Many subjects achieved 100 per cent success, with none failing to achieve a grade and a remarkable 97.5 per cent passing their examinations across the whole A-E range. Good results were recorded in mathematics and performance studies in 2002, and 2001 results for physics were good also. In several subjects, numbers were not large enough to make secure comparisons.
35. These improving standards and increasingly secure results are reflected in the standards seen during the inspection. Attainment is often high and progress over the course is good. At this level, little difference in work inspected was seen between the performance of boys and girls, although the total points scored by girls in AS and A2 examinations were higher than those by boys. In all subjects seen, students achieved well, making good use of their time and the very good teaching they received. For example, in a Year 12 chemistry lesson, though their standard of attainment was average, students made good progress in revising a topic first learnt at GCSE, because they listened well, had sufficient mathematical skills and recalled accurately what they had learnt the previous year.
36. Because they want to learn and have very good relationships with their teachers and each other, students make good progress towards the targets set. These targets are realistic but demanding. They are based, after consultation with students, on their GCSE achievements and progress over the course. At the midpoint in their courses, students are overall on target to achieve the results forecast, which should be at least in line with the national average attainment overall. The proportion of students remaining on their courses is high. On leaving the sixth form, nearly two thirds went into higher education last year, so making good use of the qualifications they had gained.
37. Attainment in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT is at the expected level for students in Year 13, but above that expected for students in Year 12. This is because the head of sixth has introduced a very good new system, giving tutorials to groups of students in key skills, but also making sure that every subject offers opportunities for students to improve these skills. As the result of clear instruction, seen in the Year 12 key skills lesson observed, students readily identify these opportunities and are keen to profit from them. In the lesson seen, a student confidently made a presentation, on the UCAS application process, while others assessed her performance. The standard of presentation was good and the subsequent discussion helpful and supportive. Students are increasingly reaching the levels of skill they need to make good use of their time and ability.
38. There is one student with a special need, and he is making good progress. Gifted students have every chance to develop their talents, for example in responding to the very good opportunities for music and drama, the frequent visits and the high quality of teaching which enables everyone to progress at a good pace.
39. There had been no A level results at the time of the last inspection. In recent years, the range and quality of sixth form achievement has steadily improved.

#### Students' attitudes, values and personal development

40. Sixth form students have especially good attitudes to their work. They show a strong sense of commitment to the school and to their studies: they want to be there. In particular, students value the ethos and sense of community within the school. Several students mentioned to inspectors that they had started their sixth form courses elsewhere, but returned to St. Edward's because of this ethos, the sense of community and the quality of support they receive. They felt that they were more likely to succeed by studying at this school.
41. In lessons, students are highly motivated. They are willing to become involved and take part in a constructive manner. Students work very well together; they share research and information. Such cooperative work is often carried out with considerable flair and imagination, as in some of the performance studies lessons seen during the inspection. Students value the way their teachers show them how to become independent learners. They recognise the need for this and develop the skills to do so very well.
42. Relationships between students and their tutors and teachers are very good. This is a particular strength and an important aid to successful learning. Students themselves single this out as one of the things they esteem most about the school. The school expects students to make a contribution to the community, whether within or outside the school. All devote a lesson a week to this, often more. Students help with drama and sport, act as 'buddies' to younger pupils and are active in the chaplaincy team. Outside school, students do charitable work and take part in musical and dramatic events.
43. Sixth form attendance levels are good. Students' behaviour is mature and responsible, and there have been no exclusions at this level. Students' attitudes, values and personal development were good at the time of the last inspection. They are now very good, and a strength of the school.

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

44. Teaching is overall of very good quality. In the 25 lessons seen, no teaching was unsatisfactory. In two lessons it was satisfactory, in ten it was good, in nine very good and in four excellent. It is the quality of relationships which makes teaching particularly effective. Students get on very well with their teachers, and with them create a very good climate for learning. As a result, they learn very well.
45. Teaching is at least good in almost all subjects. In the Year 12 general studies lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory in two lessons and good in one, when students engaged in a lively and well-informed debate on the political situation in Zimbabwe, leading to assessment in the key skills of communication. Students were keen to know more and listened very attentively. This lesson is a good illustration of the careful and well-informed quality of key skills teaching. Teachers are clearly aware of how to improve students' skills, while students know what they need to do, and why. Another good example was seen in a Year 12 lesson in biology, which included a brief discussion, on cloning, which gave the opportunity for students to enhance their communication and ICT skills. Students made good progress in their presentations on the topic, showing good powers of research and increasing competence in applying ICT, for example in their research into the topic on the web.
46. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are very good, and this allows them to plan clear and informative lessons, with plenty of pace and very high expectations of what their students can achieve. These qualities lead students to respond positively, making a good effort and acquiring knowledge rapidly. Examples of very effective teaching were seen in two business studies lessons on product lifestyles and life cycles. The teacher was very keen to share his interest in the subject, had prepared very well, and used powerpoint presentations to great effect. He involved students throughout, so that they were fully engaged and left extremely well informed by, and pleased with, the sessions.
47. Above all, teaching and learning can often be lively and cheerful. Teachers' management of students is helpful and positive, so that students show a real interest and, in many subjects, have a good knowledge of how to learn most effectively. Perhaps the best examples of this cooperative approach were seen in performance studies, where lessons were very lively and went with great

pace. Everyone present will remember an inspired warm-up, with pairs of students learning essential dance movements as they tried to tie themselves together as a pair of laces. On another occasion, word went rapidly round the school of a remarkable altercation between Macbeth and his lady as they wrestled for control at the wheel of a car while speaking their famous lines about courage and determination. Not all lessons can be like these, but they point to a freshness and enjoyment which are willingly shared between teachers and students.

48. Teaching meets the needs of all students well. The SEN department provides good information as need arises, though at present there is only one student in the sixth form with a special need; thanks to very good provision, he is making good progress. Teaching meets the needs of boys and girls equally well, encouraging an open and courteous relationship between them.
49. Sixth form teaching was not separately considered in the last report, and the sixth form was not then a significant part of the school. Since then, very good standards have been established. The quality of teaching and relationships which now characterises the sixth form is giving teachers the extra satisfaction which is helping to improve the whole school.

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

50. The school has a good and improving curriculum in the sixth form. It has taken advantage of recent government reforms in the post-16 curriculum, and now provides a wide range of AS and A2 courses. It makes particularly good provision for the development of key skills, having introduced a successful course for Year 12 this year. The course has a tutorial element, in which students rapidly learn about the range of evidence they will need to obtain certificates in key skills, and how to present and assess this evidence in their chosen subjects. The curriculum in AS subjects has been well analysed by teachers, so that opportunities to be assessed in key skills are now available in nine subject areas. Students are assessed for the competence in one, two or three key skills, through the well organised general studies course. This leads to an AS level qualification, with assessment in three broad areas of human achievement.
51. The curriculum now provides 15 subjects on the school site, and has expanded rapidly in recent years. The school would like to offer more, for example design and technology and ICT, but lacks the space to do so. Membership of the local consortium of sixth forms gives students the choice of a further six subjects, taught elsewhere. In this way, the school provides a broad range of subjects which meet the needs of all its present students. There is a potential further group, however, which is not at present well catered for by the school, and which it would like to include in the successful post-16 education it provides. This group includes students who could be well suited to an education in school, for example in one or two AS subjects combined with a choice of vocational courses. At present, the school has one such course, in leisure and recreation, leading to the equivalent of two AS level qualifications. It is taught successfully, but by one teacher for all the 18 lessons per fortnight. The school would like to expand its provision and staffing in this area.
52. There is a good programme, called life skills, for all sixth formers. This gives guidance across a range of issues, including careers guidance and preparation for higher education. The quality of information given by teachers, the careers service and visiting speakers is good.
53. Opportunities for sixth formers to join extra-curricular activities are very good, and outstanding in music and drama. There are many musical and dramatic productions. A number of students play in local and regional orchestras as well as with the school. Sixth formers are at the heart of dramatic productions, both as actors and technical crews. For example, the sound and lighting crew recently decided to enter for a GCSE qualification in stage lighting, with success. Students are expected to join in activities, and almost all do so with enjoyment. They like sharing in the activities of a successful school. In addition, all students have to do some community service. This can either be in the school, helping younger pupils, or in the wider community. In this way, the school provides very well for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its sixth formers.
54. Students' spiritual development is very well catered for by the school's pattern of regular worship and the part which sixth formers play in this, for example in helping teachers and chaplains to present lively and thought-provoking new liturgies. Students go regularly on visits and pilgrimages,

and play an active part in producing articles on matters of faith for the new school magazine. Their moral development is greatly helped by the active partnership which the school expects them to have with teachers, particularly in the example they set and the help they give to younger pupils. The opportunities which this expectation provides, combined with the first rate tradition of music and drama and an active programme of sports and recreation, lead to very good provision for social and cultural development. Sixth formers take a prominent part in raising

money for good causes, including the ambitious and worthwhile link with a school in South Africa. St Edward's staff have visited this school, some sixth formers are visiting this school, and many were involved in welcoming staff and students from there last year.

55. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has much improved. From providing a limited number of subjects on behalf of another school, the school has now achieved a growing and successful sixth form of its own, with a curriculum of good quality.

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

### **Assessment**

56. There are very good central procedures for the assessment of students' work. Each department receives the baseline information with which to discuss and agree with students their targets for AS and A2 level achievement. These are closely monitored each term, as part of departments' regular academic counselling of students. Data on students' performance is collected termly and results compared across departments. The tutor consultation day in November of Year 12 is the first major review of students' progress, and this is followed by reports in the Easter and summer terms. Students are therefore well aware of how they are doing, and reporting of progress to them and parents is very good. However, targets are solely in the form of grades at present, and the school is now looking at ways of helping students further by giving them specific tasks to achieve which would bring about the improvement which the target grades imply. After examination results are known, senior staff conduct a series of interviews with subject leaders, exploring the value added or otherwise by the department to the results their students have achieved.
57. Assessment in subjects is generally good. It is very good in some, for example mathematics, where staff have built up an impressive database of information, allowing teachers to predict future performance with accuracy. Art has established a weekly progress check, while biology, physics and chemistry conduct tests every half term, followed by constructive advice to students. Subject areas have good systems for the setting and moderating of modules of work. A noteworthy example of this is the careful approach to the assessment of key skills through the general studies course. Students are well aware of what they need to do, how to achieve the levels they are capable of, and what opportunities for assessment have been provided in subjects. As a result, they make very good progress in acquiring these skills.
58. The use of data to make predictions and calculate the value added by the school to students' results has improved markedly since the last inspection, while good standards of assessment within subjects have been maintained.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

59. The advice, support and guidance given to students in the sixth form are good. Students are prepared well. They receive a good range of information, both written and oral, to help them choose courses, whether they want to join the sixth form or go elsewhere. The transition to sixth form work is handled carefully. Sixth form staff, helped by a careers adviser, provide guidance and counselling after GCSE results come out. An important part of preparation is the induction day, held out of the school, before students begin courses. This introduces students to the methods of study they will need in the sixth form. It also covers aspects of personal development such as their spiritual life and community involvement. It is possible for students to change courses if, despite this preparation, they feel they have made the wrong choice.
60. Students also receive good support, both academic and personal, during their time in the sixth form. The well-structured programme includes academic counselling, and routine one-to-one

interviews with tutors to check and discuss progress. The guidance that students are given to help them prepare for higher education or employment is also good. The school makes good use of the proximity of Bournemouth University: students are encouraged to attend higher education days there. Outside speakers help to broaden pupils' horizons and help with interview practice. Students are asked to evaluate their university interviews so that future applicants to those institutions can prepare effectively. This is a good example of the way the school seeks to advise and help its students. The careers service contributes effectively to this support. The one weakness in the support that students receive is the very limited space for private study and recreation, caused by the shortage of space in the school.

61. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the good standards of care and guidance then reported.

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

62. Students and their parents think very highly of the sixth form. Some of the parents at the pre-inspection meeting said how pleased they were with students' progress in the sixth form. They considered the sixth form to be a developing strength of the school.
63. The school decided not to use the Ofsted students' questionnaire, as it had carried out a similar survey at the end of the summer term last year. The results of this were made available to inspectors. These were very positive. A high percentage of students considered that they were well prepared for entry to the sixth form and given good support during their time there. They said that they were taught well and enjoyed being there. Inspectors asked a number of students for their views on the sixth form during the inspection. Their views were even more positive than the school's survey. All considered that they were doing well and praised the way they were encouraged to develop as independent learners. They also valued the strength of their teachers' support, which was there should they need it.
64. In the school's survey, a majority of students felt that the school did not provide a good range of activities outside their academic subjects. This view contrasts with the opinions of those students interviewed during the inspection, and the evidence of students' involvement in the life of the main school, extra-curricular and community activities. However, students interviewed did comment on the lack of study and recreational facilities – a result of the shortage of indoor accommodation in the school. Inspectors agree with the positive views of students. They judge extra-curricular activities very good, and agree that accommodation for sixth formers is inadequate.

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

### **Leadership and management**

65. At all levels, leadership of the sixth form is very good. The headteacher and deputy are very well informed about the sixth form and are dedicated to its further progress and success. The new head of sixth, well supported by senior staff, gives committed and effective leadership. Her work in developing new areas of the curriculum, and in the development of teaching and learning skills, has resulted in the very good sharing of practice among teachers. The outstanding example of this has been the recent introduction of the key skills programme, which has rapidly established itself as a successful part of professional practice. The head of sixth and senior staff ensure that the sixth form is seen as an integral part of the school, and students greatly appreciate the chance to be part of the community and to help in its leadership. Very good leadership promotes high standards of teaching and learning, because teachers and senior staff share in the team spirit which makes the whole school, and not least the sixth form, a friendly and successful place in which people are well looked after. At a meeting of sixth formers during the inspection, three students who had left to start sixth form courses elsewhere said that they were very glad to have rejoined the school.
66. The governing body gives good leadership to the sixth form, and has ensured that statutory requirements are met. It has had the vision to bring the sixth form into being, to appoint good staff and to fight hard for the accommodation it still needs. Good leadership in its finance committee

has led to a cost-effective sixth form, which, despite rapid growth, is already breaking even. The school makes good use of sixth form funds, and neither supports the main school from this source nor is supported by it. Numbers are rising, and the sixth form now represents an increasingly effective part of the school in financial terms.

67. Monitoring of sixth form performance is good overall. Procedures for the monitoring of teaching are satisfactory at present, though the very good quality of teaching seen during the inspection does not suggest that further interventions in the classroom are needed at this level of the school. The monitoring of students' progress is good within departments and very good from the head of sixth and assistant headteacher, who provides very useful baseline and value-added data to subject areas.
68. The draft development plan for 2003-04 is based on the need to provide best value at all levels, including the sixth form. The school plan covers all stages of education, so that the sixth form is firmly included in plans to develop the quality of teaching, learning and leadership further. There is a detailed and useful sixth form development plan which reflects school priorities well. Much progress has already been made towards achieving its main aims.
69. Since the last inspection, the leadership and management of the sixth form has greatly increased in scope, so that the sixth form has now become a most important feature of the school.

## **Resources**

70. Resources for learning are good, though constrained by problems of space, especially for sufficient ICT and library resources. Staffing resources are good; teachers are well qualified and experienced, and are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Accommodation is poor. There is nothing like enough space for sixth form teaching, private study, recreation or management. The school has been granted its own sixth form, which is proving popular and successful. It needs the space to develop as it should. The lack of space is having a negative effect on potential standards, because many subjects are taught only partly in specialist space, for example music, and students lack the facilities to make good use of private study time.

## **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
Mathematics	12	92	71	58	30	3.2	2.2
Chemistry	16	88	87	38	40	2.6	2.8
Biology	18	100	84	25	34	2.7	2.6
Physics	12	100	86	50	39	3.5	2.8
Art	10	100	86	20	43	2.9	2.9
Performance studies	13	92	95	54	40	3.4	3.0
Geography	12	92	91	33	38	2.9	2.9
History	15	100	93	47	41	3.3	3.0
Religious studies	7	100	91	43	38	3.3	2.8
Psychology*	19	95		21		2.6	
English language	23	100	93	61	35	3.8	2.8
English literature	12	100	95	67	39	4.1	3.0
French	7	100	89	14	40	2.0	2.9

\*national results not available

### **GCE A2 courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	83	87	17	42	4.6	5.7
Chemistry	1	100	90	0	43	2.0	5.9
Biology	6	100	88	17	34	5.0	5.3
Physics	5	80	88	40	40	5.2	5.7
Art	4	100	97	50	46	7.0	6.5
Performance studies	5	80	99	20	38	5.5	6.6
Geography	10	80	92	40	38	5.6	5.8
History	13	100	89	23	36	5.3	5.5
Religious studies	4	50	93	0	38	2.5	5.9
English literature	15	100	95	40	37	6.8	5.9
French	3	33	89	33	38	3.0	5.6



## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics and physics, but chemistry and biology were also sampled. The inspection of mathematics covered the modules in pure mathematics, statistics, and mechanics. In chemistry and biology, examination results in 2002 were above the 2001 national average. One lesson in each subject was observed and in both teaching was good. In biology, the topic of cloning was used skilfully by the teacher to provide opportunities for the assessment of the key skill of communication. In chemistry, the teacher built well on students' recall of GCSE work, allowing them to make good progress in understanding the reactions being studied.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- A level results in recent years have been very good.
- The standard of work seen in Year 12 and Year 13 is above average for each module. Students are achieving well.
- Teaching is very good, with assessment an integral part of teaching and learning.
- Relationships with students are very good, so that learning is a partnership.
- Teachers plan the courses carefully, so that the different modules support and consolidate each other.

##### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is inadequate. It limits consistency of approach, use of ICT and the use of practical mathematics.

71. The mathematics department does well for its sixth form students, enabling students of all abilities to build upon their GCSE achievement. Since the last inspection, students have usually gained results in line with, or higher than, the national average. However, small numbers of candidates make it difficult to make direct comparisons with national figures, or between the performance of male and female students. The number of students taking the AS examinations is rising. Last year seven students sat the AS examination; this year there are 15. In the spirit of AS courses, and reflecting the national scene, two students, having gained an AS mathematics qualification, decided to concentrate their efforts on just three different subjects in Year 13 leaving five preparing for A2 mathematics. In 2002, five students sat the A2 examination with four gaining grade A and 1 grade B. The average points score was the best ever and was higher than in all other subjects. These results represent very good achievement.
72. The standard of work seen in lessons and students' files confirms this. The quality of students' written work in both years is above average and is matched by the quality of their oral work. All students have built upon their earlier knowledge effectively. In Year 13, students have very good algebraic skills and a good understanding of differentiation when deriving and using chain rule for the first time. Similarly, Year 12 students show a good understanding of statistics and probability when using the normal distribution to calculate the probability of a sheet of metal coming from a given sample.
73. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their modules and share their enthusiasm with students. The strength of teaching is careful course structure and the integration of assessment into the schemes of work. Lessons are very well structured. They are based on a detailed knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, assessed from homeworks, end-of-topic tests and classroom dialogue. Very good relationships ensure that students learn very well. Structured questioning enables students to build upon their existing knowledge and to attempt more challenging problems with confidence, in an atmosphere of partnership. Further evidence of this partnership is to be found in students' files for each module. Following the teachers' advice, files are extremely well organised. Higher attaining students are very good at writing notes, for example facts or formulae to be remembered. This prepares students well to become independent learners. Students show a very strong commitment to their studies, well exemplified by a gifted student who is studying towards a further mathematics qualification on his own, knowing he has the

support of teachers should he need it.

74. The lead teacher manages the course organisation very well. She is extremely conscientious in her efforts to provide students with the best opportunities, and ensures consistency of approach through dialogue with her colleague. Her marking and assessment procedures are very thorough, enabling her to pinpoint individual strengths and weaknesses, which are shared with students. Students benefit from negotiating targets with their teacher. They like a realistic challenge and work hard to achieve their goals. This very good practice would also benefit pupils in Years 8 to 11. Teachers and students endeavour to overcome the problems of accommodation, which obliges lessons to be held in a variety of rooms. Inadequate accommodation hinders consistency in teaching, limits the use of ICT and restricts opportunities to broaden students' experience of practical mathematics.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Standards have improved year by year and are now well above the national average.
- Students achieve well because the quality of teaching is very good and they have a positive attitude to learning.
- Relationships are very good and students respond to the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- The provision of specialist accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- The department does not have enough accessible ICT equipment.
- Students need to have a more methodical approach to their note-taking.

75. In the 2002 A2 examination, the percentage of students attaining higher grades was well above the last confirmed national average result of 2001. All candidates passed, achieving results in line with those expected for them. These results were better than the two previous years; the performance of girls was better than that of boys. The performance of students in the 2002 AS level examination was well below the national average and was below that predicted by their GCSE results. Of these nine students, only four have continued with their advanced level studies.
76. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Year 13 are broadly consistent with course expectations. Students are performing at the levels expected for them and make good progress over the course. In one lesson observed, they showed knowledge of a range of appropriate formulae related to electricity and could use a spreadsheet and carry out an experiment to investigate energy transfer.
77. Students in Year 12 have settled down to their post-16 studies and are performing at levels which reflect their previous attainment in the GCSE examination. They have good recall and showed in the lesson observed that they have a sound understanding of the forces involved in the deformation of solids. Many can present written work well, for example in an extended investigation to find the resistivity of constantan. Evaluations were well done and error calculations very detailed, indicating a sound grasp of the requirements of good scientific investigation.
78. Teaching is very good overall and, because of the teachers' enthusiasm to share their knowledge, students make good gains in their own knowledge and understanding. Relationships with students are very good and teachers have an excellent command of the subject. Lessons are carefully prepared. A range of activities within the lesson ensures that students' interest is retained and they develop scientific skills. For example, in a Year 13 lesson the teacher discussed the idea of unifying concepts in physics. Students responded well, setting up a spreadsheet to test the feasibility of using the energy from a capacitor discharge to heat a volume of water. They then tested the idea experimentally. Students improved their knowledge as well as their skills in ICT because the lesson was well planned and had a variety of challenging activities.
79. In the Year 12 group, students' recall of work covered in GCSE was very good. The teacher made good use of multi-media resources, making the objectives of the lesson clear. Students discussed the forces involved in deforming solids and carried out an open-ended investigation related to Hooke's Law. Their graph drawing skills were good. The teacher was adept in identifying students'

- difficulties and giving them assistance. The work tested students at all levels of attainment. As a consequence, they made good progress in their knowledge and understanding, and improved their practical skills.
80. Students' motivation is high and they are willing to initiate discussion and challenge ideas. They work independently, but support each other well in discussion. The quality of their written work varies. Some take great care with their presentation, but others lack organisation and fail to provide evidence of a methodical approach to study. The work in students' files is not often marked. However, the use of periodic review sheets, commenting on what they have written and setting targets, helps them to plan for further progress. Higher attaining students have good numerical skills, allowing them access to all parts of the curriculum, but lower attainers sometimes have difficulty with simple algebraic processes.
81. The subject is well managed by the head of science who shares the teaching with another experienced teacher. They work well together and are well supported by three laboratory technicians. Although the department makes good use of ICT, access to sufficient suitable hardware is very limited. The lack of laboratories results in students being taught frequently in non-specialist accommodation. This has an adverse effect on the continuity of their education.
82. The department has responded to the observations in the last report about post-16 provision. Students are now less dependent on their teachers and work more independently. Attainment has improved, and students now achieve the higher grades in the A2 level examinations.

## **BUSINESS**

Business studies is a new AS and A2 course, first offered in September 2002. Teaching in the two lessons seen, on product lifestyle and life cycle, was excellent. Students made first rate progress, gaining a very good understanding and getting real enjoyment from their studies.

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

Leisure and recreation, a vocational certificate course, was first offered in September 2002 One lesson was seen, on sports tourism. Teaching was good and students responded well, making steady progress in understanding the technical analyses required. At present, one teacher takes all 18 lessons in the fortnight, which is not a good arrangement either for teacher or students.

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

The focus was on performance studies, taught to students from the school and the local sixth form consortium. Five lessons were seen. The elements of the subject are music, drama and dance.

There was no opportunity to observe any art lessons, but students' work was seen. Recent A level results are average, though numbers are too small for valid national comparisons. Students' standards are improving as a result of knowledgeable and challenging teaching. Students are achieving well in relation to their capabilities. An area for improvement is the lack of adequate work and storage space which restricts activities in the sixth form. There was no opportunity to observe any music lessons, though students were seen fully involved in extra-curricular music. The department has a good record of examination results which have been above the national average in recent years. A particular strength is the comparatively large numbers of students who are entered for AS and A2 level music. An area for improvement is the lack of adequate accommodation which restricts activities in sixth form

### **Performance studies**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Standards of work are above average.
- Students have excellent attitudes and the desire to do well.

- Teaching is very good; it is characterised by enthusiasm, very good subject knowledge and effective use of professional experience and expertise.
- Musical theatre and other public performances enrich the curriculum and offer excellent opportunities for whole-school involvement.

**Areas for improvement**

- A second studio space for lessons and group work is urgently required.

83. In 2002, A2 level results were very good, with all students, including those from the local consortium of sixth forms, gaining grade B. AS results were good and most students are continuing to A2 level. Male and female students do equally well. The results indicate very good achievement, particularly for those students who have little or no previous experience in the three elements of the subject, music, drama and dance. The subject is attracting an increasing number of students.
84. The standard of work of current students is above average and confirms their high attainment in examinations. A particular strength is the confidence displayed by students in planning and performing. All students demonstrate very good knowledge of drama techniques. This enables them to convey subtle and abstract ideas effectively in performance and to take the occasional risk. The higher attaining students also demonstrate these qualities in their written evaluations and coursework. For some, the written aspects of the course are difficult, both in depth and in the standards of literacy required. Students with a good knowledge of dance and music draw well on their skills. By integrating them into their performances, they help to raise the standards reached by others. In planning for a final examination performance, one Year 13 group, using their jazz playing talents, set their morality tale in 1920s America. Another group planned to base their compositions on the musical style of John Cage to create the atmosphere for their contemporary dance.
85. Students' attitudes are excellent. Year 13 students work with maturity and self-assurance and when working together with Year 12, they present exemplary role models. They seek and respect guidance with the result that they are self-critical and learn quickly. Students develop a trust in each other when negotiating ideas and this develops team building skills and excellent relationships. They enjoy their work. A scene exploring the power struggle between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, set in the driving seat of a car, met its objectives of close analysis of tone changes in the text. A combination of good humour, high expectations and mutual support is a major factor in the students' success.
86. The teaching seen was all very good and had many excellent features. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is contagious and inspires students to learn in and beyond the classroom. Numerous opportunities are found to involve experts from outside the school, widening the subject and giving students an insight into the high standards expected in professional performance. Good knowledge of the examination requirements and very good relationships with the students underpin the teacher's appropriate challenge and praise to each individual. Helpful marking of work, close analysis of marks gained in each examination unit and a discussion of individual progress give the students a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. This leads to good advances in knowledge, skills and understanding.
87. Teaching is well supported by very good equipment in the hall and the drama studio and promotes a sophisticated use of and good training in lighting, sound and stage management. However, the shortage of a second teaching space leads to lessons inappropriately timetabled for the hall and a lobby, and this involves constant interruptions. Whilst it is to the credit of the teacher and the students that they work with determination in these circumstances, it results in a serious limitation on the activities that can be undertaken. Themes of lessons and plays studied draw effectively on matters important to the students, particularly issues that are sensitive and deal with feelings. In work such as this, the department makes a strong contribution to spiritual development and, in its style of lessons and activities, an excellent contribution to moral and social development.
88. A wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum and makes a good link with parents and the local community. The ambitious annual production, ably supported by the caretaking and administrative staff, also involves teachers and assistants from other departments in the school. It gives the sixth form opportunities to work with younger students and the whole school to be involved in a communal activity.

89. The department is led with commitment, energy and flair. As a result, performance studies has a major impact on the creative and communal life of the school.

## HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history. In addition, one lesson of geography and one of psychology were also sampled. In geography, standards are at least good. A level results show a 100 per cent pass rate in four out of the last five years. In a very good lesson on socio-economic changes in rural areas, very effective teaching and learning were seen. Students made rapid progress, gaining a good understanding and getting real enjoyment from their studies. In psychology, the first A2 examination was in 2002, when all students were successful, with an average points score higher than in most subjects in the school. Teaching was good in the lesson seen, on factors causing heart disease, with good learning and assured progress.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- There has been a clear improvement in standards since the time of the last inspection.
- 100 per cent pass rates have been achieved at A level over the last four years.
- Teaching is at least good, and sometimes very good.
- Effective liaison with the SEN department helps all pupils learn.
- The department is well led.

#### Areas for improvement

- Better use of ICT is needed in everyday classroom teaching.
- The lack of a consistent style of marking lessens the effectiveness of assessment.
- Accommodation for specialist teaching is lacking.

90. In the A2 examinations in 2002, 100 per cent of the entry achieved a pass grade, with around a quarter gaining A-B grades. In the AS level examinations, most students passed, with a third gaining A-B grades. Despite weaker results in 2002 than in the previous year, history was still performing at above the school average at AS level, both in the overall success rate and in the percentage of students gaining the highest grades.
91. Since the last inspection, there has been a marked improvement in the success rate in Year 13. Five years ago, only one in ten of the entry gained a pass at A-B grade. The pattern since then has been for a 100 per cent pass rate each year, with around a quarter of the entry gaining the highest grades. This consistent pattern of achievement reflects the solid advances made by the department since the last inspection. The department has achieved its targets, improving results in GCSE and sixth form examinations.
92. Standards of teaching and learning were at least good, and some aspects were very good. Both sixth form teachers are specialists and readily communicate their knowledge and enthusiasm, so that students were keen to learn and develop their skills. The style of teaching encouraged group and whole-class discussion, so that all students participated well. One student with a hearing impairment, well supported by a teaching assistant, took a full part in group and discussion work and takes a full part in the work of the class. Careful and well monitored note-taking, both individually and in groups, is also used to good effect. Students in both years developed their skills as historians, as well as learning historical fact and detail. They developed their note-taking from original source materials, and also their essay writing skills, improving their amplification, analysis and judgement.
93. History is not removed from the realities of the world in which we live. For example, in a lesson on the rise of anti-Jewish legislation in Germany during the 1930s, links were made to the eventual outcome of Nazi anti-Semitism in the Holocaust. This lesson was given on Holocaust Day.
94. Leadership and management of the department are good. The amount and quality of up-to-date resources meet the requirements of the new syllabuses. These include resources for ICT, and computers are well used for research by A-level historians. However, a greater use of computer-assisted teaching is needed in the classroom. Students' work is marked clearly and their progress monitored throughout the course, including an analysis of individual strengths and weaknesses.

This provides a clear picture of likely achievement and of areas on which students should concentrate. However, the two teachers use slightly different styles of marking and the department should look towards standardising practice, to increase clarity for students. Teachers make good use of opportunities for their professional development.

95. The shortage of accommodation is a major constraint. The school is doing all it can to improve things, but meanwhile the resourceful staff do their best with what is available. This reflects the enthusiasm and quality of the department, and the dedication of its teachers.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English language and English literature, in which two literature and one language lessons were seen. One lesson of French was also sampled. In French, examination results in 2002 were below the national average of 2001. In the lesson seen, the one student was revising her work on racism and immigration. Teaching was very good, the student had good linguistic competence and made good progress.

### English language and English literature

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and leads to good learning and progress.
- All teachers are committed to the support of students and to raising standards.
- Extra-curricular activities are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Space is lacking for students' private study.
- Better use of ICT is needed, to improve drafting and presentation.
- Students in English Language need help in drawing conclusions from their analysis of texts.

96. Standards in both the literature and the language courses are very high. Results in A2 level literature, measured by the percentage of A and B grades, have been above or well above the national average in three of the last four years. Results in language were as high in 2002, the first year in which the school has entered candidates. Results in the AS examinations have been equally impressive, particularly in 2001 when well over half the candidates in a large entry achieved A-B grades. Only one student has failed to achieve a pass grade in any examination in the last four years.
97. Those studying literature have good knowledge of the texts. They understand character and plot, the devices which make drama come alive, and the technical aspects of poetry. They are lively and responsive in discussion, offering in one lesson perceptive comments on a poem's meaning and mood. In another lesson, on Shakespeare's *Othello*, they discussed how one might stage the first meeting in Cyprus between Desdemona and Iago, why Iago speaks in rhyming couplets, and whether Desdemona was flirting with him. Some writing seen in essays is clumsy; students are unsure how to incorporate quotation, or how to conclude an argument.
98. In the language course, students have mastered the basics of grammar, though they still make grammatical mistakes in their own writing. They are confident in their use of technical terms, such as 'semantic field' or 'strap lines'. They acquire increasing skill in analysing various types of writing, showing how writers adapt their style to the likely audience. They learn how the English language has changed over time, and how language develops in childhood. Some good research was seen on the language used in a new town such as Milton Keynes, where the children have evolved a way of speaking quite different from their parents. However, some essays fail to show the effect of the technical devices which the student has identified, and become, at worst, a mere list of such devices.
99. Students' progress is good, in both language and literature. Examination results show that

students are achieving well in relation to their results in GCSE and the AS examinations. This is due to their hard work and the support given by teachers. Students are given targets, but these could be more precise and challenging.

100. Teaching is very good. Teachers know their subjects well, prepare thoroughly, explain clearly and mark helpfully. Relationships with students are excellent, thus encouraging discussion and increasing motivation. There is little that needs improvement but some minor points emerged during the inspection. Advice to students on how to improve could be more precise: if more essays were word-processed they could be redrafted more successfully. Teachers could usefully suggest a wider range of critical reading. And there were times when some silent students should have been invited to speak, and others when more time should have been given to recording the outcomes of a discussion.
101. The curriculum is appropriate. It has been widened in the last two years by the introduction of the language course. Students are encouraged to develop their skills in speaking and listening. The literature course in particular extends their cultural awareness, and the style of teaching gives plenty of scope for positive interaction, developing the skills of working together in small groups, listening sensitively to other people and learning from what they say.
102. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, due in large part to the leadership of the head of the department, who has encouraged an active team spirit among all his colleagues. He has overseen a continually rising standard of attainment and widening contacts with the local community, including a good range of extra-curricular activities.