

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **MILLOM SCHOOL**

Millom

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112388

Headteacher: Mr L J Higgins

Reporting inspector: Bill Stoneham  
27407

Dates of inspection: 31<sup>st</sup> March – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003

Inspection number: 254233

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11-18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Salthouse Road  
Millom  
Cumbria

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Professor Colin Richards

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

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11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English English post-16	
8341	William Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics post-16	
18542	Gerald Griffin		Science Biology post-16	
8682	Martin Trevor		Design and technology Design and technology post-16	
31765	Ian Hume		Information and communication technology	
11720	Philip Winch		Modern foreign languages Citizenship	
30457	David Evans		History	

15462	Clifford Blakemore		Geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
4689	Monica Christian		Art and design	
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## INTRODUCTION

In this report efforts have been made to minimise the use of shorthand notations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, the notation **ICT** refers to information and communication technology. **SEN** is used to denote students who have special educational needs and **SENCO** refers to the special needs co-ordinator. An **LSA** is a learning support assistants and an **IEP** is an individual education plan. **PHSE** refers to the school's programme for personal, health and social education.

In the sixth form section of the report, comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2000/2001. When the report was published national comparative data for the academic year 2001/2002 was not available for sixth form education though it had been published, and is used in this report, for Years 7 to 11 inclusive.

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Millom School is a popular and growing specialist technology college serving the small town of Millom and a large part of rural West Cumbria, a sparsely populated region. Parts of the catchment area are economically disadvantaged and other parts are still recovering from the effects of the 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic. The school is smaller than average. There are 723 students on roll, including 72 sixth formers. The numbers of boys and girls attending the school are very similar. The students are mainly of white UK origin; less than one per cent of students are from other backgrounds and there are very few students for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is broadly average, but the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is above average. Students' attainment on entry to the school varies widely but, overall, is below average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a very good school. Students in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well and the achievement of sixth formers is good. Teaching and learning in all years, including the sixth form, are good. Leadership and management of the school are very good and the school provides good value for money. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is also good. The principles of best value are thoroughly understood and they are applied very well. The school has recorded a good level of improvement since the last inspection. For the school to improve further, some of the advances it has made need to be fine-tuned in order to improve effectiveness further.

#### **What the school does well**

- The very good leadership of the headteacher, other members of the senior management group and the governing body, in establishing a clear educational direction for the school.
- The leadership and management offered by many heads of department.
- The quality of teaching and learning in many lessons, including the sixth form.
- Achievement is very good; during their time in the school, students make significantly greater progress than students nationally.
- The very good provision made for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the impact this has on personal development and relationships.
- The very good provision made in design and technology.

#### **What could be improved**

- Although standards in ICT are above average and achievement is good, more consistent opportunities need to be provided for students to use ICT as a tool to help their learning.
- The more consistent use of assessment information to improve the students' knowledge of grade criteria, their target grades and what they need to do to achieve them.

*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 previously inspected in March 1997. A good level of improvement has been recorded since this date. The quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve and the majority of lessons are now good or better. This reflects the school's commitment to raising standards by monitoring and evaluating its work. Good progress has been made against the key issues for development identified in the previous inspection. Standards at the end of Year 9 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have risen at least in line with the national pattern and GCSE results at the end of Year 11 and A level results at the end of Year 13, have improved. The school has met or



exceeded its suitably challenging targets. In relation to its income, the school has continued to show good value for money and it is on course to meet its current targets.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above average in English in comparison to all schools, while in mathematics and science they were average. When compared to schools having a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, results in English and mathematics were well above average and in science they were average. The results in English and mathematics, in particular, when considered against the students' standards on entry to the school in Year 7, are significantly better than expected and show that the students achieve well during their first three years in the school. At the end of Year 11, the average points scored in GCSE examinations has been increasing and, in 2002, results were well above average. In relation to the students' test scores at the end of Year 9 in 2000, their GCSE results are well above average and, when compared to schools having a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals, results are significantly above average and are in the highest five per cent nationally on this comparison. The achievement of these students is good. Though the number of students sitting A-level examinations at the end of Year 13 is small, numbers have been increasing and results have improved. As numbers are small, any analysis based on gender has to be treated with caution, but male students in 2002 recorded results that were well above average, female students recorded results that were broadly average, and results overall were above average. For the students concerned, these results represent good achievement, as they were better than predicted based on their GCSE performances two years earlier. In the work seen during the inspection, overall standards are average in Year 9, and above average in Year 11 and in the sixth form, though standards and achievement in mathematics in Year 11, especially for higher attainers, are only satisfactory as a result of students receiving insufficient taught time. Standards and achievement in DT are very good throughout the school because of consistently very good teaching. Improvements have been made in the use of assessment information and much useful and relevant data is made available to staff. The use of this information is, however, variable between departments and between individual members of staff. For standards to rise further, the way data is used to set students target grades and monitor their progress against such targets, needs to be fine-tuned to ensure consistency across the school. Standards in ICT are above average, overall, but the opportunities students have to hone their skills in the use of ICT in different subjects are inconsistent. Nevertheless, achievement is very good over Years 7 to 11. This applies to all students, regardless of their background, prior attainment or special educational needs. Achievement in the sixth form is good.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of students have good attitudes towards school and their lessons and this makes a good contribution to their learning.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Students behave well and, as a result, they make significant progress in lessons. They respond well to school rules and have a good understanding of right and wrong.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. This is a major strength of the school because students get on very well with staff and with each other. This makes for a calm and productive learning environment.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance rates in Years 7 to 11 are similar to the national average, but attendance in the sixth form is good. The school is working hard to secure further improvements.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics and science. The teaching of literacy across the school is good and it is satisfactory for numeracy. In most other subjects of the curriculum teaching and learning are good, with the exception of business studies and history where teaching and learning are satisfactory, and design and technology, ICT and music, where teaching and learning are very good. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, partly because of improved monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice. The school is meeting the needs of all its students well, with most working hard and concentrating well. However, some inconsistencies in the use of assessment data and target grades at departmental level means that students in some lessons do not always know how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. In Years 7 to 11 all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. The quality and range of the sixth form curriculum are also good, though there are no arrangements for the teaching of religious education.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for spiritual and moral development is very good and it is good for social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. The school is caring and inclusive, offering good social and academic support to its students. Assessment procedures are good.

Parents have a positive view of the school. The school has maintained the good relationship with parents highlighted in the previous inspection report.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and senior staff are very committed to improving the educational opportunities for all students who attend the school. There is a clear vision for improvement, which senior staff implement consistently.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors have a clear understanding of the work of the school and they offer very good and consistent support. The governing body have not felt able to fulfil their statutory duty relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship, or RE in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The quality of self-evaluation is high and is leading to improving standards.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The management of the budget is excellent and specific grants are used appropriately. The senior managers have a very good understanding of best value and the principles are applied with rigour. Planning for the school's future is very strong.

Accommodation and levels of staffing are both good. The level and quality of learning resources are also good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress made by their children.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching offered.</li> <li>• The approachability of the school.</li> <li>• That the school expects students to work hard and achieve well.</li> <li>• That the school encourages its students to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework that is set.</li> <li>• The quality and frequency of information provided.</li> <li>• The quality of working relationships with parents.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agree with parents about the many strengths of the school. Inspectors also agree with parents about improvements in the setting of homework and the frequency with which information is provided about how well their sons and daughters are doing at school. The school does offer a broad range of extra-curricular activities in Years 7 to 11 and, despite the school's large rural catchment area participation rates are very good. This provision does need improving for sixth form students. The inspection team found no strong evidence to suggest difficulties in the quality of working relationships with parents. In many cases the evidence suggested that the school had listened to parental comments and had acted accordingly.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is smaller than average with 72 students, with almost equal numbers of male and female students. Most students enter the sixth form having studied their GCSE examinations at the school; few enter from other schools. The sixth form is growing and the present stay-on rate from Year 11 is approaching 40 per cent. Virtually all students are from a white UK origin. There are no students who speak English as an additional language and no members of the sixth form are designated as having special educational needs. The growth in the sixth form has been associated with an expansion in provision. The school concentrates on offering A-level subjects, including a vocational option in health and social care. The range of subjects, and the choices offered, are good given the size of the sixth form. Care is taken to ensure that students start their A-level studies with appropriate qualifications at GCSE. In comparison to national averages, students enter the sixth form with levels of attainment that are broadly average.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is effective overall and a good level of improvement has been made since the last inspection. Leadership is good. Students learn well because of the predominantly good and sometimes very good teaching they receive. Though the consistency of academic monitoring needs refining, the good levels of support and guidance offered to students enable them to achieve well; standards are rising and, overall, students leave the sixth form with a better level of qualifications than expected based on their GCSE performance two years earlier. The sixth form is successful in meeting the needs of its students. Course completion rates are very high and the school is adept at evaluating its own performance and seeking ways by which provision might be improved. This is most clearly reflected in the growing list of subjects offered and the care that is taken to meet the needs of each individual student. In the main, the student body are appreciative of the opportunities offered to them and are supportive. Their attendance is good, though this is not reflected in some non-examination classes. The range of academic subjects offered is good, but the provision for additional activities is less good. The tutorial period, for example, offers too few opportunities for the students to widen their understanding of the world at large. The provision for curriculum enrichment is unsatisfactory. Though the numbers enrolled on some classes are small, provision is planned and managed well and the sixth form has a good level of cost-effectiveness.

**Strengths**

- Good teaching leads to good achievement.
- The opportunities the sixth form offers students to progress to higher education and the world of work.
- The breadth of the sixth form provision.
- The improvements in numbers and results since the last inspection.
- The attitudes of the students.

**What could be improved**

- The opportunities offered in the curriculum for students to broaden their understanding beyond their chosen A-level subjects.
- The opportunities available to sixth formers to have relevant industrial, or commercial, or business experiences as part of their academic courses

*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>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are average. Students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve satisfactorily in relation to their previous learning. Very good leadership of the new head of department provides a good basis for future development.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are good, standards are above average and students achieve well given their prior levels of attainment. The subject is increasing in popularity and the students appreciate the help and assistance offered to them by their tutors.
Design and Technology	<b>Good.</b> A variety of A-level courses are offered. Students start their courses with above average prior attainment and the standards of work seen were also above average. Teaching is good and this stimulates the quality of learning. All students achieve well.
Physical Education	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning are very good and standards of work are above average. Students achieve well and are involved in a range of related activities beyond their academic studies.
English literature	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are above average and an improvement on recent results. Very good teaching motivates students, who achieve well. Students need to have a more effective focus on what they need to do to reach their target grades

In other subjects where lessons were sampled, standards were generally satisfactory and good teaching and learning were seen. A very good lesson was seen in business studies.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Staff know the students well and the support offered by subject tutors is good. Levels of pastoral support are also good. The monitoring of academic performance and the use of target grades vary in their consistency. Some practice is very good and the students are well informed and they know what must be done in order to improve. In other cases subject tutors do not provide the same level of information and the students are less clear on what needs to be done to secure better grades. The overall monitoring of this aspect of the school's work needs to be refined, as do some aspects of the careers education and guidance programme. Students are well informed about higher education opportunities. They are less well informed on details of specific careers, and curriculum partnerships with business, industry and commerce need to be developed further.

Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The provision has good cost effectiveness and the sixth form is evolving well. As it has grown in size, the range of subjects has increased and the needs of the students are being met well. The governors are kept well informed of developments and, as examination results continue to improve, the value added for students of all attainment levels and backgrounds is increasing. Achievement is good and the sixth form is successful in offering students greater opportunities and raising their aspirations.
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## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching they receive.</li> <li>• The opportunities offered to become independent learners.</li> <li>• The range of courses available and the level of choice offered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount and quality of information made available about sixth form options, including careers advice and guidance prior to joining the sixth form and when in the sixth form.</li> <li>• The quality of assessment and information offered about how improvements can be made in learning.</li> <li>• The level of support offered to students experiencing academic or social difficulties.</li> <li>• The quality of enrichment opportunities.</li> <li>• The opportunities offered to take responsibility.</li> <li>• The extent to which sixth formers believe that their views are listened to.</li> </ul>

The views that the students expressed in their questionnaires were not always reflected in discussions and conversations that took place during the inspection. In the questionnaires the students tended to be very critical of their experiences but, during the inspection, it emerged strongly that most students appreciated the opportunities being offered to them and their main feeling was that the sixth form was enjoyable and was improving career opportunities. The inspection team does agree with some of the other criticisms made. For example, some improvements in the quality of the careers education and guidance programme are desirable, as are the opportunities for students to be appointed to positions of responsibility. Greater consistency across departments in the quality of assessment information offered to the students is also desirable, as is the overall co-ordination of this function.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

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

1. This section should be read in conjunction with the summary report where comments on, for example, trends in results are made. Standards in literacy and numeracy are described at the end of the sections on English and mathematics and each subject report includes detailed information about the standards seen during the inspection.
2. Results in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in recent years show that standards, in comparison to all schools nationally, are average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Overall, results are average. These represent good achievement as the standards on entry to the school in Year 7 were below average. Results in mathematics and science have been average for the last few years and changes in levels of attainment have been broadly in line with national trends. Standards in English have risen from below average in 2001 to above average in 2002 and the proportion of students gaining Level 5, or better, in their National Curriculum tests has risen at a rate faster than that recorded nationally. When the 2002 results in these three subjects are compared to schools where a similar proportion of students are entitled to free school meals, standards in English and mathematics are well above average and they are average in science.
3. In work seen during the inspection, standards in the current Year 9 are average overall and are average in English, mathematics and science. Given the below average standards on entry, this represents good achievement over time and reflects the school's commitment to securing higher standards and the work that has been done in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and assessment analysis. In the other subjects of the curriculum, standards are below average in history, modern foreign languages and music. In the case of the former, the students' literacy skills are impinging on standards. For the two other subjects staffing difficulties have had an adverse impact, though standards are now improving well in music following a recent staffing appointment. In ICT standards are above average and in design and technology they are well above average. These outcomes reflect, to a considerable extent, the quality of teaching that is offered. Standards are broadly average in all other subjects.
4. At the end of Year 11 in GCSE examinations standards are rising and, in 2002, the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at grades A\* to C was above average, as was the capped average points score. In comparison to similar schools based on free school meals entitlement, the school's performance at GCSE in 2002 was well above average. Results have been improving for a number of years and trend of improvement has been greater than that typical of schools nationally. The results for both boys and girls were above average, with boys doing better than girls. This praiseworthy outcome reflects the monitoring and evaluation work undertaken by the school, especially in relation to the quality of teaching and learning. The GCSE students in 2002 attained results in their National Curriculum tests two years earlier that were broadly average. Their achievement as they moved through Years 10 and 11 was, therefore, good. Overall, the achievement of this group of students as they moved from Year 7 through to the end of Year 11 was very good. They entered the school with standards of attainment that were below average but, five years later, left with standards of attainment that were above average. Of particular note was the performance of students with special educational needs, all of whom achieved at least 6 GCSEs at grades A\* to G. A most creditable performance.
5. For individual GCSE subjects based on grades A\* to C, standards were well above average in art and design and design and technology. They were above average in English literature, mathematics, dual award science, geography, history, ICT and physical education. Standards were average in English language, below average in business studies, German and home economics and well below average in French. In some of these cases, staffing difficulties contributed to a lower than expected performance.

6. For present students in Year 11, standards are above average. This too represents good achievement in Years 10 and 11, but very good achievement over time as the students have moved through the school from Years 7 to 11. Standards are above average in science, art and design, ICT, and religious education and well above average in English and design and technology. For all other subjects, including mathematics, they are average, except in modern foreign languages where they are below average.
7. Standards of literacy are above average. Students achieve well given their standards on entry. Most write with clarity and good organisation. Typical of this were the high standards in GCSE geography course work where students presented well-structured and close analysis of data on beach management. GCSE ICT students used very clear English expression in their course work. In history Year 9 students used rhythm and imagery effectively to re-create life in the trenches. The work of some students is below average because of weaknesses in reading fluency and written accuracy. The school has effective strategies in place to support these students, such as a reading intervention scheme and use of the recently introduced literacy progress units.
8. The overall standard of numeracy is average. Students handle numbers confidently when doing calculations in their heads. They use calculators appropriately and accurately. In science, students use measuring apparatus accurately and make good use of graphs to display results of experiments. In geography, students collect and analyse data about climate and population confidently. In ICT and design and technology students use computers effectively to display data. However, in mathematics, though the use of the National Numeracy Strategy is well planned, learning objectives are not consistently stated at the start of lessons and the time at the end of lessons is not always used well enough to review learning. Consequently, students are not always sure about what should have been learnt, or how much progress they have made.
9. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Achievement is particularly good in the special needs department where students have discrete support from the special educational needs co-ordinator, which is targeted at their particular need. In lessons, progress is good where there is effective teaching catering for individual needs and where learning support assistants help students individually.
10. The achievements of gifted and talented students are good. In some subjects, for example physical education, their achievements are very good as they are offered additional opportunities via clubs and societies, or by gaining representative honours at district or county level. Gifted and talented students are also offered good opportunities to excel in creative subjects like art and design and design and technology.

### **Sixth form**

11. Standards on A-level courses in 2001, the last year for which national comparative data are available, were above average overall. Though the number of candidates involved was small, results for boys were well above average, while results for girls were close to the national average. Results in 2002 show some improvement on those gained in 2001 and more students were involved and a greater range of subjects was offered. A-level results have continued to improve since the last inspection and the nature of the sixth form has also continued to evolve.
12. Students commence their sixth form courses with levels of attainment at GCSE that are broadly average. Their results are above average. The school's analysis of examination data indicates that most students gain better grades than predicted, based on their GCSE results. This represents good achievement. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations and work sampling, suggests that standards are rising and the school's drive on improving the quality of teaching and learning still further is having an effect. Present students in the sixth form achieve well over time and progress in the majority of lessons is at least good.
13. A-level results in 2002 are similar to those recorded in 2001. Standards in many subjects in 2001 are difficult to substantiate, as entry levels to individual subjects were often low. Even where numbers were higher, gender analysis is not valid because the numbers of each gender entering



for the examination were low. Though no subjects were above average in terms of the attainment of A and B grades, all students gained at least a pass grade in chemistry, English literature, geography and ICT and the results in these subjects were above average overall. Further improvements were made in 2002 and, though some subjects were taken by small numbers of candidates, most subjects had 100 per cent pass rates.

14. Standards continue to rise and the achievement of current students is good. In the subjects that were the focus of the sixth form inspection standards are above average in English Literature, physical education, design and technology, and biology, and are average in mathematics. In the other subjects, observations of the small number of lessons sampled suggest that currently standards are well above average in ICT, above average in business studies, health and social care and history, average in English Language, French, German and geography, and below average in chemistry, physics and media studies.
15. Reasons for the improving standards include the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, the quality of teaching offered and the analysis of examination data that the school undertakes. Levels of achievement and attainment are also influenced by the students' proficiency in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Though these are improving and the school provides key skills lessons, the progress made by some students is constrained by key skills, especially their literacy skills and the limited opportunities they have to study independently using ICT. It was also evident during the inspection that key skills lessons are not always well attended, or appreciated, by the students.
16. The achievement of gifted and talented students studying A-level courses is similar to that of all other students. There are no sixth formers with special educational needs.

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

17. Millom students have positive attitudes to learning, their behaviour is generally good and relationships within the school are very good. These are distinctive strengths that are helping all students in their learning. The positive picture seen at the time of the previous inspection has been successfully maintained. Students' attitudes are good and they enjoy coming to school. Most willingly take part in class discussions and there is no shortage of hands shooting up when the teacher asks questions. The majority are well motivated and concentrate well in lessons. It was noticeable, when inspectors were talking to students, how aware they are, and how proud, of the school's good reputation locally.
18. Excellent attitudes to learning were evident in a Year 7 art and design lesson, where students were making miniature gardens out of clay. The students' responsiveness and enthusiasm as the teacher conducted her slick demonstration of how to model the base and the wall, ensured they made very good gains in techniques and practices. Most had brought along their own protective shirt and drawing tools, again showing good attitudes to the subject, and tried hard to do exactly as they had been shown. The gasps of astonishment as they saw how the teacher made grass using a sieve added another dimension to their learning and they showed much admiration and appreciation of a finished garden displayed by the teacher.
19. Overall, students behave well and, as a result, they make significant progress in lessons. They respond well to school rules and have a good understanding of right and wrong. Students are accustomed to showing respect for other people's property and are friendly, polite and trustworthy.
20. There is a small number of students in the school, mostly in Year 9, who operate outside of the socially acceptable bounds of behaviour. In the case of Year 9 this behaviour pre-dates their arrival in the school; though the school points to the improvement of individuals as time has progressed. This minority, both boys and girls, occasionally disrupt lessons, refuse to co-operate and can be aggressive towards adults and fellow students alike. Staff are well aware of the existence of this minority and are employing a range of strategies to improve their conduct and behaviour.

21. Instances of oppressive behaviour are unusual in the school and students confirmed this was the case. There is some bullying and aggressive behaviour from certain individuals, which the staff are very aware of and work hard to eliminate. Students confirmed that the school takes these kinds of issues seriously and that they are happy to go to teachers for help, knowing it will be given. Staff are aware that some tensions within families apparent in the local community do spill into school. They also realise that there are often differing expectations of behaviour between those practised in the home and at school.
22. The number of students temporarily excluded has risen significantly since the previous inspection. However, the recent introduction of a learning support unit is helping to deal with those students who might otherwise have been excluded. As a result, exclusions are now falling.
23. Students with special educational needs enjoy and appreciate the special help they receive, demonstrating good attitudes and behaviour when supported in class and in one-to-one sessions. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties usually behave well, though they are less consistent than others. They generally behave well in the learning support unit, when working in small groups with learning support assistants. They concentrate well on their work and are eager to succeed.
24. Relationships within the school are very good and students make very significant progress in developing their social skills. Many will defend their views with confidence and they enjoy debating with their teacher. In a tutor period lesson, Year 7 students were keen to express their views on the rights and wrongs of war and clearly felt strongly, and with some passion, about this issue.
25. Students contribute enthusiastically to life of the school and community. Involvement in the school council is taken seriously by the student councillors and is helping to improve their quality of life, for example, by influencing change in the canteen facilities. They also have a big say in spearheading the school's good fundraising work and are currently organising a working party to look at ways of raising money for children in Iraq. Students are mostly tolerant of, and respect, different cultures and beliefs. During the 'Out of the Box' event held for Year 7 students on the last day of the inspection, they were fascinated as the intricacies of Indian dance were explained to them. They tried hard to copy arm and eye movements and joined in enthusiastically, yet with a good sense of respect for the taste of the different culture they were experiencing.
26. Attendance rates are satisfactory and in line with national averages. The school has good procedures for checking on students who are absent and is working hard to improve attendance rates still further. Staff feel that parents are becoming more alert in letting them know reasons for absence and less likely to condone students taking occasional days off for unacceptable reasons.

### **Sixth form**

27. Students have very good attitudes towards their work. Relationships are also very good, based on mutual respect and a genuine liking for their teachers. Students' attendance is above average and is better than that found in the main school. Course retention rates are also very good. Students are interested and concentrate well on their work. They have a strong commitment to do well. They enthusiastically join in lessons and work very well together. Behaviour is very good and students are mature and responsible individuals. The sixth form operates as a harmonious and happy community.
28. Though opportunities for sixth formers to accept positions of responsibility are limited in comparison to many other schools, students carry out their responsibilities well. They can be relied on to organise the annual Christmas discos for younger students successfully and, during the inspection week, they helped organise a primary school swimming gala. Some help in classes and others are taking part in the sports leadership award scheme and help with coaching and training of younger students. Sixth formers regularly present assemblies to the rest of the school; during the inspection, this involved a teacher supposedly eating tinned cat meat, which in fact it was tinned tofu, to prove the moral of not always taking things at face value! The majority of sixth formers are positive about school and appreciate the opportunities offered.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning, which was low at the last inspection, has now been reduced to virtually zero; only two lessons, out of 153 seen, did not meet the standard expected. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of teaching that is good, or very good, though no excellent teaching was seen in the sixth form. Overall, of the five excellent lessons seen, four were in Years 7 to 9. These lessons engaged and challenged the students, who responded with enthusiasm and interest. Excellent learning resulted. The improvements in teaching and learning identified during this inspection reflect the school's commitment to raising standards and the commitment made to the careful and thorough monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice.
30. In Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning are good in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Teaching and learning are very good in design and technology, ICT and music. In business studies and history teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are no subjects where the quality of teaching and learning is less than satisfactory.
31. The teaching of basic skills is good overall but some variations in practice exist. The teaching of literacy is good and is having a positive impact on standards. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. At present the school does not have a written policy statement to guide the development of numeracy across and within subjects. Despite this, well-planned contributions are already being made in many subjects. The teaching of ICT skills is very good and a strength of the provision is that all but a very few students engaged on alternative programmes in Years 10 and 11 are entered for the GCSE examination, however, the teaching of ICT across departments is less strong and in many subjects students are offered too few opportunities to enhance and develop their learning by applying their skills. This affects the progress students make in some lessons and in their own time, as too few opportunities are offered for research work using the Internet, or using spreadsheets to record data in experiments, or other exercises. A further issue is that teachers cannot always gain access to ICT facilities for use in lessons because these are intensively used for GCSE courses. This is a source of frustration reported by teachers and students alike.
32. A major strength of the teaching is that much of it is done by specialists who have good subject knowledge. Most teachers also manage lessons well; potential problems are nipped in the bud. This creates a good learning environment in which students can gain the knowledge and understanding that they need. Much of the teaching is marked by good expectations of what the students should be able to do, backed by teaching methods and tasks that reflect the range of needs in the class. As a result, students of all attainment levels, including those with special educational needs, learn well and make good progress over the lesson, as well as in the longer term.
33. The quality of teaching and learning of students with special educational needs is good in all years. Strengths include well-prepared and well-structured lessons that systematically build on students' previous knowledge and understanding. There is very good support from the teaching assistants, who help the students to become involved in lessons by offering sensible and sensitive support when needed. These well-informed and effective teaching assistants play a key role in enabling students to access the curriculum in lessons. The individual support offered in Years 10 and 11 is of a standard that sufficiently prepares students with special educational needs to sit their GCSE examinations. This represents the school's strong commitment to inclusion. Special educational needs students also benefit in lessons where starter activities are used well and where lessons are concluded by teachers asking the students what they have learnt. Where teaching is occasionally less effective, teachers could offer a wider range of approaches to reinforce understanding. Opportunities are occasionally missed for consistently reinforcing literacy across subjects by encouraging students to plan and draft their writing, providing and encouraging students to use dictionaries, or referring students to classroom wordlists when they ask for a spelling.

34. The features of very good and excellent teaching are not just concentrated in a few bright spots within the school. The very good and excellent lessons seen during the inspection were spread across subjects and involved a good number of teachers, working with a balanced mix of groups of high, middle and low attainers, as well as mixed ability classes. The best lessons have common threads. The purpose of the lesson is made clear so that the students know what they have to do; in the best cases, this is done by identifying the learning objectives rather than listing the activities. Staff plan their lessons very well; they have very good subject knowledge and they are keen to challenge the students' knowledge and understanding and extend it. Excellent teaching characterised work in the Year 11 GCSE textiles course. The class ran a trade fair based on their GCSE practical coursework. This lesson was the culmination of a whole series of lessons and the students, who were all girls, had to display their creations as if they were for sale at a trade fair. The teacher had planned the event in a most thoughtful and creative way and the students had to give oral presentations about their work, covering aspects such as inspiration, design and materials used. The rest of the group, and the inspector, were then invited to quiz the producer about her product. Not only was this approach innovative and imaginative, but the learning was also outstanding as the students had to be knowledgeable about their work in order to give convincing performances in front of their peers. The quality of work displayed was also of a very high standard and it was clear that exciting and innovative teaching served to motivate the students, who were keen to do well and establish high standards in all aspects of their textiles work. Excellent learning was fostered by excellent teaching.
35. One area of teaching and learning that was less consistently good was the use of assessment levels, assessment data and target grades. Much information about the past performances of students is made available to teachers, as are target grades, but some staff do not consistently make sufficient reference to this information as a means of raising standards. Nevertheless, some very good and excellent practice was seen. For example, in Year 9 geography one lesson started with an assessed piece of work being returned. The quality of the marking was excellent; it was detailed and annotated with helpful comments identifying what had been done well and how the work might be further improved. National Curriculum levels were used and all students were set clear targets for improvement. The students were required to refer to their planners to compare the standards they had attained with the National Curriculum levels listed. The lesson then proceeded to examine various aspects of economic trade and development. Teaching and learning during the lesson were excellent. The method by which this lesson was started was impressive as all students knew where they stood and all could identify strengths in their work, areas for improvement and their target grades. The teacher was successful in challenging the students to aim higher by referring regularly to National Curriculum level descriptions and expecting them to know how their work could be improved. Though all staff have the necessary information, not all use it so effectively, so a potent force for raising standards is not being used with consistency.
36. Although over 70 per cent of the teaching is good or better, teaching which is satisfactory tends to lack consistent challenge and pace is slower. Whilst most lessons have a statement of objectives for the lesson, these are often stated in terms of what activities will be carried out rather than considering learning outcomes: what all students will be able to do, most should be able to do and some might be able to do. Further, because assessment data are used inconsistently to set targets and to monitor the progress over time of individual students against them, the work that is set tends to be the same for all. The level of planning to meet the needs of students at both ends of the ability range needs refining. Even if there were, the progress that students make within the lesson is not being assessed well enough; questioning is narrow and limited to a few students, for example. As a result of these shortcomings, a significant minority of the students can drift away from the productive work that characterises much of the work in the school. This rarely results in major misbehaviour; rather a background murmur of social chatter, and a sagging of the pace of learning. Overall, the expectations of what students should be able to do in a lesson are too modest so that, over time, students show adequate rather than good achievement. Yet these lessons are usually taking place in the same subjects where good, or better, teaching is found.

## **Sixth form**

37. The overall quality of sixth form teaching is good. In the five focus subjects, teaching and learning were satisfactory in mathematics; they were good in biology and design and technology and they were very good in English and physical education. There were no excellent lessons seen. Most were either good, or very good with one lesson being graded as satisfactory and another unsatisfactory. Twenty-four lessons were seen in total. In most lessons a key strength of the teaching is the very good knowledge and understanding that teachers have of their subject. This means that in the relatively small groups, there is ample opportunity for teachers to question students carefully and promote greater understanding. In a few cases, some students are relatively quiet and the teacher does not always bring them into discussion sufficiently. In addition to subject knowledge, there is a very good understanding about how the examinations work and how subjects are assessed. Allied to generally good expectations, this means that the students are encouraged to work that bit harder, to refine coursework just that bit more, in order to secure a better grade. This clearly works, as overall, achievement in the sixth form is good and standards of attainment overtime are rising.
38. The relationships between students and staff, and between the students themselves, are good and this promotes an atmosphere of trust and support. Students are thus willing to take risks without worrying about being made to look foolish. As a result of this positive atmosphere and the demands placed on them, students work hard and behave well.
39. In a few cases, teachers talk too much, or try to control the lesson too much. This means that students do not always develop enough independence as learners. A more general weakness is that teachers rely too much on the informal knowledge that they have of the students. Overall, the use made of assessment information is inconsistent. They assess work against examination criteria accurately and regularly, giving helpful feedback. But there are inconsistencies in setting target grades for the students, based on GCSE performances, and in monitoring the progress of students over time against such targets. The value-added approach at the level of individual students could be used more in lessons to evaluate performance and identify how teaching and learning methods could be refined. At a whole school level, there is a wealth of such information. Analyses are done at the level of individual students and the whole sixth form and demonstrate that most male and female students, whether high, middle and lower attainers make at least appropriate progress over time in their learning. The widening of the curriculum, and the range of learning styles offered, even in the same subject mean that students' needs are met well.
40. The sixth form are also offered key skill classes and there is a weekly tutorial period. During the inspection students complained to a number of inspectors about the quality of this provision and admitted that attendance at these sessions was not good. The crux of the dissatisfaction was that the students felt that the sessions were inadequately prepared and did not meet their needs. A further gripe was that it is difficult for sixth formers to access reliable ICT equipment during study periods and this constrains learning opportunities. A numeracy key skills lesson observed during the inspection was satisfactory, though attendance was unsatisfactory. A Year 12 tutorial lesson featured unsatisfactory teaching and learning. It was inadequately planned, taught in an inappropriate location and did not meet the needs of the students.

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

41. The curriculum is good and exceeds statutory requirements; there is very good equality of access and range of opportunities for all students, particularly given that this is a small school compared to the national average. Students from Years 7 to 9 receive a broad and balanced curriculum. All students are taught the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and one modern language, French. Students have the opportunity to study German from Year 8. In addition there is a weekly tutorial period for all students and this incorporates drugs awareness and sex and health education, including personal, social and moral education. In addition Year 7 students receive a weekly lesson in critical skills that focuses on improving students' learning skills. Twice a term, at regular intervals, the timetable is suspended for one day for students in Year 7 to work on a specialist curriculum theme. This provides opportunities for students to engage in activities such as designing space suits to performing arts, and improves their personal and interpersonal skills. Drama is provided as an option in Years 10 and 11 and at A level. The curriculum provides a good

range of GCSE subjects as well as vocational options in business studies, child care and work related learning.

42. The length of the taught week is in line with that recommended by the Government, although below average time in Year 11 mathematics limits the scope of extension work with higher attaining students. This necessitates additional after-school classes. There are weaknesses in the timetabling of subjects such as design and technology and physical education because the single-lesson arrangement does not provide enough opportunities to cover the range of practical experiences in many year groups and the time allocated to Year 8 German teaching is low. The time allowed for personal, social and health education is average and supplemented by work in the critical skills course in Year 7 and work in the religious education course. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. It starts well in Year 9 when students are supported over their choice of courses to follow in the next two years. Satisfactory use is made of the time available for careers education in Years 10 and 11. Provision includes a two-week period of work experience for all students, for which they are well prepared. The school is supported in design and delivery of the programme by the Connexions advisory team who provide advice and interview students about career pathways.
43. The strategies for improving literacy standards are good and are satisfactory for numeracy. The whole-school literacy co-ordinator has a clear overview of developments. There has been effective training for teachers, which has had a good impact on teaching. The Key Stage 3 strategy group provides a forum for promoting literacy and the school has frequent and effective links with its external literacy consultant. The amount of books in the library is in line with recommended levels. Good contact between the librarian and subject teachers results in resources being prepared to support learning, although the library is not represented on the Key Stage 3 group. Year 7 students who join the school with standards that are below average have access to additional help via the literacy progress units. This provision is well organized by the SENCO and delivered by trained learning support assistants. The strategy for developing numeracy is not as well developed as that for literacy. Nevertheless, most subjects are contributing to developing numeracy skills in a well-planned way.
44. There are very good partnerships with primary schools and this leads to students making a smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Regular meetings of senior staff of partner schools ensure that curriculum and pastoral policies are agreed and implemented. Teachers of English and mathematics for example, work closely to plan the literacy progress units and the springboard mathematics in Year 7, whilst the school's special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with the primary schools to ensure that the needs of the students are being met. The sports co-ordinator regularly spends time in a local primary schools supporting students' physical development.
45. Students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs generally have full access to the curriculum. Where students are removed from lessons the procedures followed are appropriate. Learning support assistants have a good knowledge of students' targets and work towards helping them achieve their goals. Literacy is promoted well by the special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants through one-to-one tuition and catch-up programmes.
46. There is a good range of clubs and other activities that take place beyond lesson times, ranging from sporting activities through to clubs based on interests and subjects of the curriculum. Many students attend these activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and fieldwork study, but participation after school is restricted for a few students who do not live in the immediate vicinity of the school.
47. There are very good links with the local community. The ICT curriculum in Year 9, for example, incorporates arrangements to work closely with the Driving Standards Agency on road safety, whilst a group of students in Years 10 and 11 participate in work-related activity in the local community. On other occasions visitors come to the school to work with groups of students. During the inspection week for example, Year 7 students experienced and participated in aspects

of Indian culture, whilst throughout the year many of the school's governors provide support to learning.

48. The school has made good progress in addressing the curricular shortcomings identified in the previous report. The arrangements for humanities subjects have improved and the statutory requirement for ICT is now being met.
49. The overall provision made for students' personal development is very good. The school has made good efforts to improve provision since the last inspection; particularly the spiritual aspect of students' lives, but also the moral, social and cultural elements of their development. This is offered through a good PSHE programme, with a number of subjects, including religious education, citizenship, music, English, geography and history all making good contributions. This is supplemented by activities beyond lessons as well as by visitors and visits, and is supported by the very good role models that the headteacher and other staff provide.
50. Provision for students' spiritual development is very good. The school is an environment where individual differences are recognised and valued. Religious education particularly provides a very good range of opportunities to promote understanding of a variety of religious beliefs. Assemblies are conducted in a respectful manner. An assembly on the Iraq conflict was used to reflect on the choices of good or evil and the suffering that conflict brings. In music lessons students are able to make an emotional response to the music they listen to and reflect on the power of music in times of sadness and celebration. Geography and mathematics inspire a sense of awe at the forces and principles behind the universe and our natural world. Although the school does not fulfil the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all students there is evidence that their spiritual development is not neglected.
51. Students' moral development is promoted very effectively. There are clear expectations of behaviour, which are sometimes discussed in lessons. For example students talked about rewards and punishment in the afterlife and assessed good and bad behaviour. In geography they reflected on boys being preferred to girls in China as well as the effects of acid rain and pollution on the environment. Teachers set a very good example. Students are left in no doubt regarding what attitudes, to oppressive behaviour, such as bullying or racism, are right. They are encouraged to understand and reflect on the rules that underpin society through the 'island' exercise, drawing up rules for peaceful coexistence and democracy through the working of the school council. Discussions in class support students' developing understanding of the consequences of their actions and contribute to the elimination of prejudice. In business studies students consider the moral implications of various forms of production and consider some of the dilemmas that decision-making imposes.
52. There is good provision for students' social development. They are given many opportunities to work together in lessons and they support each other, for example, in music where instrumentalists help others with notation. Year 8 students act as receptionists. Members of the school council take decisions about the school, for instance the refectory and menus. Students' social development is supported by the general atmosphere of respect and co-operation and is promoted by participation in classroom activities such as role play, residential field trips and charitable activities.
53. Students' cultural development is good. Students are introduced to aspects of their own culture and are given knowledge and experience of other cultures, for example in the study of Islam or the 'Out of The Box' day, which Year 7 spent learning about Indian dance and drumming. Because of the remote location of the school, students have had few opportunities to visit galleries or exhibitions or a range of places of worship. They have done useful work in geography on Kenyan culture and in history have explored poetry in the world wars as well as Aboriginal and Egyptian medicines and lifestyles. In mathematics they have encountered Indian number systems and studied the symmetrical patterns of Celtic art. In music they listen to different styles and instruments from other cultures. There is still scope, however, for students to develop further their satisfactory awareness of the implications of the multicultural nature of the United Kingdom and European society.

## **Sixth form**

54. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good but the school does not meet the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education and the provision for enrichment in the sixth form curriculum is limited. The school has a smaller than average sixth form but offers students a good range of A-level and AS-level courses, including a vocational option in health and social care. Extra accreditation can be gained via the sports leadership award scheme. In addition students study key skills of communication and number alongside a weekly tutorial period, students have very good opportunities to access the range of learning opportunities and it is unusual for students to leave their chosen subjects prematurely; course retention rates are very good. In most cases students have a good foundation of knowledge from earlier studies to meet the expectations of more advanced courses, but teachers carefully consider individual cases where the academic background is less secure prior to acceptance into the sixth form. The curriculum is responsive to and enhanced by links with the local community. In design and technology courses for example, learning is well linked to real life situations with joint projects with BAe shipyard at Barrow and British Nuclear Fuels through the engineering education scheme. The health and social care course similarly integrates well with the community as an area health action zone. The school has some good links with the business community and higher education. Students have opportunity for visits and 'taster' days at Newcastle and Lancaster universities and have access to the careers service based at the school.
55. The school has done some good work to enliven its careers education and guidance programme in the sixth form. Good quality advice is available to those students wishing to progress to university and in some subjects, departments have good curriculum partnerships with local firms. Not all students can profit from such partnerships and the school needs to look to see if the role of business, or industrial mentors, can be extended to benefit more students. The quality of the sixth form tutorial period also requires improvement. The student body were critical of the arrangements for this period and commented that the programme was poorly devised and was not well attended. Evidence gained during the inspection supports their view.

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

56. There are good quality, established procedures for ensuring students' welfare care and safety. The positive aspects seen during the previous inspection are still present today. Staff have a clear understanding of child protection matters and procedures are good. Teachers are very aware of and sensitive to the personal and home circumstances of each student. Health and safety procedures are also good. The health and safety policy is a thorough document, which has been carefully considered and revised with the help of governors to reflect current circumstances. A member of staff has recently been given the responsibility for overseeing for health and safety. She recognises the need for training to help her carry out this role. The school receives good support from the local education authority who have helped them improve practice through a recent audit and follow-up visits.
57. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. They have improved considerably over the last year and attendance has improved as a result. The information officer, in partnership with teachers and the educational welfare officer, takes a careful overview of attendance patterns and follows up any areas of concern. The school telephones home on the first day certain students are absent to find out why they are away. This is working well and has been a major reason why attendance is improving, as parents are starting to realise how important their child's regular attendance really is. The school is starting to introduce new ways of rewarding students who attend regularly, such as organising trips out; this is a very appropriate development.
58. There are good systems for encouraging positive behaviour and monitoring unsatisfactory behaviour. The reduction in the number of times students are being excluded for poor behaviour is a testimony to the school's good procedures. Staff have worked hard to improve behaviour over the last year, with a good deal of success. The behaviour policy guide, specifically written for the current academic year, is a comprehensive and helpful document. Instances of unsatisfactory



behaviour are generally managed well by the school. There are a good range of escalating sanctions and varying degrees of support and specialist help provided to enable the school to cope with the minority whose behaviour is extremely challenging. Overall, the school is successful in creating a happy atmosphere, where good behaviour and self-discipline are promoted.

59. Procedures for overcoming any bullying or harassment are satisfactory and instances of oppressive behaviour are rare. Staff are aware of the effect of the minority of students who can turn to aggression and intimidation. They work hard to mitigate their effects on others. The school takes the few reports of bullying seriously and investigates fully. In conversation with inspectors about different aspects of school life, students confirmed they were happy with the help staff provide. There is guidance for students in their planners about what to do if they are being bullied.
60. The way the school monitors and supports students' personal development is good. This is characterised by the very good relationships between staff and students and the interest and care shown in helping them achieve their potential. Each student has an individual interview with his or her tutor every term, where progress is discussed and targets agreed. Of particular note is the school's very well structured mentoring programme for Year 11 students in danger of underachieving. Working with parents full co-operation and support, mentors are provided with an in-depth subject by subject analysis of areas students need to focus on to improve their grades. This information is used as the basis for targeted support in the weeks leading up to examinations.
61. Provision for students with special educational needs, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, is good. Flexibility in arrangements allows for several strategies to be used to aid learning. These include support both in and out of lessons, including the use of the learning support unit and the special needs department. Students receive particularly good support when they are withdrawn from lessons. Good improvements have been made since the last report.
62. Whole-school procedures to assess students' attainment and progress are good overall, and very good in science, design and technology, ICT and geography. In English there is very good use of a range of methods to establish clear learning targets. The 'Assessment for Learning', which underpins the school's approach to assessment, has promoted assessment methods to support learning and there has been a good response in many subjects. The use of technology to store, retrieve and analyse assessment data is strong. The deputy headteacher acts as assessment co-ordinator who analyses a range of data and shares findings with departments and governors as a matter of policy. This has enabled the school to analyse assessment and examination data with greater understanding. Senior management has recognised the need for a more open policy of sharing data with departments. Consequently, heads of departments have started to focus on how best to use the centrally collected data available and to identify underachieving students so that extra support and guidance can be given. This is particularly effective with certain borderline students in Year 11.
63. The school has good systems for collecting and analysing student performance data on a termly basis in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form, and twice yearly in Years 10 and 11. This information and prior attainment data are used to produce estimated and target grades for individual students and year groups in external examinations and attainment tests. However, this information is not consistently used in the classroom.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

64. The school's work in developing systems of assessment and ways of using the information gathered to help to guide teaching and learning is good. In design and technology they are very good. The analysis of GCSE results, for instance, has helped to guide students towards appropriate courses and give them some useful indications of what they need to do to succeed in different courses in the sixth form. However, there is a need for greater consistency in the use of assessment data to ensure that students are given clear targets and that progress against these

targets is regularly monitored and reported. In English there is a need to develop more explicit references to assessment objectives and grade criteria.

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

65. Students are well supported in the sixth form. The very good relationships that exist between staff and students, and the interest staff show in, them help to explain why personal support is good.
66. Induction arrangements are satisfactory and most students are clear about which subject choices to make. Students confirmed in the questionnaire that they were happy with the arrangements. The school does all it can to accommodate the personal circumstances of students, wherever possible.
67. There are good procedures to ensure students' health and safety, which largely follow practice in the main school. Signing in and out procedures are soon to be refined with the trial installation of a card recognition system. Staff have an appropriate understanding of child protection procedures and students in need are sensitively supported, where necessary.
68. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory range of information and guidance for students. A new careers adviser from Connexions started last term and she is enthusiastic about developing her role in order to meet students' needs. There is a good range of links with universities and options for different routes enabling students to enter the world of work. However, the content and quality of the tutorial programme is currently not of a high enough standard to prepare students fully for the wider demands of life after they leave school. Some aspects of the careers education and guidance programme require development. The quality of advice for further and higher education is good, but what many students lack is the opportunity to gain high quality work-related experience during their sixth form courses. Some provision is made, for example, for aspiring engineers, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

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

69. Parents have a positive view of the school. It is rightly well respected in the local community. The school has maintained the good relationship with parents mentioned in the previous inspection report.
70. Approximately one third of parents returned their OFSTED questionnaire and a small number attended the parents' meeting held before the inspection. Most parents who replied were positive, especially about the strong values and attitudes the school promotes, the good progress their child is making and the approachability of staff. Parents were also very happy about the teaching and academic standards at the school. These views are in line with inspectors' findings.
71. Overall, views at the parents' meeting were very positive. However, there were concerns about the timings of parents' evenings and feelings that the gap between meetings is too long for some year groups. These views were echoed in parents' written responses. Inspectors agree with these concerns; there is a four-term gap between parents' meetings for students in Years 7 and 8 and a further three-term gap before the meeting in Year 9. These are too long. Reviewing the pattern and timing of parents' evenings, to overcome this, is a minor issue for the school to consider.
72. A positive aspect of arrangements for parents' evenings is the way parents have the chance to book follow-up meetings with staff, or arrange meetings with teachers they do not manage to see on the night. This is good practice. Staff are very willing to meet with parents at other times, on request.
73. Some other issues emerged from the questionnaire. A quarter of those who replied did not feel well informed about how their child is progressing at school and they are not happy with the amounts of homework and do not feel the school works closely with them. In reply to these concerns, inspectors judge the quality of information about student's progress to be satisfactory overall. Annual reports have been revised recently to make them more useful for parents. They are very

personal to the child and include relevant information such as coursework details, examination and target grades, grades for attitude and information about weaker areas. The balance between comments on attitude and those on progress is not always right. Some subjects contain more comments about the student's attitude towards the subject and it is not always clear exactly what students need to do to improve. Continuity of contact between parents and teachers is not helped by the timings of some parents' evenings, as mentioned above.

74. Arrangements for homework are satisfactory and in line with those seen in many secondary schools. The school urges parents to contact them directly if they feel their child is not getting enough, or getting too much, homework.
75. There is evidence to suggest that the school wants to work closely with parents and the quality of information about school life is good. There is much informal contact through telephone, notes in planners and occasional home visits. This is in addition to letters from heads of year and tutors if there is a concern about a student, or to give praise where due. There are also useful information booklets explaining particular aspects of school life, such as what happens if a child is ill. Information evenings for particular year groups help parents to understand the curriculum and how to help their child at home. The planner is an important tool for students, teachers and parents and is used well to communicate messages and explain school routines. The school consults with parents in order to improve on current practice. For instance, by sending a questionnaire to Year 7 parents in order to find out what they are pleased with and what they would like the school to improve.
76. Parents have a satisfactory level of involvement in school life. Parents and staff are very willing to help with transport so that after-school clubs and sports can operate. Those parents who are governors play an important role in contributing to the overall very good school management.
77. Very few parents commented specifically on sixth-form provision. Those that attended the parents' meeting were very pleased with the standards in the school and the quality of support from teachers.

### **Students' Views**

78. Sixth form students generally expressed satisfaction with the school. In the questionnaire completed by students, some strong concerns were viewed, but in a large number of interviews and conversations with inspectors, many concerns evaporated and students were fulsome in their praise for staff. They particularly appreciate the way they are encouraged to study and learn for themselves, the high quality teaching, the way they were helped to settle into the sixth form and the good choice of courses available. Inspectors agree.
79. There were concerns, however, about the range of activities and enrichment courses and the quality of advice in order to prepare them after they leave. A few disagreed that they could rely on strong support if they had personal problems, but this was then contradicted when students spoke to inspectors. The students were also very critical of the content and of their tutorial programme. The sessions seen by inspectors would confirm this view. The sessions had not been planned well, attendance was unsatisfactory and little learning took place.
80. The provision of advice from the careers service was missing last year, because of staff shortages in the careers service. This may account for some of the negative views held. However, a new careers adviser started last term and she is enthusiastic about developing her role in order to meet students' needs. The level of advice offered to students wishing to enter further or higher education is good. Where the careers education and guidance programme is less effective is in the opportunities all students, irrespective of their subject disciplines, have for gaining high quality work placements that are related to their academic studies and future career plans. There are few work shadowing opportunities although some subjects have formed curriculum partnerships with local firms or businesses and all students carry out two weeks' work experience in Year 12. This limits the opportunities students have for empirical studies and for gaining first class careers guidance from practitioners in the field.

81. Inspectors judge students' concerns about the quality of enrichment programmes and the tutorial programme to be legitimate areas for further thought and consideration.

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

82. The quality of leadership and management offered by the headteacher and senior staff with managerial responsibilities is very good. It has continued to improve since the last inspection. The headteacher has a strong vision for the school and works tirelessly, and with considerable vigour and enthusiasm, to ensure that the school functions successfully and that it provides a safe, happy and vibrant environment for the students.
83. The school's other senior managers provide very good leadership and support. Lines of responsibility are clearly identified and roles and future goals are well presented in the school's development plan. This document has been carefully and thoughtfully crafted and provides an effective route for improvement. The school's senior managers are strongly committed to monitoring and evaluating performance against the school development plan and are good at taking action when it is required. The success of this approach is evidenced by the school's improving examination results at GCSE and A-level. Teaching and learning, for example, are monitored well and the quality has continued to improve on the standards reported in the previous inspection.
84. The governing body is well led and strong. They are highly supportive of the work of the school. Governors see themselves as providing the role of 'a critical friend'. They do this well and have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. They monitor the work of the school and are successful in seeking explanations from senior staff about the school's performance. The degree of collaborative working between the governors and senior staff of the school is very good and is a major factor contributing to school improvement.
85. The governing body is also successful in discharging almost all of its statutory duties. There is a very good policy to ensure the safe use of the Internet by students. There is also an explicit statement on promoting racial equality. However, governors need to consider how they are provide a daily act of collective worship in the main school and religious education in the sixth form.
86. Financial management is excellent. The school has an excellent business manager who fully understands the complexities of the school's various sources of finance. She works harmoniously and very effectively with the chair of the governors' finance committee. Both people are highly qualified financial professionals and the knowledge and understanding they bring to the school's budget are most beneficial. The school is able to access finances from a variety of sources, including its recent successful bid for specialist college status. The strategic use of resources, including specific grants and other funding, is very good. The allocation of resources, including funding, is very well managed, monitored and evaluated. The business manager stringently applies the principles of best value and she ensures that the governing body is appropriately briefed. Underpinning all decisions is a strong desire that any decision made should be linked to educational priorities and has a quantifiable effect on standards. The relationship between spending decisions and the desire for the school to be inclusive is very strong.
87. The leadership and management shown by the middle managers are good overall, but with some variations in quality. Such variations tend to reflect the levels of experience of the post holders. Leadership and management are very good in English, science, citizenship, design and technology, geography, ICT, music and physical education. They are good in mathematics, art and design, modern foreign languages and religious education. In all other departments, leadership and management are satisfactory; there are no departments where leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
88. The management of the special needs department is good. Documentation is detailed, up-to-date and appropriate. The policy has recently been rewritten to take into account changes in legislation and gives clear guidelines to staff on the implications of these changes. Support staff meet regularly with the special educational needs co-ordinator to discuss issues relating to students

with special educational needs. However, there are insufficient opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor the teaching and learning of students in mainstream classes and share good practice. The department is well supported by the governor responsible for special educational needs. However, there is insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of provision by the governing body. The special needs department provides a pleasant working environment, with well-organised and appropriate resources, including a good range of reading materials and modern networked computers with appropriate software, and a good range of other resources.

89. Providing a Learning Support Unit for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties is a new and rapidly developing initiative. The teacher responsible for the learning support unit works closely with teaching and pastoral staff to monitor and support these students. Central to the philosophy of this unit is the reintegration of students back into classrooms. Already, there are signs of an improvement in the behaviour of some students. However, systems and strategies are still in the developmental stage.
90. The accommodation is generally good. There are enough rooms in school to meet the needs of the curriculum. Most are in good condition, with good displays to celebrate students' work. Most rooms within departments are in suites so that inter-departmental communication and sharing of resources is made easy. With the exceptions of drama and business education, rooms are fit for the purpose. Neither of these two rooms have blackout facilities, the drama room has poor lighting and is used for other activities and the business education room has no computers. Blinds are also needed in geography and the curtains in the hall, which has to be used for drama and performances, do not close properly and are rotting. The lack of a sports hall and an all-weather pitch prevent the physical education accommodation from being good. There is insufficient space for storage of materials in design and technology.
91. During the inspection week, staffing was good in spite of the absence of some key staff. Supply staff, with some fixed term contract teachers, maintained an adequate coverage. The match of staff to departments is particularly good in ICT where teachers and associate teachers form an effective team that encourages learning. Staff in the special educational needs department provide effective support. Only in geography is staffing unsatisfactory and achievement is adversely affected. The librarian offers a good service to students designed to promote interest in reading and research. Performance management has been organised capably and the targets set are shared with team leaders and senior management. Time is allocated to team leaders to observe, monitor and evaluate teaching in their departments. Professional development is part of the process and is incorporated into the well-planned training programme. There is a successful induction scheme for supporting newly qualified teachers and new staff to the school. The administrative, caretaking, dining and supervisory staff all contribute to the school's ethos through their support and cheerfulness to students and visitors.
92. Resources in the various departments are good overall. When used effectively, as in English, ICT, religious education and physical education, learning is encouraged. Inadequate resources affect learning in history and work on resistant materials in design technology. The use of ICT is good and interactive whiteboards are installed in many departments and used appropriately. The 'pen wizard' gives students the opportunity to experience labelling diagrams and making comments in front of the class. The library provides good learning resources and is used by students at break, lunchtimes and after school for a short time. Television, video and digital cameras are available for use by all staff. Books can be added to the stock by staff and use is made of the county library service for book loans.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

93. Overall, the leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Though the sixth form is small, it is growing and much care is taken to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the students and that their choice of subject combinations is met as far as is possible. The strategic use of resources in the sixth form is very good. The proportion of spending on the sixth form

matches the income available for this purpose and needs are properly considered in the context of whole-school funding. These arrangements and the students' good achievement mean that, overall, the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

94. The governing body provides good direction for the sixth form and evaluates its work well. Apart from the requirements to hold a daily act of collective worship and the provision for religious education, the governors fulfil their statutory requirements. The governors and the school's senior management group have a very good understanding of the principles of best value and apply them well to managing and evaluating the sixth form.
95. The sixth form is very effective in offering students enhanced pathways into the world of work and to further and higher education. Enhanced opportunities for improvement and better career and life prospects are being generated and the sixth form is making a significant contribution to social inclusion. It is successfully tackling some of the issues associated with geographical and rural isolation that affect Millom School. The sixth form is successful in that it is meeting students' needs and achievement is good. Some aspects of management require fine-tuning in order that the success of this provision can be improved even further. These include a more consistent co-ordination of reviewing the performance of each individual student against their target grades and ensuring that the quality of the tutorial, key skills and enrichment programmes are improved.

## **Resources**

96. The sixth form is well staffed with subject specialists and staff are deployed well to meet the needs of the students. Accommodation is good and, though the provision for learning resources is good overall, students commented that they experience problems accessing reliable ICT facilities during their study periods. Though there are some computers in the sixth form study area, some students observed that these were unreliable and had not been working for some time prior to the inspection, but had been repaired shortly before the inspection commenced. If sixth formers are to be expected to develop as independent learners who take responsibility for their work, it is clearly important that they have suitable access to reliable and good quality learning resources.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97. In their plans to improve standards and achievement still further, the governors, headteacher and others in positions of responsibility should bear in mind the following points when drawing up the action plan. The numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraphs in the main report.

(1) The more consistent use of ICT in some subjects, including the sixth form, by ensuring that:

- opportunities to apply ICT are regularly provided in lessons;
- all subjects can readily access ICT facilities;
- all students including those in the sixth can access ICT facilities to undertake independent research and coursework assignments.

(Paragraphs: 15, 31, 40, 90, 96, 105, 117, 124, 132, 145, 151, 159, 164, 167, 168, 178, 181, 182, 190, 203).

(2) The more consistent use of assessment information to improve the students' knowledge of their target grades and what they need to do to achieve them by ensuring that:

- Students are secure in the knowledge they have about their own learning and what they need to do to improve;
- A more consistent use is made across all departments and in the sixth form of target grades;
- The progress of all students against their targets is undertaken regularly;
- good practice is shared between departments.

(Paragraphs: 35, 36, 39, 63, 64, 95, 99, 106, 118, 137, 151, 181, 211).

### Sixth form

(1) The opportunities offered in the curriculum for enrichment, by ensuring that:

- Students are given more opportunities to seek and accept positions of responsibility;
- The quality of the tutorial programme is improved to offer coverage of current affairs, cultural issues, religious education and all aspects of citizenship, for example.
- Attendance at key skills lessons and the tutorial period improves.

(Paragraphs: 15, 28, 40, 54, 55, 68, 79, 81, 95).

(2) Providing opportunities for all sixth formers to have relevant industrial, commercial, or business experiences as part of their academic courses, by::

- Developing a work shadowing programme;
- Extending the range of curriculum partnerships to cover all subjects of the sixth form curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 55, 68, 80).

In addition to the main issues for improvement listed above, the governors and the school should consider addressing the following minor issues in their development plan:

- Ensure that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all students.

(Paragraphs: 50, 85, 94.)

- Improve the teaching accommodation for business studies and drama

(Paragraphs: 90, 112, 182).

- Change the pattern and timing of parental consultation evenings.

(Paragraphs: 71, 73).

- Provide a formal written policy for numeracy across the curriculum.

(Paragraphs: 31, 119).

## **OTHER FEATURES**

### **SEN ASSESSMENT**

98. Arrangements for the annual review of students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs are fully in place and provision is appropriately specified in the statements. Support teachers and staff show a very caring attitude to students. As a result, students feel free to talk to staff and to seek help when necessary. Their self-esteem is boosted and this has a positive effect on learning.
99. The assessment systems for students with special educational needs are good with some very good features. The range of assessments gives the school a clear picture of the needs of each student and informs the writing of individual education plans. These plans give additional good guidelines to departments on strategies that will help individual students meet their targets. The contents help staff to know the students well. Detailed, regular assessments provide termly information on each student's attainment levels. However, there are missed opportunities to gather this information together over time and closely track attainment and progress.
100. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly and shared appropriately with students and their parents. As a result, students know what they have to do to improve and parental help with learning is fostered. The careful and regular assessment of students, together with the staff's keen interest in students' well being, is a key factor in the achievement of many students. The school has cultivated good links with feeder primary schools, specialist teachers and outside agencies and these make a valuable contribution to students' assessments and support. The local education authority provides very good additional support and guidance.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	129
	Sixth form	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		43

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	5	32	50	41	0	1	0
Percentage	3.9	24.8	38.8	31.7	0	0.8	0

#### Sixth form

Number	0	11	11	1	1	0	0
Percentage	0	45.8	45.8	4.2	4.2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

#### Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	651	72
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	97	0

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	21	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	123	0

#### English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	1

#### Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.0
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	63	65	128

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	42	42
	Girls	53	46	43
	Total	96	88	85
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (58)	69 (70)	66 (68)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (27)	48 (48)	25 (36)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	42	45
	Girls	55	46	52
	Total	96	88	97
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (65)	69 (72)	76 (78)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (18)	51 (51)	38 (45)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	52	57	109

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	31	49	49
	Girls	30	55	55
	Total	61	104	104
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	56 (50)	95 (98)	95 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	45.7 (41.6)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	7	15	22
	Average point score per candidate	22.6 (N/A)	14.5 (N/A)	17.0 (N/A)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	17.7 (18.0)	17.4 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	7	15	22	N/A	1	1
	Average point score per candidate	22.6	14.5	17.0	N/A	12.0	12.0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

### ***Ethnic background of students***

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	718	103	4
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	2	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	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

### ***Financial information***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7 – Y 11 ]**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	46.3
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.8

#### **Education support staff: Y 7 – Y 11**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	342

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y 7 – Y 11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y 7 – Y 11**

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	22.6

Financial year	2002-03
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	£
Total income	2,336,945
Total expenditure	2,389,200
Expenditure per student	3,304
Balance brought forward from previous year	89,995
Balance carried forward to next year	37,740

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

723

Number of questionnaires returned

193

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	54	10	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	56	6	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	55	10	4	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	51	18	7	3
The teaching is good.	30	59	5	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	42	23	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	4	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	41	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	42	19	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	44	40	5	4	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	60	5	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	48	10	5	10

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

**ENGLISH**

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

**Strengths**

- The GCSE literature results in 2002.
- Good achievement resulting from consistently good teaching and learning.
- A good, inclusive approach with good opportunities for all students.
- Good student attitudes in lessons and to their work.
- Very good team work, leadership and management.

**Areas for improvement**

- Students' knowledge of both their current and target standards in terms of level and grade criteria so they know precisely what they must do to improve.
- More rigorous time management of learning tasks for lower attainers.
- The opportunities for improving extended writing for lower and middle attainers.

101. Students tend to enter the school with average standards in English according to their results in their end of Year 6 tests. However, students in the current Year 9 entered with below average standards. Results in the 2002 Year 9 national tests were above average and matched the results for 1999 and 2000. Results were below average in 2001, although the work of these students, who are now in Year 11, suggests that their standards are significantly higher than their Year 9 results indicated. Results in 2002 were well above average when compared with students from similar backgrounds. They were above average when compared with students of similar prior attainment. Overall the results suggest that students achieve well. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.
102. In the 2002 GCSE English examination results were average, both in regard to the proportion gaining grade C or higher and the overall average grade. The proportion at A\*-C grades was well above average when compared with students from similar backgrounds and higher than might have been anticipated given the students' earlier results at the end of Year 9. Overall achievement, however, was satisfactory. The proportion at A\*-C grades was slightly higher in 2001 and lower in 2000. An unusual feature of the 2002 results was that the boys' results at grades A\*-C were above average for boys nationally whereas the girls' results were below average for girls nationally. In the 2002 English literature examination the proportion at grades A\*-C and the average grade were above average: this was good achievement given that the school enters significantly more students for the subject than most schools. Girls did better than boys but not significantly. Results have improved significantly since 2000. In 2002 girls tended to do better in literature than in most of their other subjects.
103. The standards of the current Year 9 students are broadly average which represents good achievement in relation to their below average starting point at the start of Year 7. Standards are not as high as obtained in the 2002 national tests because fewer students are working at the standards associated with Level 6 or higher and fewer are reaching average standards or higher. Even so, the proportion of this year group achieving above average standards has doubled since they began Year 7. Higher attainers produce well-organised extended writing that is secure in terms of accuracy. They used vocabulary effectively when writing a formal letter of complaint. They revealed well above average reading skills when identifying examples of bias and emotive language in an article about animal rights. Middle attaining students write with good organisational skills but lack the sentence and vocabulary range required for higher levels. Students whose standards are below average lack the required accuracy in writing. A few are well below average because of weaknesses in writing skills, although they have secure knowledge about the main events in



'Macbeth'. Listening skills are above average but speaking skills are average. Only higher attainers are comfortable in providing extended, well-reasoned contributions.

104. The standards of the current Year 11 students are well above average and their achievement is good. Their course work shows about seven out of ten are reaching the standards associated with grades A\*-C. Folder after folder revealed well-organized and paragraphed extended writing about a range of literary and non-literary texts as well as assured and engaging personal writing. These students have secure punctuation and spelling. The highest attainers reach the very highest standards. One piece comparing works by Poe and Golding was cogently argued with powerful comment on many quotations and revealed a highly mature ability to unravel the paradoxes and ambiguities between the texts. A notable strength of many students is their ability to ensure they apply effectively their knowledge about a text to answer the requirements of an essay title. Students who do not reach average and above average standards make too many errors in their spelling, punctuation and paragraphing. Their work on texts is more descriptive than analytical. Only a few, however, are well below average because of the frequency and basic nature of their written inaccuracies. Speaking and listening skills are above average. Many spoke confidently without notes when reflecting on the cultural significance of a range of artefacts from around the world.
105. Students with special educational needs achieve well because teachers are well informed about their needs and adapt tasks and materials appropriately. The department has a very inclusive approach with all students prepared and entered for examinations. There are good opportunities in the schemes of work to develop numeracy and ICT, although more ICT opportunities are required in Year 9.
106. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There are some very good features. In Years 10 and 11 the subject specialisms of the teachers ensure that the students make good progress in writing extended assignments and explaining effectively the significance and ideas of the texts they encounter. High expectations result in well-structured work. The quality of marking is informative and shows very good knowledge of the requirements of the examination course. In Years 7 to 11 students are well managed and good planning ensures lessons are busy. Activities are well planned and encompass a range of whole class, group, pair and individual tasks. Students' attitudes are, therefore, good, responding well to effective lesson organisation. Teachers make good use of resources to raise standards and engage and sustain interest. When teaching was less effective there were shortcomings in the planned use of time, mainly for lower attaining classes. Time management of activities was not consistently rigorous and so not suitable for students with a shorter concentration span. Middle and lower attaining students are also not having enough opportunities to write extended assignments in Years 7 to 9. Some marking is not precise enough, especially with respect to what a student has done well. There is a need to improve the effectiveness and impact of assessment. Despite some very innovative use of target setting based on previous standards, students throughout the school are not secure about their own learning standards and targets. In particular they are vague about their current standards of attainment and about what they precisely have to improve in order to achieve their realistic and aspirational target levels and grades.
107. The development of literacy in other subjects is good. The development of technical vocabulary is very good, of writing good and of reading satisfactory.
108. The reinforcement of key subject vocabulary is very effective except for mathematics where there is not enough focus. Modern foreign language teachers effectively and constantly reinforce knowledge and application of grammatical terms. The constant reinforcement of key terminology is a strength in ICT, science, music, business studies, physical education, history and art and design. Very effective practice was observed in geography where students used accurately terms such as 'canopy' and 'nutrient cycle' in their study of rain forests. In religious education the students' confident use and understanding of abstract terms is a strength. They were assured in their use of 'absolute', 'founder', 'empathy' and 'evolution'.

109. In modern foreign languages there is good development of writing from word to phrase to sentence and paragraph levels. ICT teachers help students reach good standards by giving them clear examples of good practice to emulate. In science there are some very good examples of explanatory writing, supported by good examples from the teachers, although students do not have enough opportunities for this sort of work. Examples and templates effectively support writing standards in religious education but there is not enough extended writing in Years 7 to 9. Provision in geography is effective. GCSE course work shows high standards of organization but, lower down the school, there are not enough opportunities for writing for different audiences. Although some outstanding examples of effective writing were observed in history, such as obituaries for William the Conqueror and poetic representations of life in the First World War, there is an over-reliance on worksheets and short answers.
110. The best development of reading skills occurred in modern languages where Year 9 students' attention was effectively directed to the text clues when studying a passage on illness. Some effective highlighting of key information was observed in a post-16 geography lesson on urban development and annotation is used effectively in art and design. Highlighting of relevant aspects of texts is a prominent feature of ICT lessons. Otherwise, reading and study skills are not as embedded as they should be across subjects.
111. The department is very well led and managed. The teachers work very well together as a team and are all have high expectations of their students. Through recruitment and taking on additional responsibilities they have pulled together well to make sure students continue to achieve well during a period of staffing difficulty. The monitoring and developing of teaching are good. The opportunities in English for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are making a good contribution to the students' personal development. There has been a good response to the requirements of the previous inspection.

## DRAMA

112. Results in the 2002 GCSE drama examination were broadly average and significantly higher than in 2001. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement in relation to these students' prior attainments. In a good lesson the students gave an excellent response to the teacher's excellent management and leadership of a series of warm-up activities. They displayed high standards of control and concentration. However, only a small number of students have the assurance and level of performance skills associated with the higher grades at GCSE. Because there has not been a formal and consistently taught curriculum in Year 7 to 9, students start GCSE with standards and skills that are at least below average. The school has formulated plans to improve this situation by introducing drama in Years 7 and 8 from September 2003. The quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory and also undermines standards. In a very well taught Year 8 lesson, standards were constrained by space and lack of facilities and equipment. This was also observed in the Year 11 lesson. The school has rightly formulated plans to improve drama accommodation significantly and this, in tandem with better curriculum provision, augurs well for the future of the subject and reflects good leadership and management of the subject at middle and senior management levels. English teachers make a good contribution to the development of drama in Years 7 to 9 and help establish the students' awareness and application of a repertoire of drama skills. Extra-curricular activities such as the drama club, theatre visits and the link with the Quondam Theatre Company also support the development of the students' drama skills.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching and learning.
- The continuing improvement in GCSE results.
- Good leadership and management provides a clear direction for improvement.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used often enough in lessons to help students' learning.
- There is insufficient focus on learning objectives and the use of time at the end of lessons to review learning.
- Assessment procedures are good, but could provide more information about students' progress.
- The time allocated to Year 11 is below average. This limits the scope of extension work with higher attaining students.
- The lack of a formal policy for numeracy across the curriculum.

113. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, standards were average. The average points score was average for all schools, but was well above average for similar schools. These results represent good achievement in relation to students' standards at the beginning of Year 7. Results in mathematics were not as good as those in English, but slightly better than those in science. Except for 2001, results have improved faster than national trends since 1998.
114. In 2002, the GCSE mathematics examination results were above average. The proportion attaining grades A\* to C was above average for all schools and well above average for similar schools. A\* to G grades were above average. Boys' results were slightly better than those of girls. In relation to students' standards at the end of Year 9 results were as expected. This represents satisfactory achievement for this group of students. Students did as well in mathematics as they did in their other subjects. Results have risen significantly since the last inspection.
115. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. Students entered the school with below average standards; thus achievement is good. Students handle numbers confidently. Algebraic skills are being developed well; students simplify expressions well but many still have difficulty with solving equations. Students handle data well. In many subjects, for example geography, history and science, students draw a range of graphs accurately. Problem solving skills are developing well. Students find patterns, establish rules and use formulae confidently.
116. In Year 11 standards are average. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory. The standards do not match those of the previous year. The standards attained by this group of students at the end of Year 9 were not as high as those for the previous year group. In addition, teaching time allocated to Year 11 is below average. As a result, teachers have to rush through the syllabus; they do not have sufficient time to reinforce students' knowledge and understanding in lessons. This particularly affects higher attaining students and the department offers additional lessons to overcome this issue. Most students handle mental calculations confidently and use calculators accurately. Algebraic skills are not as developed as they should be. For example, average attaining students have difficulty with factorising quadratic expressions. Most students handle data effectively. In the data handling project for GCSE course work, students showed a good understanding of different ways of displaying and analysing data.
117. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Students make good progress in lessons and as they move through the school from Year 7 to Year 11 they achieve well. The good subject knowledge of teachers ensures they are able to explain skills and concepts clearly, which helps students with their understanding. Teachers plan well to provide activities that meet the needs of students and allow for the development of a range of skills. For example, in a very good lesson with higher attaining students in Year 7, the students were beginning a statistics project, which would allow them to use ICT and other data handling methods to compare life in rural and city communities. Although the use of the numeracy strategy is well planned, the learning objectives do not have a clear enough focus at the beginning of lessons. As a result students are not always sure about what they are trying to achieve. In addition, the time at the end of lessons is not used well enough to review students' learning. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace, which ensures good progress. Questioning of students is good; this helps students to understand new skills and concepts better. Good management allied to the good attitudes and behaviour of students, ensures that students listen well and, when working together, co-operate and share ideas well. Good provision is made for gifted and talented students and where support staff are provided they are used effectively to support students with special educational needs. This

ensures that the achievement of these students is similar to that of other students. Though a range of activities, including practical and mental activities, are used to help students learn, more use could be made of ICT to help with their learning.

118. Leadership and management are good. A clear direction is provided for the subject through very good development plans and schemes of work. The subject's performance in external tests and examinations are analysed well. Although assessment procedures are good they do not provide sufficient information to check adequately on students' progress as they move through the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## NUMERACY

119. The effectiveness of the contribution made by other subjects to numeracy is satisfactory. Teachers have been made aware of the new numeracy strategy. As a result, most subjects know how they can contribute to improving numeracy standards and the methods being used to develop skills in mathematics. A teacher is responsible for developing numeracy across subjects. At present the school does not have a written policy statement to guide the development of numeracy across and within subjects. Despite this, well-planned contributions are already being made in many subjects.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards in Years 9 and 11 indicate good achievement given the students' prior attainment.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure students' good learning is sustained to the end of the lesson.
- The planning for the use of ICT to improve learning.

120. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were at the national average for average points scored per student. These results were above the national average for the percentage of students gaining A\* to C grades and A\* to G grades. GCSE results have been steadily improving over recent years. Boys outperform girls in the examination. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were at the national average. The percentage of students attaining Level 5+ was above the national average, but the percentage attaining Level 6+ was below. Overall the science results in Year 9 were below those in English and mathematics. Boys and girls did as well as each other.
121. Standards seen in the inspection in Year 11 were above the national average. This represents good achievement over students' results at the end of Year 9. Standards seen in the inspection were at the national average in Year 9. As these students entered the school with science standards below the national average this, too, represents good achievement. Students with special educational needs achieve well in science.
122. By the end of Year 11 all students have a good understanding of the topics they are studying. All students have good knowledge of particle theory, atomic structures, isotopes and their half-lives, the reactivity series, respiration, cell structure and photosynthesis. All higher attaining students clearly understand the theory of ionic bonding. They also have a good grasp of the chemistry of cracking in the industrial production of petrol. Higher attaining students all have good knowledge of genetics, but a minority of students is unclear about chromosome numbers and the split of the XY chromosomes during meiosis. A minority of folders also show some confusion over energy and bonding during heating and cooling. Average attaining students all have a sound grasp of most aspects of genetics, but they are not clear as to how genes carry disease from one generation to another. All students understand the electromagnetic spectrum but most do not know examples of

its uses. Average attaining students all make accurate calculations of moments and they use graphs and diagrams well to show speed, acceleration and deceleration. However, only a minority of folders show results from practical work displayed as graphs. All folders of lower attaining students show a satisfactory understanding of cell structure, the solar system and rock formation. All students have a good grasp of chemistry. However, most students make spelling errors and confuse the meaning of similar words, for example, electrons and electrodes. All lower attaining students can accurately draw a graph of experimental results, but most do not label the graph axes correctly. All practical coursework projects are of a very good standard overall and make an important contribution to the good results at GCSE. However, most projects do not contain enough detail of the theory behind their experiments.

123. By the end of Year 9 all students have a satisfactory understanding of the science they are studying. They all clearly understand static and current electricity, parallel and series circuits, the National Grid and the use of transformers. Students understand photosynthesis and how its rate is depressed in low light conditions. They all know the difference between a food chain and a food web. Overall, higher attaining students have a good understanding of their work and most are reaching Level 6 and 7. They all understand well why most foods need to be digested and how enzymes carry this out. However, many do not clearly differentiate between respiration and breathing. The work of average and lower attaining students is sound overall. Some mistakes are made in the use of scientific words. Overall, science practical work is not as strong as theory work. Only the folders of higher attaining students show consistent use of predictions and analysis of results; two important features of experimental work.
124. Students' folders are generally well presented and this makes for easy revision. Many folders show very good use of diagrams to explain science theory. All folders show good use of number through graphs, calculations and data collection. Students have too few opportunities to use ICT in their learning. All students write well in science. A minority of folders also show very good variation of writing styles, for example, suggesting how a teacher should plan a lesson to best explain a particular science topic!
125. The quality of teaching and learning is good. One quarter of lessons seen were very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons during the inspection. In all lessons the teachers' knowledge and understanding of science were very good, so enabling students to gain accurate knowledge and understanding of the topic quickly. This was evident in a very good Year 10 lesson where the teacher's clear explanation of cracking of kerosene enabled all students to grasp this difficult concept quickly. Lesson planning was strong and students' learning was accelerated through a good number of relevant exercises in each lesson. This also ensures that the pace of lessons is good; a criticism in the last inspection. An example was a Year 11 class studying the nitrogen cycle. The students learned well from a short discussion, a computer presentation, paired work discussing farming changes and a short written exercise; all in 50 minutes! Homework is regularly set and it reinforces and extends class work well. Students learned well from the detailed marking undertaken by all teachers. Most teachers also added a very useful comment to say how students could improve further. All teachers managed class discussions well and ensured all students were thoroughly involved. Behaviour, which was a problem in the last report, was good overall because teachers have high expectations. All teachers made good use of the new interactive whiteboards to develop and extend students' understanding. For example, in a good Year 11 class, students made very good progress in their understanding of speed using a computer simulation of the fall of a skydiver shown on the interactive whiteboard. In this very good lesson, the teacher's enthusiasm thoroughly engaged students, who made rapid progress. However, in a minority of lessons, students were not engaged because teachers did not explain what needed to be done well enough. In most lessons, including those that were very good, the excellent work of students at the start of the lesson was not fully sustained right to the end. This was because staff did not offer adequate opportunities for students to reflect on the learning that had taken place.
126. The leadership and management of science are very good. Very good use is made of data on attainment to plan lessons. It is also very well used to target students who are under-performing. For example, students in Year 9 who have not scored well in school tests, are given additional classes after school. The department has very clear plans to raise attainment still further and all

staff are committed to this. This is why science GCSE results are rising faster than the national rate. The laboratory accommodation is good. Resources, an issue in the last report, are good and all students have a textbook for home use. The department receives sterling support from the laboratory technician. Science has made good progress since the last report.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, securing good quality learning.
- Students achieve well during Years 7 to 11 and resulting standards are above average for both boys and girls.
- Leadership and management are good, securing good improvement since the last inspection.
- The contribution made to the students' cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment of students' work at the end of Year 9 needs standardising and the system of commenting on work, particularly in sketchbooks, needs improving.
- There are limited resources for ICT, which restricts the amount and type of work attempted.
- The work areas and storage arrangements need redefining.

127. Standards of attainment in art and design are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11, showing good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were judged as below average at the end of Year 11. These standards represent good achievement over the five years in school as students often enter school with below average standards in practical work and knowledge of art in general. The quality of teaching is good, which secures good quality learning. Students have good attitudes to the subject and usually try hard in lessons.
128. The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were not as high as in the previous two years. Fifty-six per cent of students attained Level 5 or above, but this was nearly 20 per cent below the national average. Girls' performance was better than that of the boys, reflecting the national trend. The overall average points score in art and design in the GCSE examinations in 2002 was above average when compared with the average attained nationally. Girls' scores met the average, but boys' scores were above average. The percentage of students gaining A\* to C grades in GCSE was above the national average for girls and well above for boys. Results in art and design over the past three years show a rising trend and are among the highest in school. All students usually gain at least a G grade.
129. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are sound and are better than the teachers' assessments indicate. In relation to their starting points, students' achievement is good. In general, drawing skills are best when students work from stimulating sources rather than from imagination. For example, students studying Cubism in Year 9 are producing good quality pieces, showing different sporting figures surrounded by fragmented tonal planes, but their homework drawings in sketchbooks often revert to the naïve. Students use paint brightly, but the lower attaining students find blending difficult. Most students, including those with special educational needs, cope well with work in three dimensions and make models from a variety of media. Printing is good, as students spot which lines can produce the best effects and understand about negative images. Knowledge of artists' work and lives is mainly confined to the ones they hear about in projects, such as Rousseau, Picasso and Braque, but appreciation of art and artefacts from people of different countries and cultures is strong. Medieval, Celtic and Australian aboriginal art are three good examples where students' knowledge has been enhanced. Literacy skills vary. Students write about what they see and do and learn to use new vocabulary, but only the highest attaining students understand about sifting information.
130. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Students build on well to their early experiences and produce lively, interesting work, often inspired by the work of real artists.

Displays in the art rooms and around the school show work in both two and three dimensions, some on a large scale. Students understand the impact of working on a theme through a variety of media and their sketchbooks are used as inspiration for larger pieces of work. They complete a good amount of work, so can select and mount the best for exhibition, which raises their grades. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in practical aspects of art. The ones who are gifted and talented make very good progress as they are encouraged to be independent, set themselves appropriate challenges and produce more research than others, with examples to supplement their studies. Some students use the digital camera and computers to distort images and search the Internet to supplement their art studies.

131. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In lessons seen during the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching and lessons ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which in turn brings out above average attainment. Students see correct techniques in skilful demonstrations and from very well chosen resources; they hear accurate information and gain confidence to be creative and innovative. Teachers have high expectations for students, especially in Years 10 and 11, where they spend much lesson time helping on a one-to-one basis to ensure students make good efforts and produce the best work possible. All work is marked regularly, but students need more written comments in their sketchbooks to ensure they know how to make improvements, especially on homework tasks. As most students get on well together, have good attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is good, teachers do not have to waste time establishing order and discipline. Students are treated equally and fairly and relationships between adults and students are good. Teachers are very patient in helping individual students with problems, from which the lower attaining students and the few lazy boys benefit most. Teachers value students' work and display it prominently in the studios and around the school. This raises self-esteem; it allows students to see what others can do and sets high standards.
132. Leadership and management are good and the department has made good progress since the last inspection. The head of department has been in post for a relatively short time, but has already effected good changes to benefit students' art education. There is a newly redrafted scheme of work with accompanying theme booklets to reinforce learning and a new system of self-evaluation, which makes students more aware of their targets. Departmental meetings are held regularly to determine where there are weaknesses, such as the need for more numeracy-oriented projects in the lower school and increased use of ICT in all years. The latter is hindered as the department lacks Internet-linked computer workstations, a large-scale colour printer and software programs. Training has been arranged to address the weakness in the end of Year 9 assessments, which at present give an inaccurate picture of attainment; and afterwards, there will be a portfolio of assessed work for reference. Students now benefit from working alongside local artists, visiting museums and galleries, participating in regional competitions, exhibiting work in nearby towns and attending art classes after school. In order to raise the profile of art, the department needs to establish display boards in the art corridor, clear the clutter from the studios and rearrange storerooms to ensure all equipment is easily accessed and students' work is safe.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

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

#### Strengths

- Students are achieving well.
- Leadership and management are very good: planning is thorough.
- Each department has identified aspects of citizenship in the schemes of work: this allows for good coverage of the citizenship programme.
- Students are very enthusiastic about raising funds for charities.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students' knowledge of how local and national government works.
- The way students' work is assessed.

133. Standards in citizenship are average in Years 9 and 11 and students are achieving well. Citizenship is taught through weekly tutorial periods and identified areas in the curriculum for every subject. The school also provides enrichment through activities organised for a day or part day, when the normal timetable is suspended.

134. By Year 9 students gain a good understanding of rights and responsibilities. They read about elections and political parties, showing a limited knowledge of the functions of the monarchy. They are unclear about the workings of Parliament and how the House of Commons differs from the House of Lords. Students learn how to participate effectively in a group and how to share tasks. For example, in a Year 9 German lesson students co-operated to make a brochure about their school and decided on the allocation of tasks. Students show an acute social conscience in the work they do to raise money for charities. Something they greatly enjoy. In a past Year 8 event, groups mimed and danced to pop music on the stage, raising money to contribute to the building of a school in the Sudan. Students said they helped one another by commenting on how performances could be improved. They learnt that by working together, they could do better. Students raising money for Comic Relief showed considerable enthusiasm, saying it is fun to help others and that it makes them aware of how underprivileged people live. Students are encouraged to reflect on real life events, such as the war in Iraq, through drawings and art. They become aware of the differences in communities: for example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson on data handling, students learnt about how life in rural areas differs from that in towns.

135. By Year 11 students gain an insight into how the local community works. In Local Democracy Week, councillors work with Year 10 students to help them extend their knowledge. Skills of enquiry and communication are developed through work on the media in English lessons: students learn to distinguish fact from opinion and to analyse the various ways in which news is presented. They participate willingly in raising money for Comic Relief and in work-related activities, such as mock interviews. They are introduced to the world of work through outside visits and through work experience. All students learn about the democratic process by voting for form representatives to sit on the school council and by presenting a point of view for discussion at council meetings. In tutorial lessons they discuss gender stereotypes and express their strongly held views clearly, while appreciating that there are different sides to every argument.

136. Teaching and learning are good. Relationships in lessons are very positive and teachers give students the opportunity to take the initiative and become active learners. For example, in an excellent Year 7 lesson, the teacher revised how a group functions and set a challenging task to discover who had committed a fictitious murder. She left the group to organise its plan of campaign, monitoring progress from the sidelines. Students made outstanding progress in learning how to work together, how to listen rather than just waiting to speak and how to reflect on their own performance. By thorough planning, the teacher helped students realise how they had assisted, or hindered, the final outcome. Teachers maintain a brisk pace and are conscientious in their delivery of schemes of work relating to citizenship. For example, they specifically mention how an activity contributes to citizenship and this raises the profile of the subject in students' eyes. The good planning of heads of department plays a significant part in the delivery of the National Curriculum in citizenship. Assemblies also make a valuable contribution. For example, in a Year 10 assembly a talk on the situation in Iraq brought to students' attention the democratic



nature of parliamentary majority decision making. Students reflected on the suffering of others and wanted to help starving children in Iraq.

137. Leadership and management are very good. In her first three months in post, the teacher in charge of citizenship has worked extremely hard to plan an interesting programme of work. Her very thorough audit of the curriculum identified existing gaps in learning and this informed her planning of the weekly tutor periods. Although assessment is in the early stages of development, the teacher-in-charge has detailed plans to monitor how well students are achieving and to link assessment to Records of Achievement. She has invited several outside speakers to address students, so providing good links with the community. The capacity for improvement is good because of the enthusiasm of the teacher-in-charge and the excellent understanding she has of National Curriculum requirements for citizenship.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Clear leadership shows a good educational direction for the department.
- Teaching staff are committed and dedicated.
- Excellent accommodation and many very good resources.
- The very good achievement of students in Years 7 to 11.
- The high attainment at GCSE in textiles and food technology.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensuring the basic skills required for working in resistant materials are taught appropriately, resources are properly stored and maintained, and lesson timetabling is improved.

138. Students coming into the school in Year 7 have below average design and technology skills and their achievement throughout Years 7 to 9 is very good overall. The students' results in the teacher-assessed tests at the end of Year 9 have been well above the national average for the past three years. Eighty-two per cent of girls and 65 per cent of boys attained the nationally expected level in 2002; a creditable achievement.

139. The department's results at GCSE have been improving consistently since the previous inspection. At that time they were well below the national average but the improvement has been such that the results overall are now well above. Of the students who were entered in the examinations last year, 72.5 per cent gained an A\* to C grade. The national figure was 51.6 per cent. This shows very good achievement and is clearly the result of the high quality teaching. Over 90 per cent of the students entered for GCSE in textiles achieved a grade between A\* and C. Food technology and graphics also recorded very good results with 80 per cent of the students gaining A\* to C grades; both well above national statistics. A lower ability resistant materials group, including SEN students, did well with results that were higher than the national average; 53 per cent of students gained an A\* to C grade. These results represent achievements that are very good overall and exceptional in the case of textiles. The department manages to help more students to gain a grade C than is seen nationally with correspondingly fewer gaining grade Ds. This is the result of well-targeted teaching. The standards observed during the inspection show similar levels of high attainment in Years 10 and 11 particularly in textiles, where some excellent pieces of completed course work were displayed.

140. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers show a creditable level of expectation in all areas of the department. Students are managed well and the planning is of a high order. The staff, with the head of department in particular, having put much effort into this. In the teaching of textiles and food technology effective emphasis is placed on the teaching of basic skills. This equips students with the ability to tackle variable design tasks effectively. Resistant materials is less good in this respect, as is shown in the completion of tasks throughout the age range. Further consideration needs to be given to how basic subject skills are taught. The best teaching

and learning was seen in textiles and food technology. Students respond readily to the high level of challenge and teacher expectation and normally meet this with high quality work. In Years 7 to 9 the range of teaching observed varied between satisfactory and very good; mainly it was good. Lessons were characterised by the teacher showing a clear presentation style, good expectations and good subject knowledge. It is these features that drive learning and lead to higher standards. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is even better. The teachers clearly know and understand their students well. Assessment data are used well by teachers in order to promote higher standards; students know where they are and what they have to do to improve.

141. The department is very ably led and managed by an industrious and capable teacher. She is well respected by her teaching colleagues and students alike. This quality of leadership is very helpful in promoting a shared commitment to subject improvement and standards have improved since the last inspection. Departmental documentation has been completed in a very full and thorough way. The department moved to new buildings some two years ago and this transfer has been completed effectively. There are still some areas to be fully commissioned, but these are noted clearly in the development plan and will be completed in due course. Day-to-day management is very good with clear lines of communication between staff. This department is provided with a good allocation of teaching time for all students. The way in which the timetable only allows for single 50-minute lessons, however, makes some processes almost impossible to teach well within the time. This is leading to inefficiencies and is affecting standards especially in resistant materials. It also places undue pressure on teachers who would find it easier to have extended time allocations.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to students making very good progress.
- Students' knowledge of places is extended through fieldwork opportunities throughout the school.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject are leading to rapidly rising standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Inconsistencies in the day-to-day marking result in some students not knowing how well they are doing and how to improve.
- The use of ICT in classroom teaching.

142. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were in line with the national average points score for all maintained schools, although results at grades A\* to C were above average. All students achieved a grade at A\* to G. Girls did better than boys. The results show an improving trend over recent years. Achievement was good, though students did less well in geography than they did in the other subjects that they studied.
143. The standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are average. This represents good achievement given their standards when they entered the school. Students possess an appropriate range of geographical skills. They know about places in a local and global context, but knowledge is weak because they do not use atlases enough. Students are appreciative of other cultures and understand the differences between such groups as the Kikuyu and Maasai in Kenya. Students know a range of technical terms such as 'birth and death rates' in studies of population in India, but many do not describe and analyse the information fully. The written work of many students is average with most students paying attention to grammatical accuracy. The writing of lower attaining students is below average, but they achieve well when their writing needs are supported.
144. The standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are average. This represents good achievement given their standards at the end of Year 9. Students build on their geographical skills and use maps and diagrams effectively to complement written explanations. They have good knowledge of topics such as the features and processes of river erosion of the Tees Valley and the impact of

flooding on peoples' lives. They understand about the ecosystem in studies of the tropical rain forests and are competent in note taking, but the quality of extended writing of some students is reduced because answers are too vague and they do not make enough reference to places. Similarly students do not explain ideas fully in class discussions. GCSE coursework is of above average standard because students have carefully researched the topic and made effective use of diagrams, particularly data and graphs, to support analysis and conclusions to the study.

145. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, where some very good and excellent lessons were seen, but are very good in Years 10 and 11, where the teachers are more experienced. The aims of lessons are explained and teachers plan lessons carefully. They regularly consolidate work previously covered and it enables students to improve their understanding of topics. The setting of homework further enhances learning with encouragement to research information through books and the Internet, but not enough use is made of ICT in lessons. Some marking is of a very high quality, informing students well about the quality of work, but this is inconsistently applied across the subject. Occasionally students do not make enough progress because of weaknesses in strategies to meet the needs of lower attaining students, combined with the poor attitudes of a minority. As a result progress is slow. In most lessons, however, teachers manage students very well and make high demands on them in learning. In a higher attaining Year 9 lesson for example, the teacher engaged students well on the subject of fair trade among countries. The lesson 'bubbled' with discussion about cocoa production in Ghana, with students sharing views and working out costs of production through both a commercial and a 'fair trade' system. Students concentrated well, met the time controls set for them to complete tasks and made excellent progress. Students with special educational needs make sound progress, particularly when given additional adult support. In a Year 11 lesson about tropical rain forests the teacher made effective use of film extracts and prepared card statements about the ecosystem and this led to students significantly improving their knowledge of terms and processes of decay and regeneration in the forests. Generally work in Years 10 and 11 is extremely well assessed, students are fully informed about strengths and weaknesses and they are progressing very well. Most lessons are well structured but teachers do not allocate sufficient time and engage students enough to explaining what they have learned in the lesson.
146. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The curriculum is good and enhanced well through fieldwork. The head of department has made significant progress in developing the schemes of work and the procedures to assess students' attainment and progress, but the progress for students in Years 7 to 9 is not being monitored closely enough across all classes. Staffing provision is unsatisfactory because of illness and the reliance on non-specialist teaching. This has slowed the progress made by some students in Years 7 to 9. There are plans to rectify this situation. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Teaching and learning have improved, especially in Years 10 and 11, and the quality of leadership and management has also improved.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Good achievement for students by the end of Year 11.
- High standards in GCSE examinations.
- The development of literacy skills.

### Areas for improvement

- The more effective use of assessment information to guide teachers' planning and the monitoring of students' achievements.
- The further development of schemes of work.
- The more systematic use of ICT to enrich lessons, to develop history skills and offer opportunities for independent learning and research.

147. The 2002 GCSE results continued the pattern of improvement over recent years. At grades A\* to C they were well above the national average with almost half the students gaining the higher grades of A\* to B in years 2001 and 2002. Although almost all the students gained A\* to G grades in 2000 and 2001, the percentage fell in 2002 by one per cent. The 2002 results represent good achievement for the students concerned.
148. Inspection evidence shows that at the end of Year 9 standards of attainment are below average. However, students are achieving satisfactorily in terms of their attainment levels on entry to the school. Overall, students have a basic knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence. All, including those with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial sources. The higher attaining students recognise bias and can begin to interpret sources accurately. In Year 7 students are beginning to understand the main features of the medieval period. They study various monarchs, church and social life. In one Year 7 lesson observed, students were encouraged to examine aspects of village life and to relate these to archaeological studies. Year 8 students satisfactorily added to their knowledge through their work on the Reformation, the English Civil War and the American Plains Indians. When looking at industrial change, students pay particular attention to the local area and produce many interesting projects on local demographic and social changes during the era of industrialisation. The study of local history adds significantly to their knowledge and understanding of history.
149. For current Year 11 students, standards of work are average. However, both boys and girls achieve well in relation to their prior attainment on entry and this is because considerable attention is given to developing students' vocabulary and challenging them to extend this by explaining new words. The present Year 11 group is not as strong as some other recent GCSE groups. Although students in the current Year 11 behaved appropriately in lessons, they did not show high levels of motivation and self-discipline. Higher attaining students show independence in following lines of enquiry and they analyse evidence critically to produce reasoned arguments. Lower attaining students use sources to support their narratives and they can draw simple, unstructured conclusions. However, they did not always listen attentively in lessons and neither did they participate with significant interest in class discussions.
150. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, in the best lessons, this enabled them to challenge students and promote higher-order thinking skills. Appropriate learning environments are established and good student management skills ensure that lessons and debates progress without too much interruption. Students learn best in Years 7 to 9 when teachers present small units of work, regularly reinforced by referring to lesson objectives. However, there is a need to plan work that promotes more individual responsibility for learning. In the lessons in which students' concentration and effort lapsed, teachers' expectations were not high enough and students were not sufficiently challenged. In the effective lessons, the pace of learning was brisk, students were required to respond to quick-fire questions and plenary sessions were strongly evaluative. This encouraged students to assess their own learning and to understand what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. Homework set matches the work covered in lessons and marking, although supportive, needs to identify clear steps for improvement. History provides good opportunities for students to practise and improve their literacy skills. The subject also makes a good contribution to citizenship and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good use is made of the local area for extra-curricular visits and community links.
151. The leadership and management of history are satisfactory and the head of department has made a sound contribution to the satisfactory level of improvements since the last inspection. Priorities for raising standards across the school and recruiting more students to study history in Years 10 and 11 are clearly identified in departmental planning. The department is in the process of revising its existing schemes of work and updating its resources to match the new units of work. Although assessment procedures are effective, the information gathered is not used well enough to set individual targets and it is not analysed to guide students on how to improve. Although written into some lesson plans, ICT is not systematically used in all classes to enrich the subject and provide an additional resource for enquiry. The department is, however, developing this aspect of its work.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology across the whole school is **good**. It is very good in ICT lessons, but the use of ICT in other subjects needs fine tuning.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to good achievement for all students.
- Good teamwork ensures attention for the individual.
- Good use of data for target setting.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The consistent implementation of a school-wide strategy to extend ICT to other departments to build on present achievements.

152. All students in Years 7 to 9 have discrete ICT lessons and all but a minority of students in Years 10 and 11 take the GCSE ICT course. This level of provision and improvement in students' performance is in considerable contrast to the situation three years ago, when attainment was well below average. The school addressed this situation with vigour and the head of department has managed great improvement in the subject area, as evidenced by the exceeding of technology college targets for ICT. Recent moves by school have ensured that the requirements of the National Curriculum are now fully met.
153. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9 is above average, with 68 per cent of students gaining Level 5 or above. The school figures are based on teacher assessments, however, the remarkable increase in attainment of GCSE students over the past three years is a strong indicator of the broad accuracy of these assessments. GCSE results in 2002 were above average. Sixty-one per cent of students gained an A\* to C grade, compared to 56 per cent nationally, and 95 per cent gained grades A\*-G compared to a national figure of 89 per cent. Both boys and girls performed above national averages. Overall, this represents very good achievement, especially in view of the fact that virtually all Year 11 students are entered for GCSE compared to a national average figure of approximately 17 per cent.
154. The achievement shown within and between Years 7 to 9 is good. Students work well both independently and in groups, showing increasing confidence in the handling of software. They show skill in gathering data, processing data and in creating and interrogating databases. They can manipulate, format and edit both text and graphics. They are particularly skilled in the use of spreadsheets and, from Year 7, they begin to use and understand formulae. In Year 9 they have completed good work on relational databases, including creating tables and queries. Overall, they are discriminating in their selection, organisation and presentation of data. In each year they have completed good work on control. In classes in Years 8 and 9 their oral work shows a very good knowledge of the meaning of logic and sequence and their practical work with control software shows a very good understanding of how to create and control sequences. The best students regularly and consistently produce work meeting the requirements of National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6.
155. Most students work with application and enthusiasm and readily relate ICT to their daily lives and that of the immediate and larger communities of which they are a part. They can explain the workings of hardware and software and their relative merits in differing home and business situations. For example, Year 8 students readily distinguish between the differing merits of storage devices such as hard and soft disks, CD and DVD ROMs and memory sticks. In a Year 9 class on control they progressed in their use of software to develop full testing routines and sub-routines based on their own knowledge of the requirements of road safety.
156. In Years 10 and 11 students are working toward the requirements of course work for GCSE. They work well on constructing and presenting assignments and take pride in their achievements.

Completed work indicates that final results will be above national standards. They build on their skills gained in Years 7 to 9 to use a wider range of software, with good presentational work being completed. This represents good achievement based on their standards at the end of Year 9.

157. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons have good pace and provide a clear framework for students to follow. Teachers are skilled and at ease with the latest developments in ICT and plan into lessons the visible and effective use of modern ICT hardware and software. Through the demonstration of these techniques they further plan the involvement of all students in their use. Effectively teachers are ICT role models which students see value in emulating. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and a skilled learning support assistant and technician complement their expertise. These associate staff are part of the very effective teamwork that provides appropriate tasks to each individual student. The practical business experience of several of this team helps to make tasks relevant to the world in which students live.
158. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The department has a hard working and enthusiastic leader who ensures excellent teamwork. The departmental monitoring of students' work is regular and rigorous, enabling the setting of challenging and achievable targets. The creative and innovative teamwork includes regular review of teaching strategies and a high degree of joint teaching. Evaluation of teaching techniques is regular and incisive and also involves associate staff at appropriate points. The department holds regular lunchtime and after-school activities and developmental sessions for students.
159. As underlay to its renewed commitment to ICT teaching the school has made clear advances. The investment in resources, staffing training, hardware and software has been considerable. The school has reached a stage where decisions need to be made regarding how to make further advance on this firm base. The three specialist ICT rooms are now fully timetabled, and whilst other departments can obtain access, the scarcity of time affects the full implementation of their planned use of ICT. Whilst several departments are able to organise timetabled and extra-curricular activity using equipment outside these suites, such as the Year 7 French Computer Club, the implementation of the school's ICT strategy is restricted. At present, many subjects do not make sufficient use of ICT as a teaching tool in their day-to-day work. Though students' ICT needs are more than adequately served in ICT lessons, standards in other subjects suffer if students are not offered sufficient opportunities to use ICT in their studies.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good: teachers plan well to include a variety of activities to help students learn rapidly.
- Results in German are rising steadily: boys achieved well in 2002, with the proportion of A\* to C grades exceeding the national average for boys.
- The school enters a greater percentage of students for GCSE examinations in a modern language than in many schools.
- Leadership and management are good; all teachers are committed to raising standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in the GCSE examinations, particularly French, which are below average.
- Teaching time for German in Year 8, which is low.
- Marking, which does not always tell students what they need to do to improve.
- The teaching and learning in classes not taken by a permanent specialist teacher.
- Use of ICT to support students' learning.

160. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average in German and well below in French in relation to the average points scored and the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A\* to C. In German, results have risen steadily since 2000, with boys doing better than girls in 2002. In French, however, results dipped in 2002, largely as a result of staffing instability.

Many more students took German than is the case nationally, and fewer took French. Almost all students in the school take a modern language and gain a grade, though few achieved a grade above C in 2002 in either French or German. The results in 2002 represent unsatisfactory achievement in comparison with the same students' teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, which indicated standards were average.

161. In Year 9 standards are below average. This represents satisfactory achievement from Year 7 in French and Year 8 in German. Higher attaining students, who take both languages, do not get enough teaching time in Year 8 to achieve well in both. Standards are better in listening than in speaking, reading and writing. They listen carefully to extracts on tape, to teachers and to their classmates in group work. Students lack confidence in speaking and, in French, the pronunciation of even the higher attaining students is weak. Students read with basic understanding but, when reading aloud, they pronounce the words with an English accent. For example, in French they frequently pronounce the final 's' in 'noires' and 'les'. Higher attaining students write in fluent sentences and many structure extended paragraphs on their school and their town. They reach a good level of accuracy while other students make basic spelling and agreement errors and do not employ a sufficient range of vocabulary to make the work interesting.
162. Standards in Year 11 are below average, but closer to average than previously. This represents satisfactory achievement from Year 9. Listening continues to be the strongest aspect. Students are attentive to what is said in class and respond in developed sentences, though pronunciation is still approximate, particularly in French. Higher attaining students understand what they read, though other students need much teacher support to grasp meaning. Written work is more extensive now, as in paragraphs on students' own experiences and in letters to pen friends. Average and lower attaining students make frequent grammatical and spelling errors, while higher attainers are more accurate and use a range of tenses.
163. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan an interesting variety of activities to help students sustain concentration. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, the teacher began with a brisk question and answer session, then introduced new vocabulary referring to locations, which students repeated. Students practised writing the words from memory and did a written assessment. The teacher's enthusiasm and brisk pace swept the students along and they learnt very rapidly. Teachers suit the work to the capabilities of students, including the gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties. Teachers use resources very well. In a Year 8 German lesson about school subjects, the teacher moved from the overhead projector to tape recorder, whiteboard and text book to extend students' vocabulary. Her skilful linking of activities and her lively delivery motivated students to work hard. In-class assessment is frequent, so that teachers know how well students are getting on. However, conclusions to lessons are sometimes too brief to review effectively what has been learned. While books are marked regularly, there are not enough comments to tell students what they need to do to improve. Teachers manage classes well so that no time is wasted. As result, students make good progress in lessons and have positive attitudes to their work.
164. Leadership and management are good. Although the head of department has been in post for less than a year, she has revised all the schemes of work so that they match students' needs. The achievement in German of higher attaining Year 8 students is satisfactory, despite the low teaching time, because of her careful planning. Her department ably supports her in her drive to raise standards after staffing difficulties led to the underachievement of Years 10 and 11 students in 2002. As a result, standards in the current Year 10 are average. However, the lack of a part-time specialist teacher to cover several classes of younger students means that they are not learning as much as they should. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall and good over the past year. While GCSE results are lower and ICT still underused, through difficulties of access, teaching is more dynamic and the foreign language is spoken routinely as a means of instruction. Support for students with learning difficulties is now good and work better matched to each class's capabilities. The capacity for further improvement is good.

## MUSIC

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

**Strengths**

- Very good teacher knowledge and planning provides very good learning opportunities.
- High expectation of intellectual and creative effort leads to good achievement.

**Areas for improvement**

- Use of ICT to support students' learning.
- The low number and variety of instruments limit access to learning in lessons.

165. Since the appointment of a new head of department at the beginning of this school year, there has been a significant improvement in the students' attainment with standards in Year 7 being close to the average. Since standards at entry in Year 7 are well below the national average, achievement in this year is, therefore, good. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicate a level of attainment significantly lower than the national average. Current standards in the present Year 9 show some improvement but standards remain below average. Students are learning basic skills in counting and listening through ensemble work with extended rhythmic patterns and show both imagination and sense of structure in their own composition. In Year 7 they can recognise individual and groups of instruments and can discuss tempo, mood and dynamics in different pieces of music. In Year 8 they can compose music within given structures, take an increasing role in group performances and use various notation. Students having instrumental tuition are at an advantage and take the lead in group or pair work. Music has not recently been timetabled for A level or GCSE, and no recent examination data are available.
166. The quality of teaching and learning is very good because students are constantly challenged to make both intellectual and creative efforts. This is seen particularly in composition where the first efforts of students are not necessarily accepted and they are encouraged to better their performance. This encourages independent learning and self-evaluation. Students respond positively because there is a very good relationship with the teacher, which provides a supportive learning environment and they want to do their best. For example, in a lesson on Negro spirituals, students became fully involved, singing enthusiastically but also reflecting on their own compositions; an affective and personal response to the emotional content of these songs. Teaching is well planned and paced so that students become absorbed in the lessons, whether it is listening reflectively to classical composers, learning to listen to each other in ensemble work, or using their imaginations to create their own music. There is evidence of a growing awareness in Year 8 of structure in their own compositions and, especially with higher attaining students, a confidence to produce quite original and witty pieces. Students with special educational needs achieve very well and can excel in making music and performing in a group. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Year 9 students produce more complex compositions and can perform with increasing expression, sensitivity and technical competence. There are, however, a small number of disaffected students in this year group whose efforts are not consistent and who rely on others, for example in paired work, to do the work.
167. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear vision and commitment to improvement. Assessment and monitoring of students' achievement is being put in place and is already beginning to drive up standards. Students know both what level of attainment they are at and what they must do to improve and progress further. The subject makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students through the reflective and emotional response to music and its power in times of sadness and celebration, as well as exposure to the music of other cultures, for example a morning of demonstrations and workshops about Indian dance and drumming, their symbolism and meaning. There is not enough variety in the instruments available, and there are too few to allow access for every student, particularly in the larger classes. ICT has not made a significant impact on students' learning. The department has only two computers. Extra-curricular activities include a band and an orchestra, loyally attended by students and well supported by the peripatetic teachers, as well as outside performances such as Lakeland Opera.



168. Improvement since the last inspection has been good but there are still areas such as ICT provision, availability of instruments and take up of music in Years 10 and 11, which are being addressed but are not yet in place. This is a rapidly improving department with the potential to become a strength of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The department has very good leadership and management.
- GCSE examination entries have increased and results are improving.
- Very good links have been made with primary schools via the school sports co-ordinator programme.

### Areas for improvement

- The participation rates of students in Years 10 and 11.
- To share the teaching in examination work so that the overload on one teacher is reduced.
- Reduce the number of non-participants in core physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11.

169. In 2002, teachers assessed students' standards at the end of Year 9 as above average with more than three-quarters of all students reaching the national average. Standards in the present Year 9 are average but improving. In 2002, the GCSE results had improved on the previous year and the A\* to C grades were above the national average. The points score was higher than the average points score in all other subjects in the school. Work scrutiny and observations in Year 11 demonstrate that this year's examination group is at an above average standard. The standards of non-examination groups in Years 10 and 11 are affected by a substantial number of non-participants and, overall, they are average in performance. Lower attaining students, particularly in Years 7 and 8, achieve satisfactorily because courses are matched to their abilities. Talented students develop their expertise through the good extra-curricular opportunities and inter-school fixtures. Students who participate fully achieve well throughout the school.
170. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are average in games. In girls' soccer basic skills were beginning to develop although some difficulty in accurate passing was apparent in a small team game. Boys in a Year 9 soccer session had good individual skills and their passing improved when they were encouraged by a group of Year 13 students. Their levels of control and concentration were not of the same standard. Year 7 showed above average standards in swimming and the entire group could swim, some reaching a high standard in front crawl technique. Another Year 7 class showed above average quality and control of sequence work in gymnastics. Year 8 worked hard in a fitness session and recorded their circuit scores. Year 8 lower attainers responded well in a hockey session and reached an average standard in controlling the ball. Because the students enter the school with below average standards in physical education, the achievement they make is good.
171. In work seen during the inspection in Year 11, overall standards are average. Increasing numbers are opting for the GCSE examination course and their standards are above average in both written and practical work. Presentation skills are good and notes and diagrams are clearly written and labelled. The practical performances in badminton and hockey were above average because they were beginning to use tactics and strategies as well as develop more advanced motor skills. 'Drop-shots' in badminton and reverse stickwork in hockey were two examples of advanced skills being performed in a game situation. Students' standards in core physical education are average. The students who took an active part showed very good technique in swimming and life-saving practices. In a basketball session, Year 11 worked hard on their passing skills and are beginning to understand strategies in possession practices. Soccer and rounders were played with enthusiasm, but the number of non-participants is affecting standards. The GCSE students achieve well and better than the non-examination students because of the time allocation and their clearer understanding of the subject.

172. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very creditable as two members of the department were absent from specialist duties during the inspection week. Teachers show enthusiasm for the subject and their planning and preparation for lessons is very good. Class management is good and objectives are presented clearly at the beginning of every lesson. Many lessons showed challenge, pace and opportunity but a few failed to use students' demonstration to reinforce learning. Very good teaching in GCSE theory lessons helped students to progress. The use of ICT improved the presentation of the work and more use of paired and group discussion should assist speaking skills. Very good matching of tasks helped Year 8 to progress in their hockey skills. Very good relationships have been established and this helps the quality of learning. A few students brought negative attitudes to lessons, but these were subdued with the help of teaching support and effective organisational strategies. The core physical education teaching in Years 10 and 11 was more recreational and less on coaching and technical help and did not always meet National Curriculum requirements. The graduate trainee and the supply teacher contributed effectively in the absence of the regular staff.
173. Leadership and management are very good and documentation has been clearly presented and acted on. Monitoring through performance management of teaching is good and clarifies future developments in the department. The head of department works extremely hard and teaches most of the examination work, but ways of sharing the workload more need investigating. The sports co-ordinator scheme is working well in providing sporting opportunities for primary feeder schools. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the breadth and balance of activities is good. The one 50-minute lesson per week for Years 10 and 11 non-examination students does not help their progression. However, a GCSE option is available to all students in Years 10 and 11 and an increasing number opt for the subject. Assessment procedures are very good and meet the criteria set in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The application of these measures is beginning to be made by all the specialist staff. The department has made good improvement since the appointment of the head of department. Areas for improvement should be centred on continuing to increase participation levels in Years 10 and 11 and reducing the examination workload for the head of department.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Well planned lessons provide good learning opportunities.
- Good teacher-student relationships support achievement through guidance and advice.
- Assessment procedures impact positively on learning.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used effectively to encourage independent learning through research.
- The department could provide more enrichment opportunities.

174. Results in the first GCSE short course examined in 2002 were in line with national averages, with 48 per cent attaining grades A\* to C, but 89 per cent gained grades in the range A\* to G. Girls did better than boys. Given that these students had average levels of prior attainment, their achievements are satisfactory. There is no comparison with previous years as this was the first year group to be entered. Attainment levels at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in line with national averages. Given the below average attainment of students when they enter the school this represents good achievement.
175. Present standards of work in Year 11 indicate higher levels of attainment compared to the previous year's results, and standards are now above average. Predicted grades for GCSE range from A\* to E for the majority of students. This represents good achievement following on from Year 9. Students are able to marshal arguments considering more than one point of view and can both explain scripture extracts and use them to support their writing. Higher attaining students are able to attempt some basic exegesis while lower attaining students, although writing less fluently, can

produce some very thoughtful commentary. Students grow more confident in evaluative writing, for example, in discussing Muslim aid and are able to explain the differences between a variety of belief systems, reflecting how belief affects behaviour and customs, for instance in Hinduism the belief in reincarnation, or the difference between Christian and Muslim marriage. They are able to discuss a range of moral issues such as euthanasia, abortion or 'Just War' theory and relate these to their own lives and actions.

176. Current Year 9 teacher assessments show average attainment indicating good improvement and achievement. There are examples of excellent work on, for instance, Buddhism, with a good grasp of its teaching and some thoughtful commentary. Higher attaining students are able to carry out their own research and incorporate their findings in their work. An excellent imaginative modern parable explaining death and the afterlife to a young child was well written and beautifully illustrated. Some good evaluative work on prejudice and discrimination, with appropriate examples, linked theory and real life. Students in Year 8 are able to give thoughtful answers to the big questions about life and students with special educational needs, although their answers were not as full, were just as thoughtful as higher attaining students. All students use religious terminology with understanding, for example, the notion of sacrifice and selflessness, and give examples in real life such as Mother Theresa. Year 7 students can understand symbolism and give examples. They are able to relate the story of the Good Samaritan to their own lives and make a moral judgement about behaviour. Self-assessment is encouraged and one student, after a module on justice, was able to write: ' I have changed my mind '.
177. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some very good practice observed. Lessons are well planned. Where teaching is very good the pace is brisk and purposeful and this engages the students, helping their concentration and intellectual effort. For example, a lesson on examination technique and practice was taken seriously by a Year 11 group who gained much from it and learned through evaluating the work of others where their own weaknesses lay. This supported their independent learning. Occasionally a lesson can be overly teacher-led or too text-bound, particularly if taught by a non-specialist, with more emphasis on filling in worksheets rather than an opportunity for students to share their thoughts and experiences with others. Also, general questioning does not allow the individual to be challenged to think further and deeper. Students work purposefully and are responsive to their teachers. They have very good opportunities to develop their spiritual and moral life in moments of reflection, or stillness, using a lighted candle as a focus or discussing ethical problems and moral dilemmas. They learn tolerance, understanding and appreciation of other cultures and religions with their diverse customs and beliefs.
178. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is clear vision and a commitment to improvement especially in the assessing and monitoring of students' progress. Opportunities to support literacy and numeracy, as well as citizenship, are clearly identified in the schemes of work and very well addressed; for example, in the 'Island' exercise where the students have to draw up their own laws for living together. There is little evidence of the use of ICT, particularly in encouraging research and independent learning. Extra-curricular activities include visits to a Hindu shrine and Buddhist temple and the organisation of a multicultural Hindu "Out of the Box" day for Year 7, in which Indian drummers and dancers worked with the whole year group, but further learning-enhancing experiences need to be developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, particularly the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11. However, there is still non-compliance with the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education in the sixth form.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

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

### Strengths

- The rising popularity of the subject.
- The extent to which students are developing their understanding of how businesses operate.
- The contribution to extra-curricular work, including recent fieldwork in Barcelona.

### Areas for improvement

- The teaching accommodation does not offer a suitably stimulating business-orientated environment for teaching and learning.
- The emphasis placed on the use of key skills, especially the opportunities for extended writing.
- Lesson planning, so that more challenges are presented to the students.
- The quality of marking and use of assessment data.

179. Business studies is offered as a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Hitherto, numbers opting for the subject have been small, but are now growing. In 2002 a small number of students were entered for the GCSE examination. Standards based on average points scored were below average and they were below average for the percentage of students gaining grades A\* to C. For grades A\* to G, however, standards were above average. Owing to the smallness of the group, no analysis based on gender is possible. These results represent satisfactory achievement as standards on entry into Year 10 were below average.

180. For present students attainment is broadly average, with a minority of students, who are mainly boys, recording standards that are well above average. Achievement is satisfactory as, on entry to the course in Year 10, standards were broadly average. The higher standards that are now being recorded are associated with a new teacher. No discernible differences in achievement based on gender can be identified and the achievements of students with special educational needs, and higher attainers, are also satisfactory.

181. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are planned well, though there is a tendency for the teacher to dominate the lesson. Once an introduction to the lesson has been offered, learning would be more effective if the students were challenged to find answers for themselves by researching and investigating the materials available. For example, in an otherwise effective Year 10 lesson on designing questionnaires, the quality of learning would have been even greater if the students had been asked to research and identify different forms of questions for themselves. Instead, the teacher listed the different types of questions that might be used and then gave examples. Though the students improved their knowledge and understanding during the lesson, pace suffered and the students played rather a passive role in the lesson. They were not sufficiently challenged. In a more effective Year 11 lesson, the students were finishing their GCSE course work. Their portfolios showed evidence of some individual research and all students had developed a good working knowledge of business terms. Higher attaining students were able to apply these terms successfully and explained factors that might limit the size of a market, for example. Work seen during the inspection showed that all students were compiling a good set of notes, but there was insufficient evidence of the fostering of key skills. Written exercises tended to be short, there was little evidence of numerical analysis and little evidence of the use of ICT beyond word processing. Students' learning would improve if they were set more challenging written tasks and if more opportunities were presented for them to undertake research tasks by using the Internet, or by consulting a wider range of written texts, including newspaper and magazine articles. Students' work is marked regularly, but some of the marking is too concerned with effort rather than content. Marking did not relate to GCSE levels and insufficient reference was made to the target grades awarded to each student. The students were not given enough guidance on how they might further improve their work and secure higher grades.

182. Business studies is a one-person department that is headed by a teacher who is new to both the school and the profession. As a result of this changing context, references to the developments

since the last inspection are not valid. The present leadership and management of the department are satisfactory and planning for future developments is good. The subject is increasing in popularity and a recent departmental visit to Barcelona has helped to raise the department's profile, as well as contribute to the students' moral, social and cultural development. Department planning needs to focus on how key skills can be developed further, especially writing skills and the use of ICT. The quality of teaching and learning would also benefit if business studies lessons could be conducted in suitably equipped, specialist accommodation.

## 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 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. At the time of the inspection, no validated school results, nor validated national data, were available for the 2002 examinations. In the tables only subjects entering at least five candidates are included. In 2001, no subjects entered 5 or more candidates at AS level and there were no Advanced or Intermediate GNVQ students.

### GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	9	88.9	88	22	34	4	5.3
Chemistry	6	100	90	33	32	5	5.5
English literature	9	100	95	33.3	37	4.4	5.3
General Studies	21	85.7	84.9	28.6	28.2	4.9	4.9
Geography	8	100	92	25	38	4.8	5.7
Information Technology	6	100	86	0	23	2.7	4.6
Mathematics	10	80	87	30	43	4.	5.8

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

183. Mathematics and biology were inspected in depth, but lessons in both chemistry and physics, which are offered at AS and A2 level, were sampled, as was a lesson in numeracy key skills. Standards in chemistry and physics were below average, but achievement is good given the students' results at GCSE. In the AS physics lesson seen, the class was planning an investigation into the resistance of different lengths of nichrome wire. The lesson was good because the students were making good progress, being encouraged to work independently and test various ideas for themselves. In the AS chemistry lesson seen, the group was making good progress in their understanding of halogens. They were using several tests successfully to identify unknown halides. This too was a good lesson. In the Year 12 key skills lesson, teaching and learning were good and, though standards were average, they were adversely affected by the high level of absence.

#### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- The students' very positive attitudes to learning help them to achieve satisfactorily.
- Very good leadership by the new head of department provides clear priorities for future improvement.
- Good assessment procedures ensure that students' achievements are well supported.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCE A level, which are too low.
- Increased guidance to students about course expectations.
- The available teachers could be used more effectively to ensure that A level groups are shared.

184. In 2001, the GCE A2-level examination results were below average. Ten students completed the course. Though three gained A grades, two did not reach a pass standard. On such a small entry, an analysis of results based on gender is not valid, but the achievement of the students, based on their attainment at GCSE, was satisfactory. In 2002, with a smaller group of only five students, the average points scored improved marginally and all candidates passed, but no A and B grades were awarded. In the 2002 AS-level examinations, nearly half of the 18 students failed to achieve a grade. Too many students began the course with lower than normal standards for entry into mathematics A-level courses. As a result, many of them were not able to cope with the demands of the course.
185. The standards of current Year 13 students are average. Standards are higher than those of the previous year as the new head of department has introduced more rigour to teaching and learning. Results in examination modules taken so far suggest that all five students are on track for successful completion, a high proportion at the higher grades. In pure mathematics, students have developed well their understanding of calculus, trigonometric functions, coordinate geometry and quadratic equations. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory. They are making at least satisfactory progress in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In Year 12 only four students are following the course. They have not yet taken any of the modules to obtain an indication of possible AS-level performance. In the work seen students understand how to use different algorithms to solve problems and use calculus confidently to find the equations of tangents to curves.
186. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. At the time of the inspection the sole teacher responsible for teaching the subject in Year 13 was absent. This meant that no lessons could be seen for these students as no arrangements had yet been made to cover their lessons. However, students' records show that work is well structured and progress is well monitored and supported. Students' views of the teaching received were positive. Teaching in Year 12 is good. Lessons are carefully planned and always have clear aims. The objectives of the course are well met. Lessons are well structured and provide appropriate levels of challenge and approaches to help students learn. A very good knowledge of mathematics is shown in the teachers' questioning and explanations and in the tasks set. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in lessons. The day-to-day marking and assessment of students' work is good. It usually contains comments to help students see how they can improve. Students show very positive attitudes and work hard to cope with the demands of the subject. They make considerable efforts to understand the work they are doing.
187. The subject is well led and managed. In the two years since his appointment the subject leader has identified clear priorities for the sixth form. Very good schemes of work have been developed to effectively reflect the subject requirements and set the stage for good teaching. There is a clear commitment to improving standards and attracting a larger number of more able students in future years. Course retention rates are very good. At the moment teachers are not deployed as effectively as they might be. Of the three teachers who teach in the sixth form only one teaches in Year 13. Sixth form provision was not reported in the previous inspection.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Standards in Year 13 show good achievement from students' starting point.
- Teaching is good; students enjoy biology and work hard.
- Management is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Plan more practical work.
- Provide more opportunities for independent research.
- The use of ICT in classroom teaching.

188. Biology is offered at AS and A2 GCE. Twelve students have enrolled for AS this year making biology one of the most popular subjects in the sixth form. It is unusual for a student not to complete the course; retention rates are very good.
189. In 2001, A level results were below average for grades A and B and below average based on average points scored. Results at A2 GCE in 2002 were below the national average for 2001, the last year for which national figures are available. In 2002 students generally attained higher results in biology A2 and AS GCE than in their other subjects. During the inspection standards at AS level were below the national average. Standards at A2 are above national averages. This is because of the good teaching being provided. As students are attaining at a higher standard than would be expected from their GCSE results, their achievement in biology is good.
190. Students' notes are of an appropriate depth for A level. The work of higher attaining students is consistently good. Students have a good understanding of the topics they are studying. Students know the organelles of a cell and can describe their function. Students can accurately explain how gases and food move around the body and how they enter cells. They have a clear understanding of how the nephrons remove waste products in the kidney. Students have a good understanding of most aspects of cell division but make mistakes when describing meiosis and mitosis. Mistakes are also made in work on genetics and inheritance patterns are not always accurate. Students' understanding of the structure of DNA and how it controls protein manufacture is very good. Fieldwork is of a high standard and students also gain valuable knowledge and understanding from laboratory investigations. Practical work, however, is under-represented in students' folders and they say that they would like more opportunities to learn from experiments. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to learn independently, to use ICT for research and other purposes and to present their ideas to the class. Students' folders are well presented with important facts highlighted. They show many very good examples of practice examination answers and this makes for easy revision.
191. Teaching and learning are good. The teacher has high expectations for students' learning. Following fieldwork students were reviewing oxygen levels in water samples. They were not as expected and the teacher initiated a good debate as to why this should be. The teacher's enthusiasm thoroughly engages students and this accelerates learning, especially in a Year 12 class where the students made good progress in their understanding of the anatomy of the heart and quickly overcame their misgivings about dissection. Teaching and learning always focus on how to gain top marks in examinations. This is helping to raise attainment. This was seen in a good Year 13 lesson where students were reviewing answers to examination questions on the environment. Only answers that would gain maximum marks were acceptable to the teacher. Marking is very detailed and includes very useful comments on how students can improve their work. The pace of learning was the issue in the last inspection. The pace of learning seen this time was good and students covered much relevant work in each lesson.
192. Students enjoy biology and appreciate the good personal help they receive from their teacher. They feel they work hard. They find the teacher's feedback on their answers in tests very helpful. They all like the topic books they are given, finding them a good learning aid. They also make good use of the reference books in the biology department.
193. Leadership and management are good. Assessment is thorough and uses past attainment well to predict grades. This data is used well to track students' progress. Effective remedial action is quickly taken when students under-perform. Examination results are analysed well and good use is made of the outcomes in lesson planning. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

All aspects of design and technology in the sixth form were considered as part of this inspection.



## Design and technology

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

### Strengths

- The quality of designing and making in textiles.
- Opportunities to use ICT in project work.
- Good quality teaching and learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The timetabling arrangements for sixth form study are inefficient and need review.

194. Students generally enter the courses in the sixth form with good grades in their respective design and technology subjects at GCSE. The courses in Years 10 and 11 provide a very useful preparation for the A-level course and most students have a good range of basic skills in design methodology as well as the practical ones. The department is currently offering three courses in the sixth form at both AS and A2 level. These are:-

- product design (graphics)
- textiles (art & design)
- food technology

195. The only examination course in 2002 was AS textiles where there were four students. All recorded good grades, with half gaining the top grade. Students working towards A2 in textiles were seen in class during the inspection and their work is of an above average standard. The creativity of the work is wide and is promoted through stimulating teaching. The students achieve well.

196. Students were very enthusiastic about the course and spoke highly of the teaching they received. Within the sixth form, students learn effectively principally through a mixture of practical project work and taught theory sessions. The balance of this is appropriate. The use of computer-aided design and manufacture supports development of project work in all subjects. Students generally show independence in their work and are self-motivated; they make suitable intellectual, physical and creative efforts in producing their work.

197. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all subjects and all lessons seen featured either good or very good teaching. The inter-personal relationships between students and staff are very good and with the small group sizes, students receive much individual tuition. Teachers are confident in their work and they understand their subjects well. Students have good attitudes towards their work. They are keen to do well and are enthusiastic. Most have clear ideas of what they intend to do once they have finished their course. Students achieve well overall in Years 12 and 13, with much time beyond the classroom being spent completing project work, design folders or general research. This time is well spent.

198. Leadership and management are good and course retention rates are very good. One problem, however, which is affecting standards is that students currently have five 50-minute lessons per week in their design and technology subject. All these lessons are single and restrict opportunities for extending students' working time at a task. This system is inefficient for A-level work, as a high proportion of the lesson is taken in setting work up, or putting it away. Students roundly disliked this approach and wished for longer periods of time, particularly for practical project work.

## BUSINESS

199. No subjects were inspected in detail, but one A2 Year 13 lesson in business studies was sampled. In this lesson teaching and learning were very good and the standards of work seen were above average.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

200. No subject was inspected in depth, but two ICT A-level lessons were seen and a range of student work reviewed. The course develops effective independent learning skills. Students take pride in their work, which is often compiled and presented to commercial report standards. Their work is of a well-above average standard and teaching is very good. There have been insufficient numbers of students in the past to make significant comparisons with national averages. Course retention rates are excellent.

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

During the inspection, work in physical education was inspected in depth. The school offered no other subjects.

### **Physical education**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Very good teaching promotes very good learning.
- The assistance students give in the teaching and coaching of other classes and clubs.
- The Community Sports Leadership Award and Higher Sports Leadership Award are encouraging students to become involved in primary schools.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- To promote more discussion to help students to be more articulate.
- To develop students' ICT skills and the opportunities they have to use ICT in their work.

201. The course is in its second year and the present A2 students will be the first to be entered for the examination. Last year their results in the AS examination included one A grade, one B grade, one C grade and three passes at grade D, though no national comparisons for these results can be made. The A2 work scrutiny indicated well-presented and clear notes separated into sections for revision purposes. The standard of theoretical work is above average. Practical work is similarly above average and includes work with primary school children and classes from other years in the school. The course has very good retention rates and the number of students opting for the course next year shows a healthy rise.
202. In work seen during the inspection, Year 12 AS students were all present for an advanced lesson on plyometric training. The students were responsible for the warm up and showed an understanding of the link between the warm up and the chosen activity. When the practical work was linked to the theoretical aspects the learning improved. Students are able to work independently and more discussion will improve their articulation in speaking skills. The A2 group analysed a Year 9 soccer class when passing was selected as being the key factor in a small-sided game. They found that the task had motivated the Year 9 students into more accurate passing. In a theory session on sport in Australia the group demonstrated knowledge of comparative sport education and had some opportunity for discussion. The achievement of students in Years 12 and 13 is good. Many A-level students assist in the coaching of school clubs in their own time. Through the Community Sports Leadership Award Scheme and Higher Sports Leadership Award this coaching is extended to the local primary schools. The opportunity to coach other groups of students encourages independence and promotes self-esteem.
203. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The head of department teaches all but one session on the A-level programme and works hard to present the course effectively. ICT presentations stimulate the learning process. Students need to continue to improve their own expertise in all ICT developments. The planning and preparation for lessons is very effective and the teacher's knowledge of the subject is a strength. Teacher student relationships are excellent and provide the platform for students to progress. The teaching of the coursework is mainly reliant on one teacher and more involvement from other staff is desirable for the A-level course to flourish.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

204. Health and social care is offered as an AVCE course to students in Years 12 and 13. This course was not inspected in depth, but one lesson was sampled. This course is growing in popularity and, in the lesson seen, teaching and learning were good and standards were above average.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

205. No subjects were inspected in depth, but a Year 12 AS lesson in media studies was sampled. This is a popular course and the teaching and learning seen were good. Standards, however, were below average because the students were not fluent readers and they found difficulty evaluating some of the more detailed analysis of the Iraq conflict offered in the quality press. They were more confident analysing the articles that appeared in the tabloid newspapers.

## HUMANITIES

206. No subjects were inspected in depth but geography and history were sampled. Geography prepares students for the GCE AS course in Year 12. Standards are average and students are achieving very well on the coursework assignment based on Carlisle. Year 13 students are preparing for GCE A level and the standards seen were above average. In the Year 13 history lesson, teaching and learning were good and the standards of work seen from the two students following the course were above average.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

207. The focus subject was English literature. English language was sampled. In a good lesson Year 13 students made good progress in understanding and analysing 'estuary English'. Teaching and learning were good and standards are average. There are A-level courses in French and German in Year 13, but not in Year 12. Numbers studying a modern language are very small. A German lesson was observed. Teaching and learning were good and standards average. The two students achieved well at AS level. It was not possible to observe a French lesson, but scrutiny of work indicated that standards were average. The results of the two students at AS level in 2002 represented good achievement.

### English literature

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

#### Strengths

- Highly motivating and enthusing teaching that results in very good student participation and learning.
- Students make good progress in their writing and very good progress in their ability to explore and discuss texts orally.
- Standards are improving.

#### Areas for improvement

- The students' awareness of what they need to do to realise their target grades.
- The students' understanding of the conventions of post-16 essay writing.

208. Given the small number of candidates comparisons should be treated with caution. In the 2001 A-level English literature examination results were broadly average for grades A and B. All candidates gained grades A to E: an above average performance. In 2002 the proportion at grades A and B and the average grade fell, but the overall A to E pass rate remained at 100 per cent. In the 2002 AS examination, all three candidates were successful. Recruitment to the course is good, within the confines of a small sixth form, and there is a high level of successful course completion.

209. Standards in both Year 12 and Year 13 are above average and the students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Students of all attainments are secure in their knowledge of the

socio/historical context of the texts they study, often emanating from their own research through texts and websites. They are also assured when making a personal response to the texts and justifying their response. A Year 12 debate on whether Willy Loman is a tragic hero revealed good knowledge of the concepts underpinning classical tragedy and of Miller's attempt to challenge the conventional orthodoxy. Several factors distinguish the work of higher attaining students from the other students: they deal more effectively with the impact of form, structure and language on meaning; they write with a more assured technical accuracy; they are more consistently evaluative and analytical. However, even higher attainers are not consistently attaining standards associated with the very highest grades because there is a lack of intensity and frequency in their evaluation. Some of their comments are too summative and descriptive. Other students' standards are average but they need to focus more sharply on an author's use of language to attain higher grades. Spelling errors and the inappropriate use of colloquialisms can undermine their standards.

210. The challenge for the department is to improve the students' written work to match the skills of analysis, especially of language, form and structure that they reveal in discussion. During a lesson on Nicholson's 'Fossils' Year 13 students unravelled the poet's symbolic representation of the life cycle through a highly focused, collaborative and independent analysis of the poem's imagery, especially its sound and motion. This was highly impressive advanced study work of great analytical intensity, but it is not yet translated to written work consistently. It tends to be more apparent in the students' course work where they benefit from the individual tutoring of their teachers. Better and more consistent control of the conventions of A-level essay writing will enhance the standards of students of all abilities.
211. Teaching and learning were very good in the lessons observed and as evidenced in the students' work. Students are enthused by the teachers' own enthusiasm for the subject and given confidence by their teachers' very good subject knowledge. The teachers have high expectations. This is evident in the range of activities and tasks that often require students to work individually, making presentations, leading discussions and analysing texts. The teacher's use of silence in the lessons on 'Fossils' was highly effective, allowing the students to have the time and space to formulate their own judgements, but also signalling very high expectations. Students confirm that the active and engaged learning observed in their lesson on 'Death of a Salesman' was typical. Marking is highly informative: an explicit approach to ensuring the students are aware of the assessment objectives they must cover is emerging. However, students are not assured about grade criteria: their focus on what they need to do in the examination to realise the expectations of their target grade criteria is not as sharp as often seen. There is not enough use of models of effective writing, either through the analysis of examination answers of other students, or through activities that crystallise and practise the conventions of the most effective conventions of post-16 writing.
212. Leadership and management are good. There is good collaboration between the teachers on the course through such tasks as moderating marking. They monitor the students' progress well and have ensured good continuity of learning while a member of staff is away: a commitment that is highly appreciated by the students. There is good coverage of the course requirements.