

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BEAUCHAMPS HIGH SCHOOL**

Wickford, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115322

Headteacher: Mr P Bell

Reporting inspector: Mrs S D Morgan  
1355

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2001

Inspection number: 189373

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Beauchamps Drive Wickford Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gareth Williams
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1355	Mrs S D Morgan	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils' taught?</p>
19653	Mrs E Dickson	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
8402	Dr V Johnston	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>A-level English</p>	
1292	Mrs V Foster	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>A-level mathematics</p>	
30433	Dr C Corp	Team inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>A-level biology</p>	
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	<p>Art and design</p> <p>A-level art and design</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p>	How well is the school led and managed?
2495	Mr B Munden	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology</p> <p>A-level design and technology</p>	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10817	Mr G Rayner	Team inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>History</p>	
17847	Mr D Moynihan	Team inspector	<p>Information and communication technology</p>	

2496	Dr A O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	
30814	Mrs E Coley	Team inspector	Music	
3726	Mrs M Bean	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
18683	Mrs J Thompson	Team inspector	Religious education	
23880	Mrs O Hall	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
18072	Ms J Stephens	Team inspector		

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Beauchamps is a comprehensive school of average size with 908 students in Years 7 to 13. There are more boys than girls in Years 7 to 11, although the proportion varies between year groups, with significantly more boys in Years 8, 9 and 11. Over the last six years the school has become increasingly popular with parents and is now oversubscribed. Overall, students' attainment on entry is average. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, at almost seven per cent. Just over eleven per cent of students have been identified as having special educational needs, a below average proportion. These students have a range of needs, with most having learning and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is well below average. Almost all students are white. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is similar to most schools, and three students are at an early stage of learning English. A few students are Travellers. Beauchamps is taking part in a number of initiatives, such as Summer School Intervention programmes for literacy and numeracy and the Teaching Awards initiative. It has Investors in People and Chartermark statuses.

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

This is a very good school. In relation to students' attainment on entry, GCSE results in Year 11 are very good and their results in Years 12 and 13 are satisfactory. Students are making satisfactory or better progress in all subjects. Teaching is good throughout the school. Good teaching is reflected particularly in GCSE examination results, which have improved consistently. The headteacher, senior management team and governors are providing very good leadership and management and have a clear vision of how to enable the school to improve further. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Consistently good teaching enables students to achieve very well in their GCSE examinations.
- Staff work very hard to promote constructive attitudes, positive approaches to learning and the personal development of all students.
- Monitoring of students' academic achievements is excellent and has been very effective in securing school-wide improvement.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher, senior managers and governors, with a clear focus on improving standards in a supportive and caring environment.
- Partnership with parents effectively supports students' achievements because it focuses on helping all to succeed.
- Excellent links with the community contribute significantly to many aspects of students' development.

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

- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The number of students and range of courses offered in the sixth form.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in 1996 it was judged to be improving. Since that time very good further improvement has been made. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. This is having a positive impact on standards, particularly at GCSE where results are much higher than five years ago, and are now well above the national average. In the sixth form there has been good overall improvement. Examination results have risen to the national average and the number of students is increasing.

Almost all the key issues from the last inspection report have been systematically dealt with. For example, raising standards in a number of subjects, significant improvement in the monitoring of teaching and learning and ensuring the aims of the school are shared by all staff. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship. The school continues to seek further improvement and has gained the School Achievement Award (improvement category), being judged the most improved school in Essex. Staff morale is high and the school is very well placed to improve further.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	n/a*		

\* not available at the time the report was published

GCSE results have shown significant improvement over the past five years. The table shows that the results achieved by all students were well above average at GCSE compared with schools nationally and compared to similar schools (that is, schools with a similar proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals). The results indicate that students' achievements are very good overall. The trend of improvement in GCSE grades is above the national rate. Over the last three years the results of boys have been above the national average and those of girls well above the national average. The results for individual subjects varied. Comparing students' results in each subject shows that they did relatively well in English, science, art and design, design and technology, history, French, music and physical education. They did less well in geography, ICT and religious education. The 2001 results show an improvement in art and design, design and technology, history, French, music, physical education and religious education. The school achieved almost all the targets for GCSE results in 2001 which had been agreed with the Local Education Authority.

Overall, the school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average and results have shown consistent improvement. The 2001 results in English were well above average and above average in mathematics and science. In English, girls' results were better than boys' by a similar margin to that seen nationally. Boys' and girls' results are broadly similar in mathematics and science. The results indicate that standards are improving in English. Compared with similar schools, results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science. Results indicate that students' achievements are good overall.

When students enter the school their levels of attainment are average. The most recent national assessment results at the end of Year 9 indicate that students' achievements are good overall. Current standards reflect these results. Standards in almost all other subjects, as observed in lessons and through recorded work, are average or above and students' achievements are good. In Year 11 current standards are above or well above average in almost all subjects. Students' achievements are good, and in a number of subjects, including English, are very

good. Students' achievements are in line with expectations in music, in Years 7 to 11. In ICT, standards are well below expectations because of the lack of specialist teaching last year. With new ICT staff, students are making satisfactory progress.

In the sixth form, standards are average overall and results are at least in line with predictions based on GCSE results. Current standards are broadly in line with national expectations and students are achieving satisfactorily.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Almost all students are enthusiastic and want to do well. They value the range of opportunities that the school provides and the support they receive from staff.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Almost all students are well behaved. A few students, mainly in Years 7 to 9, misbehave in a few lessons. This affects their own progress and at times that of the whole class. The rate of exclusions is average.
Personal development and relationships	Students' personal development is very good and shows a marked improvement as they move through the school. By the time they reach Year 11, students are mature and responsible members of the school community. Relationships are very positive. Students work well together and support each other. They are friendly and polite to visitors.
Attendance	Very good. It is well above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality is good and lessons begin and end on time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and this is an improvement on the last inspection. A particular strength is the consistently satisfactory or better teaching in all subject areas. This has a positive impact on students' learning and the standards attained. The teaching observed was most effective in Years 10 to 13 and slightly weaker in Year 8. Teaching was good overall in most subjects. It was satisfactory in ICT and music and very good in English in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' management of students is good, particularly in Years 10 to 13; they have high expectations of students' behaviour and performance. Their enthusiasm is clearly communicated to students. This has a positive impact on students' learning and progress. The teaching of basic skills is good overall throughout the school. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on developing students' reading and writing skills in a number of practical ways. Numeracy skills are well taught and teachers provide good opportunities for students to apply their numeracy skills in a range of subjects. Sufficient opportunities are provided for students to apply their ICT skills across the curriculum. In most subjects, students' work is marked very effectively. This gives students a clear indication of how well they are performing and areas for improvement. Lessons that had weaknesses sometimes lacked sufficient challenge for the highest-attaining students and this resulted in these students making insufficient progress with their learning. However, this was only true for a small number of lessons, and in the vast majority teachers provided work that met students' needs.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in most respects. The statutory curriculum is in place for all subjects, except design and technology in Year 10, and religious education in the sixth form. The small size of the sixth form restricts the range of courses that the school can offer. The range of extra-curricular activities is good, and they are very well attended. A satisfactory programme for personal, social and health education is provided. Careers education is good and strongly supported by a wide range of opportunities for work experience. The community makes an excellent contribution to students' learning and the school has very effective links with partner institutions.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Specialist teaching and help from learning support assistants are good and enable students to make good progress. However, opportunity groups in Years 7 and 8 are withdrawn from their only religious education lesson, which limits their access to this subject.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Students are given good support by specialist teachers. Subject departments provide good guidance to support students' progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school supports students' personal development very well. Moral and social development are very strongly promoted. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and personal development are excellent. Assessment data is used very well to track students' progress and set targets.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents are very supportive of the school. They value the education that their children receive and the standards achieved. A very good working relationship with the school supports their children's learning at home.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is a strong leader and has been highly successful in taking the school forward. There has been very good progress and improvement since the last inspection. The management team has a very good understanding of the strengths in the school and where improvements are required. The team lead by example, are approachable and have a high profile in and around the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body provides good support to the school. Governors are keen to see the school improve and many make regular visits as part of their monitoring of responsibilities. Governors with oversight of, for example literacy, and student care and well-being, are very knowledgeable about developments in these areas. The governing body fulfils its statutory role well in most respects. Strategic planning is very good and provides an effective framework to steer developments.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior managers monitor teaching and learning very rigorously. Information on how well students' achieve in tests and examinations is thoroughly analysed and used very effectively to track progress towards students' target grades. Overall, monitoring of students' achievements has been very effective in securing school-wide improvement. Teachers who are particularly skilled have given excellent support to help others improve their classroom practice.
The strategic use of resources	Governors and the senior management team have been very effective in bringing about improvements to accommodation and appointing highly qualified teachers. The school has successfully recruited several new teachers, as the roll has increased, and has good strategies for appointing new staff with the specialist skills to reflect the future demands of the curriculum. Longer-term plans for the school, including development of the sixth form, are well advanced. Very effective procedures are in place for day-to-day financial management. Best value principles are rigorously applied.

## 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>• Their children like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant issues were raised.</li> </ul>

Parents expressed great satisfaction with what the school provides and what their children achieve. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views.

## FORM

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Currently the sixth form of this 11-18 comprehensive school is small with 54 students on roll, but it is expanding. The number of students in Year 12 is substantially greater than in Year 13 and is expected to double in September 2002. Very few students are from ethnic minority communities. All students speak English well. The school provides a range of A and AS-level subjects but currently offers no vocational courses. Thirty-one per cent of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form and a small number join from other schools. The 16+ examination results have improved steadily. They were in line with the national average in 2000, and have shown further improvement in 2001. Almost all students remain in the sixth form for a two-year programme leading to A-level.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is satisfactory and cost-effective. Students can choose from an expanding range of AS and A-level courses. The school provides a positive environment for their personal and social development. Examination results have been improving steadily and are now in line with the national average. Students' achievements are satisfactory. Guidance, support and monitoring of students' progress are very good. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall, and very good in a number of subjects. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good with well-considered plans for future expansion and development.

#### Strengths

- Standards have risen steadily.
- Teaching is good overall. In a significant number of lessons it is very good or excellent and students learn well.
- Students are confident and articulate and enjoy being in the sixth form.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good and have been effective in securing improvement.
- Guidance, support and monitoring of students' progress are very good.

#### What could be improved

- The size of the sixth form and the range of courses offered.

*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
English	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards and students' achievements are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff share a commitment to enabling students to do well, and their approachability and supportiveness are highly valued by the students.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Subject management and the quality of teaching contribute significantly to the progress which students make.
Art and design	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Numbers on the course are growing. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students enjoy the subject. In classes where there are very few students the learning lacks pace and is less effective than in larger groups.
Biology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> In the past there has been underachievement by some students. The department has reorganised staff and changed the examination syllabus. This is having a positive impact on students' achievements.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Standards are in line with those expected at this early stage of the course and students are achieving appropriately. Teaching provides good individual support and is effective in encouraging personal development.

Work was sampled in all other subjects. The quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and a significant proportion was good or better. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall. Students were positive about the support they received from staff and commented that teachers gave generously of their time outside lessons.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The very effective procedures for tracking students' progress in Year 7 to 11 are continued in Years 12 and 13. Students are very well informed about their progress and development. Assessment data is used very well to set targets and very effective support and guidance systems are in place.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Those with management responsibilities are very effective. Teaching and learning are rigorously monitored. The performance of all students is carefully and conscientiously analysed to ensure that appropriate support and guidance are provided for all. Governors and staff work hard to ensure that the sixth form meets the aspirations of the students and complements what is offered in other post-sixteen centres in the locality.

## 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>• Printed information provided about subjects and courses is clear and helpful.</li> <li>• They are helped and encouraged to study and research topics independently.</li> <li>• Teachers are accessible for help if they experience difficulty in their work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of their work, and information about their progress.</li> <li>• Advice about what they should do when they leave school.</li> <li>• Support and help provided if they have a personal problem.</li> <li>• The range of activities and enrichment courses outside of lessons.</li> <li>• Treatment of sixth-form students as responsible young adults, together with the response of the school to their views.</li> </ul>

Students completed the questionnaire very early in the academic year. In discussions the views of all students were overwhelmingly positive. Some commented that they had not fully understood some questions and consequently had completed the form incorrectly. Inspectors support the students' positive views and the inspection findings do not support the criticisms.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In this report, the term "standards" refers to students' attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 or Year 11. "Above average standards", for example, means that a higher proportion of students of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set than is the case in the majority of schools. "Achievement" means how well students are doing now in relation to their prior attainment, which is what they could do when they started Year 7 or Year 10.

2. GCSE results have shown significant improvement over the past five years. In 2001, the results achieved by all students were well above average at GCSE compared with schools nationally. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A\*-C passes (56 per cent) was above the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\*-G passes and one or more A\*-G grades was well above the national average. The trend of improvement in GCSE grades is above the national rate. Over the last three years the results of boys have been above average and those of girls well above when compared to the national average. Results for individual subjects varied. Comparing students' results in each subject shows that they did relatively well in English, science, art and design, design and technology, history, French, music and physical education. They did less well in geography, ICT and religious education. The 2001 results show an improvement in art and design, design and technology, history, French, music, physical education and religious education. In 2001, the school achieved almost all the targets for GCSE results which had been agreed with the Local Education Authority.

3. Compared with similar schools in 2001, the proportion of students attaining five or more A\*-C grades was average. The proportion gaining five or more A\*-G grades was well above average. The proportion gaining one or more A\*-G grades was above average.

4. Standards of work of students in Year 11, as observed in lessons during the inspection and through students' written work, are above or well above average in almost all subjects. Students' achievements are good overall. In a number of subjects, students' achievements are very good. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations, and plan activities which are well structured. Students' achievements are in line with expectations in music. In ICT, standards are well below expectations because of the lack of specialist teaching last year. With new ICT staff, the current Year 11 students are making satisfactory progress and achieving well. However, they have a great deal to catch up if results are to improve significantly.

5. Overall, the school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average and results have shown consistent improvement. The 2001 results were well above average in English, and above average in mathematics and science. In English, girls' results were better than boys' by a similar margin to that seen nationally. Boys' and girls' results are broadly similar in mathematics and science. The results indicate that standards are improving in English. Compared with similar schools, results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science.

6. Overall, when students enter the school their levels of attainment are average. The most recent national assessment results at the end of Year 9 indicate that students' achievements are good overall. Current standards reflect these results. Standards in almost all other subjects, as observed in lessons

and through recorded work, are average or above and students' achievements are good. This is because teachers concentrate on developing appropriate skills, prepare students well for the tests and improve students' confidence.

7. In ICT current standards are well below average. This situation has arisen because of the long-term absence of the subject leader and because there is no overall plan to teach ICT across the curriculum. Since the start of this academic year there has been significant improvement. With new ICT teachers, students have been making satisfactory progress overall this school year.

8. Across the curriculum, the development of students' literacy skills is satisfactory, and likely to be good when new strategies are adopted widely. The introduction of improved strategies for teaching literacy is being managed very well. A staff training day has raised the awareness of all staff in the school, and given many practical ways of helping students with the reading and writing demands of the curriculum. Students' standards of numeracy are good and they apply their numeracy skills well in other subjects. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics lessons, which usually include a mental mathematics starter. There is no whole-school numeracy policy but developments for numeracy across the school are planned in line with the Government programme.

9. Students with special education needs make good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment. In Years 7 and 8 students with lower level reading and comprehension skills make good progress in the literacy opportunity and reading programmes to improve spelling and comprehension skills. They make good progress in language, social and collaborative skills development in morning, lunch and after-school clubs where students learn to listen and respect each others' thoughts and opinions, share materials and play word games to increase confidence and self-esteem. A few students with behaviour difficulties who are withdrawn to work with a visiting specialist show very good progress in social skills development. An important factor in their achievement was the good use of humour by the expert, who motivated and encouraged them to share ideas and make decisions. The achievement of students with statements of special educational need is good because they are well supported in class by teacher assistants who share good relationships with them. In a Year 9 history lesson, the thoughtful questioning, and sensitive support given by the learning assistant were important factors in enabling a range of students with special educational needs to achieve well. Gifted and talented students are making satisfactory progress overall. Of note are those students achieving A\* in many GCSE subjects.

10. The small number of students whose first language is not English make good progress. Three students from Russia were so effectively supported last year that one left the school to pursue courses in further education and the other two are now following full GCSE courses in school. The small number of students whose English is at an early stage of development are making good progress as a result of intensive literacy support.

### **Sixth form**

11. Overall, standards are average and results are at least in line with predictions based on GCSE results. Almost all students who start in Year 12 complete two years in the sixth form. Almost all students who want to continue into higher or further education achieve qualifications which enable them to do so. In the subjects sampled, students' achievements are satisfactory and their current standard of work is broadly in line with national expectations for these courses. In some subjects, such as drama, media studies, law, psychology, French and physical education, students attain good standards due to effective teaching. Students' communication, numeracy and ICT skills are supported well through key skills lessons and all students follow a well-planned general studies course.

12. In almost all of the subjects inspected in detail, evidence from current work and lessons observed indicates that standards are average and students are achieving satisfactorily. In biology, students did less well than expected in 2001. Appropriate action has been taken to identify and remedy areas of weakness. Staff changes have been made and the syllabus changed. Results in art and design have been broadly average, although numbers entered have been small. However, standards seen in Year 13 are below average for advanced level work. In Year 12 standards are higher in some aspects of the curriculum. For example, there is good achievement in painting and colour theory.

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

13. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Almost all the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that their children enjoy coming to school and this is evident in most lessons. In class most students show a considerable degree of interest and concentrate well. They settle quickly to written tasks. They work effectively in pairs and in small groups, where they encourage and support each other. Most take part readily in question and answer sessions and, when asked, express their own opinions. Because students enjoy their work and want to do well, they are strongly committed to the school's drive for high standards.

14. A small number of boys, particularly in Years 7 to 9, do not always respond positively. In a few lessons they are slow to settle to written work and are easily distracted. They do not always listen to their teachers, and they talk when they are not supposed to. Their negative attitudes affect their own learning and that of others. For example, in a Year 8 lesson a few boys unsettled the class by being constantly disruptive and their negative attitudes resulted in time being wasted and the class making little progress.

15. At the last inspection it was noted that a minority of students at Years 10 and 11, mainly boys, were seriously lacking in self-confidence. Teachers have largely dealt with this weakness, but a few students in lower sets sometimes showed a limited attention span and found it difficult to concentrate on what they had been asked to do.

16. In the best lessons, students applied themselves conscientiously, showing good levels of interest and enthusiasm. For example, in a Year 7 drama lesson, students were attentive, keen to be involved and had high expectations of their own performances. Similarly, in a science lesson, Year 8 students were keen to answer questions on the difference between tension and compression, and were sensible when setting up their practical investigation. Throughout the school, students showed considerable enthusiasm when learning French.

17. Students with special educational needs show positive attitudes to study through their responses in most lessons. In the learning support room, "opportunity groups" are keen to learn and readily take responsibility for organising equipment. The majority gain confidence in small group sessions which results in improvements to their organisation and presentation of work. The majority of students attend lessons punctually. However, a few, mainly students with behavioural difficulties, do not attend school regularly.

18. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and almost all are conducted in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. The school rules are clearly understood and adhered to by most students. In a small number of lessons, the behaviour of a few boys was silly and distracted others. This occurred mainly where teachers did not manage students' behaviour effectively or when the tasks did not fully engage the students' interest.

19. Around the school, students behave well, and show respect for others and for the school building. In places, the narrow corridors make movement between lessons difficult, and some students show less awareness of others than they might. Bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour rarely occur. Students say they are confident that, if there were any incidents of this kind, they would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. There have been 39 fixed period and one permanent exclusion during the year preceding the inspection, which is around the national average. All exclusions are fully documented and parents are involved at all stages.

20. Relationships between students and between students and staff are very positive. Teachers and students get on well together and there is mutual respect. There are many examples of students working well together, particularly in science, English and drama. Older students help regularly in lessons in the lower school. The quality of both working and social relationships contributes much to the ethos of the school. Students are friendly and courteous to visitors.

21. The personal development of students is very good. There is wide participation in the lunchtime and after-school activities, many of which extend and broaden learning. At lunchtime, the library is a hive of activity with many students using computers, choosing books or working, independently or with others. Students exercise responsibility through acting as members of the school council. Their views are taken seriously within the council, and are taken into account when decisions are made about improvements to the school building and grounds. As students move through the school, they become increasingly mature and responsible. By the time they reach Year 11 they manage their own common room, and many take responsibilities as prefects, helping in the day-to-day running of the school.

22. The attendance rate has gradually risen since the last inspection. For the last academic year it was 93.5 per cent, which is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence for the same year, at 0.1 per cent was well below average. Most students arrive at school on time and lessons begin promptly.

### **Sixth form**

23. Students in the sixth form are well motivated and show a mature approach to their work. They are keen to succeed and work hard to complete course work to the best of their abilities. Many work independently, carrying out their own research and showing initiative and self-discipline. However, a few students are more dependent on their teachers for guidance and support. They are more passive in lessons and wait for direction, rather than taking initiative. Behaviour is very good, and almost all students are attentive and conscientious. Overall, sixth formers are good role models for younger peers.

24. Sixth form students have responsibilities around the school. For example, they help younger students in lessons and run a drama club for Year 8. Four sixth formers recently started a bullying counselling service for younger students, for which they won The Diana Award for caring for others. This is viewed as a very positive achievement by the rest of the school. Many sixth form students take on responsibilities such as fundraising for local and national charities, participating in the Millennium Volunteers project and involving themselves in a variety of activities in the local community.

25. Students spoken to during the inspection were unanimous in their appreciation of being treated individually and as adults. They strongly value the support and guidance they receive from the staff, in respect of both their work and their plans for the future.

26. Attendance in the sixth form is good. Most students attend regularly. A small number have irregular attendance, and this is monitored carefully.

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

27. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. A particular strength is the consistently satisfactory or better teaching in all subject areas. This has a positive impact on students' learning and the standards attained. The percentage of satisfactory or better teaching has increased from 91 to 98 per cent, and the number of lessons observed in which teaching was judged to be very good or better has increased significantly. In the last inspection, eight per cent of lessons were very good or better and in this inspection it was 29 per cent. The number of good or better lessons, at 66 per cent, is also an improvement. Overall, teaching is good throughout the school. Teaching was most effective in Years 10 and 11 and slightly weaker in Year 8. Teaching was good overall in most subjects. It was very good in English in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory overall in ICT and music.

28. The lessons in which teaching was very good or excellent were characterised by teachers planning activities very thoroughly and ensuring lessons were varied and interesting. For example, the best religious education lessons were inspiring with informed and passionate presentations of figures like Martin Luther King and Bonhoeffer and issues such as life after death and Third World debt. Students were engrossed during the lessons and this led to significant gains in their understanding. Teachers took care to find out what students remembered and understood about previously completed work and then built upon this. For example in mathematics, in a Year 9 lesson for high-attaining students where there was brainstorming to see what students could remember about "area" before the teacher took the topic further. In the best English lessons, teachers gave clear explanations and asked probing questions, expecting students to explain their reasoning and support their opinions. The best science lessons were well planned and structured and used the available time effectively. For example, a very effective lesson on "distance and time" in Year 8 included a clear introduction followed by a practical session where the students were able to collect their own results. The students were well supported and this enabled them to use their results to reach meaningful conclusions. This motivated students and they learnt efficiently.

29. A considerable number of strengths were seen in the teaching and learning in many lessons that were satisfactory or better. Teachers' good subject knowledge, understanding of GCSE examination requirements and detailed assessment of students' work are particular strengths of teaching in many subjects, and enable students to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are hardworking and show considerable commitment. Students spoke positively about the willingness of teachers to spend time outside lessons if they required help or wanted to continue with practical assignments.

30. Teachers communicated their interest in topics very well and this motivated students to work hard. In French there is consistency in teaching. Teachers' knowledge and skills are a strength, as is their awareness of students' needs, their dynamic presentation and excellent modelling of spoken French. They promote active learning through games, paired and group tasks and a high level of interaction with students. These strategies are working very well in improving the performance of boys. Classes were well organised and managed, and relationships between students and teachers were good, for example in physical education. Students made good progress as a result of teachers' high expectations. Practical sessions were well organised and planned. In design and technology, teachers demonstrate new techniques effectively to enable students to develop basic skills. For example, in a Year 7 food

technology lesson, students were shown how to prepare small cakes and this enabled them to use equipment effectively and safely. Teachers used a variety of activities and resources effectively to engage students' interest. For example, in geography, departmentally produced worksheets provide a good variety of tasks and when a video is used, it vividly illustrates the places and processes that students are learning about and generates high interest.

31. The teaching of basic skills was good. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on developing students' reading and writing skills in a number of practical ways. Displays in corridors and subject areas remind students of correct spelling, and of the strategy of using mnemonics to remember difficult words. The use of the library to promote students' wider reading is being promoted well, with some good links in English. Although this work is recent, it is already having an impact in several departments. For example, in a history lesson, a novel by Charles Dickens was used as a source of historical evidence in work on crime and punishment, and helped the students to gain an understanding of the issues. Other evidence showed that teachers are providing guidance on how to structure written work, and that this is helping students to write better.

32. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics lessons, which usually include a mental mathematics starter. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to apply their numeracy skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum. For example, in geography, they analyse and display data in Year 10 on urbanisation and on European climate in Year 8. In science, Year 10 students perform calculations involving atomic masses. In design and technology, students weigh and measure during food preparation and use measurement and scale in a graphics 'bedroom' project. Sufficient opportunities are provided for students to apply their ICT skills across the curriculum. However, there is no whole-school plan and this is a weakness. Appropriate, well-structured homework was set regularly. In most subjects students' work was marked very effectively. This gave students a clear indication of how well they were performing and areas for improvement. However, marking in English and ICT was less effective or not carried out regularly enough.

33. Where teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory or poor, lessons sometimes lacked sufficient challenge for the highest-attaining students. This was only true for a small number of lessons. For example, in history, there is a need to improve the targeted provision for the highest-attainers. There is some reference to this in lesson plans, but this is not yet having a strong impact on what is provided. In almost all lessons, teachers manage students well, including those with behavioural difficulties. However, in a few lessons in Years 7 to 9 the behaviour of a few students, usually boys, is not managed effectively and this slows down the learning of the whole-class.

34. Over the last year, the school experienced difficulties in staffing in some subject areas such as ICT and design and technology. This had a negative impact on students' learning and standards. The school has made every effort to recruit suitably qualified staff and has managed the situation effectively. These difficulties have now been overcome in ICT and specialist staff appointed. However, staffing shortages remain in design and technology and there is a lack of specialist teachers for religious education. The school is currently attempting to recruit further specialist staff in both of these subjects.

35. The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good overall. Some very good teaching was observed in the learning support room. Teachers use an effective range of resources and questioning to stimulate and motivate students. This helps students understand words within the context of a sentence and encourages them to hear the sounds of vowels and to become accurate spellers. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning in mainstream and additional literacy clubs through their knowledge and expertise in a range of behaviour and specific learning difficulties training and their sensitive handling of difficult students. Teachers and assistants know their students well and their very good relationships help students feel more confident.

For example, in a well organised Year 8 science lesson, planning between the teacher and learning support assistant was thorough and as a result, contributed to excellent teaching and learning. Students with concentration and behaviour difficulties work well in drama. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, students with special educational needs engaged in a range of challenging and enjoyable activities. The pace was kept lively so that students concentrated on the tasks set and felt successful when achieving their target. Planning for special education needs students in subject areas is generally good though there are some inconsistencies in planning in religious education. Some good extension work for higher-attainers was observed in music, mathematics and religious education. In a few lessons, where teachers do not plan the work to take account of the full range of ability in the class, the progress of this group of students is too slow.

36. There are a small number of students who speak English as a second language and they make good progress in lessons.

### **Sixth form**

37. Overall, teaching and learning in the sixth form are good and have many of the positive features noted in Years 7 to 11. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Just over a third of the lessons observed were very good or excellent and two-thirds were good or better. In the good, very good and excellent lessons the work is very well matched to students' capabilities and this leads to students making rapid learning gains. Teaching in all subjects was at least satisfactory and in a number, including mathematics, French, psychology, drama, law and media studies, it was good or very good.

38. The best lessons have a number of similar features. These include teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm. Teachers prepare their lessons well, give clear explanations and carefully build upon students' previous knowledge. For example, in a Year 12 mathematics lesson on sequences, the teacher checked students' understanding of mathematical ideas on sequences prior to work on oscillating and convergent sequences. Students also receive considerable encouragement and high levels of individual support, for example in English, art and design and design and technology. Students were positive about the support they received from staff and commented that teachers gave generously of their time outside of lessons. This has a positive impact on the progress that students make. Very good relationships are evident in all lessons. In most lessons students feel confident to put forward their own ideas. The teaching of key skills is good and lessons contain an interesting range of activities. For example, in a Year 12 lesson to develop communication skills, the teacher questioned students carefully to get them to evaluate what they had gained from a recent presentation about a sporting hero. Students were then given the task of planning an extended piece of writing about how to promote a healthy life style. The teacher worked hard to involve all students and had high expectations. There was detailed discussion about the structure needed for the piece of writing. Students were keen and interested and consequently made very good learning gains.

39. Appropriate homework, including longer-term assignments, is set regularly. Marking and assessment of assignments is at least satisfactory in all subjects, and of high quality in some, such as biology. Assessments take place regularly and students are provided with detailed information. This enables students to gain a clear view of how well they are progressing. However, in English, marking is not sufficiently detailed or analytical. Other relative weaknesses include insufficient evaluation of the impact of teaching in art and design. Teachers are not always assured in the language aspect of the English course. In some subjects, such as biology, the small number in the class restricts the flow of discussion and consequently slows down progress.

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

40. The quality and range of the learning opportunities in the curriculum are good in most respects in Years 7 to 11, and provide very effective support for students' personal and academic development. There has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for religious education and ICT in Years 10 and 11. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), including sex education and attention to drugs misuse is satisfactory. Strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory and provision for students with special educational needs is good overall. A major strength is the contribution of the community to students' learning and the very good relationships with partner institutions. The programme of careers education is good. Overall there is good equality of access and opportunities for students. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good with large numbers of students taking part in a significant number of activities.

41. In Years 7 to 11, all National Curriculum subjects and religious education are in place. However, the school does not meet the statutory requirement for all students to take a design and technology subject in Year 10. This is due to staffing difficulties. The school has made strenuous efforts to recruit specialist staff but has been unsuccessful. The alternative provision of an ICT course has been made until the problem can be resolved. The school has suitable provision for ICT in Years 7 to 9, through timetabled lessons and the use of computers in other subjects. The provision of a General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) course in ICT, for the majority of students in Years 10 and 11, is a significant improvement since the last inspection. There has also been an improvement in the development and use of computers in other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum for English is enriched by enabling all students to take both English language and English literature. Higher-attaining students also take media studies. In mathematics, higher-attaining students take an extra GCSE in statistics at the end of Year 10. Although there is some imbalance in the time given to subjects for the GCSE courses in history, music and physical education, the school has monitored results and this indicates that students are not being disadvantaged. There are a number of revision clubs for different subjects at lunchtimes and after school. These are well attended and have a significant effect on improving students' performance in their examinations.

42. The school is very aware of the need to review the curriculum and to be responsive to students' needs. As a result, plans are currently being discussed with the intention of implementing changes in the next academic year. An example of this is the Vocational Education and Training Curriculum consortium arrangement, in which the school will play an active part in linking with seven other schools, local colleges and other services to provide an alternative curriculum for students who are disaffected, have low attendance and are likely to underachieve in GCSE. At present there are no vocational courses other than the GNVQ in ICT, but others such as GNVQ manufacturing have been run in the recent past. This and other courses are being considered as part of future plans and the proposed bid for specialist school status in the business category.

43. The extra-curricular programme provides a wide range of clubs, courses, visits and sporting opportunities for students. Large numbers take part in most clubs and the large variety of sporting activities that take place at lunch times and after school. The learning resource centre and two ICT rooms provide students with access to computers at break times, lunchtimes and after school every day. There are clubs for art, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and music. Design and technology facilities are in use every day at lunchtimes and after school. Music activities include choir and orchestra and there is a drama club. These and other activities result in performances and concerts throughout the year. Most clubs are well attended and students are keen and enthusiastic

about the activities available to them. For example, during the inspection, the design and technology club was always full of students busy with projects. Both boys and girls actively engaged in the Elizabethan dress session in the history club. Good opportunities exist for GCSE students to receive extra support in most subjects through revision clubs.

44. The curriculum has been developed to provide opportunities suited to students' differing requirements. As a result "opportunities groups", in Year 7, are withdrawn from lessons for one hour per week to improve their literacy skills. The literacy intervention programme meets three times a week, before school, to improve students reading skills. A breakfast club provides a range of activities to support a small group of students. The homework club provides facilities for 5 to 13 year old students. This is organised by a local consortium of schools in conjunction with the library service. Funding has also been obtained to enable higher-attaining students to have the opportunity to attend extension sessions on Saturday mornings.

45. Curriculum provision for students with special educational needs, overall, is good. The development of a structured programme of literacy to raise reading and spelling ages of those students with very low scores has been a significant improvement since the last inspection. A few Year 10 and Year 11 students receive withdrawn study support on a short-term basis, although, the range of opportunity to prepare for work-related study is limited. Opportunity groups in Years 7 and 8 are withdrawn from their only religious education lesson and this limits their access to this subject. A few students with special educational needs use an ICT package to improve literacy and numeracy skills and older students use ICT to present their coursework in the learning support room. Students with special educational needs are set in many subjects in lower ability groups and work is planned appropriately towards their targets, which are set by subject teachers. However, the quality of these targets is variable and often they do not tell students how to improve. The quality of students' individual education and behaviour support plans is good and all have individual literacy and behaviour targets that are effectively related to key skills. The gifted and talented students are appropriately identified on a register. Initiatives to support extension skills are planned. However, development is at an early stage across most curriculum areas. The high quality of display in the special needs area enhances students' opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Reading resources are effectively displayed in the learning support room. However, library resources for students with special educational needs are limited and restrict their independent learning opportunities.

46. Students whose first language is not English are well provided for, initially by intensive language support and then by the involvement of subject departments, who provide key word lists, definitions and other subject-specific guidance.

47. The provision for careers education is good. It has significantly improved since the last inspection, to the extent that the school has received an external award in recognition of its provision. The co-ordinator has been strongly supported in improving her expertise and the impact of her work through an extensive programme of in-service training. Careers teaching takes place in all years, starting within the PSHE programme in Year 7. Learning inside the school is consolidated by a well-organised work experience programme in Year 10. Most work placements are provided by the Trident organisation, although students may arrange their own if they wish. Full use is made of the local careers service to give individual advice to students on career possibilities. The school works in collaboration with the local Business Partnership to give all Year 11 students a mock interview. Students place high value on this and prepare for their interviews with strong commitment. Apart from a GNVQ ICT course, there are no organised work-related courses in the curriculum. However, the school's strong links with the community provide some opportunities for work-related experiences, including residential training with the Army.

48. The school has established very good links with its partner institutions. Teachers work closely with those from feeder primary schools, to ensure continuity and that the school is fully aware of all students' prior attainment. The value of these links as a means of sharing good practice is strongly recognised. Teachers regularly meet to consider ways in which local schools can share ideas on teaching, learn from each other and make their assessment practices more consistent. One outcome has been the development of common criteria to identify how well students achieve. The school acknowledges that, while it can provide much useful advice to primary schools, it also strongly benefits from their ideas. A recent example is advice about displaying work that led to a considerable improvement in the way in which this was done in the school. Primary pupils have opportunities to visit the school for demonstration lessons to ease their transition into the secondary phase.

49. The school's very high commitment to its place in the local community has led it to establish a wide range of links that have an excellent impact upon its students' learning. Each year, students participate in the Wickford Carnival, in which they base a float on the school's drama production. A float for the International Lions Club, created as an art and design project, was featured on local television. The main charity supported by the school is the Essex Air Ambulance and this provides a productive theme for work, for example helicopter-related projects in art and design and design and technology. In Years 7,8 and 9, students benefit from Church Fraternity days, in which adherents of all the major religions represented in the town visit the school. The school choir often performs in the community, including an annual Christmas concert at a home for mentally handicapped adults. Students from the school regularly win a competition to design a local charity Christmas card for the Lions Club and the school has won an annual public speaking competition, organised by the local Rotary Club, for the last three years. Adults from local companies and the local authority support individual students as mentors. In collaboration with the local Business Partnership, the school identifies students in danger of underachieving, who are given the opportunity to attend residential team-building and assertiveness-training courses.

50. The school cultivates personal development well. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory and students' moral and social development are very good and are strengths of the school.

51. Since the last inspection the school has introduced a 'Thought for the Day'. This provides the focus for assemblies and tutorial periods, and is used effectively by many tutors to provide good moral and social guidance. There is a regular pattern of weekly assemblies for each year group, and although they generally include moral and social aspects, they do not tend to include any spiritual element. No assemblies seen during the inspection offered students any opportunity for prayer, reflection or contemplation. They do not meet the statutory requirement for an act of worship; this was also the case at the time of the last inspection.

52. The school has a policy to promote spiritual development. Whilst some subjects such as geography, history and science do include material which promotes the spiritual dimension, others miss opportunities. One very good example occurred in a Year 9 geography lesson in which students watched a video of the Kobi earthquake. When they watched the earthquake happen it created a moment of drama, leaving them reflecting on the awesome power of natural forces and then empathising with the victims. History provides some good opportunities to consider some fundamental questions and in science students wonder at the creation of the universe and the diversity in nature. However, similar opportunities for extending spiritual development in religious education and English are often missed. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Although there have been improvements since the last inspection, the provision could still be stronger, particularly in its organisation and development across departments.

53. Moral education is very good. Teachers set high standards and provide good role models in their own relationships with students. Students are given a clear picture of the difference between right and wrong and of the importance of respecting others. Regular fund raising for local and national charities is one way in which students express, in a practical way, their understanding of the need to care for others less fortunate than themselves. Several subjects provide opportunities for students to discuss moral issues, with particularly strong contributions in English, drama and the humanities. English texts explore many moral issues, and work on the Nazi persecution of the Jews, studied in history, allows students to consider issues of human rights and responsibilities.

54. The provision for social development is a strength, and contributes much to the personal development and maturity of students as they move through the school. They are encouraged to collaborate positively in subjects such as physical education, drama and science. The school council is highly valued and gives opportunities for students to participate in the wider life and decision-making of the school. The sixth form counselling service to support students with worries about bullying is well regarded. Students in Year 11 have opportunities to develop the concept of active citizenship by taking responsibility within the school as prefects. They manage their own common room and last year the first Year 11 Prom was organised - a good example of students providing enjoyment for themselves and others. Careers provision, particularly in Years 10 and 11, together with work experience placements, has a positive impact on social development. The school has excellent links with the community, and these enable students to participate profitably in local affairs, including public speaking competitions and sporting events. Each year students perform their school production for residents of a local old people's home. Year 11 students are given mock interviews by members of local businesses and organisations. There are numerous visitors to the school including representatives from the police force, fire brigade and local churches. These provide students with valuable models for good citizenship and community service. Extra-curricular activities, linked to subject areas such as drama, physical education and music, are popular and enable students to work together and enhance their social and performance skills. The content of the personal and social education programme is appropriate.

55. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Several subjects seek to extend students' understanding of their own and other cultures. The humanities include aspects of a multi-cultural education in their planning. For example, the geography syllabus includes work on the Plains Indians and work in religious education provides opportunities to learn about the cultures and beliefs of people who belong to religions other than Christianity. In music, there is a good balance of work from other cultures including African, Indian and Chinese, and, in food technology, a wide range of food styles is studied. The school holds a multi-cultural day each year, providing opportunities for students to learn at first hand about other cultures and traditions. Activities such as drama, theatre visits and school productions extend students' cultural experiences. Annual ski trips are arranged to resorts in Europe, and in 2000 the ski visit was to Canada. However, there are no specific trips abroad for language students.

### **Sixth form**

56. There is a close relationship with the town's other secondary school, aimed at widening the range of sixth form courses on offer to students from both schools. Links with tertiary colleges and higher education institutions also ensure that students moving on at the end of Year 11, or on completion of their sixth form courses, have informative and objective guidance.

57. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory in most respects. Currently, the range of courses offered is limited by the small number of students in the sixth form. Prospective students

choose from a range of subjects. The school tries to run all selected courses, even though numbers for some are very small, but this is not always possible. Numbers in the sixth form are growing. Although Year 13 is small, there are significantly more students in Year 12. At present all students are taking AS and A-level courses but there are provisional plans to include some GNVQ courses, such as manufacturing. All students get access to a significant amount of careers advice through the PSHE programme and this is complemented by individual advice and support from the careers service on a regular basis. The PSHE programme includes 'citizenship' and the school has also documented where this is taking place in the other A-level subjects. Moral and social issues are covered in the PSHE programme but religious education in the sixth form remains unsatisfactory. All students take a key skills course, which is well planned to include ICT, communications and number. The course is examined and valued by students. All students take an A-level in general studies but physical education is an option. Although students have a full academic programme there are many opportunities for them to play an active part in the life of the school. Many volunteer for the 'mentor' programme and support classes and younger students with their work.

58. The provision for personal development in the sixth form is very good. Students are encouraged to take an active part in the day-to-day life and organisation of the school, through, for example helping in lessons and running extra-curricular clubs. Through the sixth form council they are given a voice in the management of the sixth form. There are many valuable opportunities beyond the school for students to develop their social, cultural and business skills; they successfully take part in public speaking events and many are involved in the Millennium Volunteer project. Students' community service includes working in charity shops and helping at local playgroups. Many work hard to raise money for charities and have a good sense of community responsibility. Biennially, the sixth form organises a substantial "Crucial Crew" activity, in which representatives of emergency, transport, utility and other local services and companies give presentations to younger students that alert them to dangers that they face in their everyday life. Sixth formers play a prominent role in organising other charity activities, such as for Children in Need.

59. Through the subjects they study, students are given scope to develop their social skills and extend their horizons. For example, drama has a powerful impact on their ability to explore and discuss profound ideas. All students follow a general studies course which includes topics such as conflict resolution, and some a law course which deals with crime and punishment. In science they consider the implications of research on the human genome. However, the lack of religious education in the sixth form means that this department cannot make a contribution to sixth formers' personal development.

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

60. Child protection policies are in place and comply with locally agreed procedures. They are published clearly and are well known by teachers. Issues on child protection are covered with new teachers within their induction programme. This aspect of the school's systems of care is very good.

61. Arrangements for health and safety throughout the school are very good. The health and safety committee meets regularly and all matters are fully documented. Governors are involved appropriately in ensuring that all health and safety issues are dealt with speedily. The school is well provided with people qualified in first aid and first aid boxes are sited in all the appropriate areas of the school.

62. The school has excellent monitoring systems to track students' personal development, academic progress and achievements. Key stage co-ordinators and form tutors know their students very well

and the system for the collection of data allows them to track individual progress quickly and easily. This data is very well used to produce informative and accurate reports of progress and development three times a year.

63. The reward system of merits is very well used in Years 7 to 9 and is well liked by the students. Sanctions are equally clear and applied consistently, so that students are very aware of the accepted parameters of behaviour and work. A system of rewards for Years 10 and 11 is under discussion. In the meantime, a number of staff take students on local visits from time to time as a reward for particularly good work or attendance and behaviour. This system is very popular with students and they clearly appreciate the time teachers give to them.

64. The anti-bullying code of practice was developed in conjunction with the school council and is very good. It gives clear guidelines and students are confident that any issues which arise will be dealt with promptly. Aspects of bullying are also dealt with appropriately within PSHE lessons. Other policies such as sex education and drugs education are also very clear.

65. The PSHE scheme of work is satisfactory in that it lists topics to be covered at appropriate times. However, it does not indicate how links can be made between topics or how students progress from year to year. The key stage co-ordinators have responsibility for overseeing the programme within their own year groups but oversight of the whole-school programme at the moment is superficial and the teaching of the programme by form tutors varies in quality.

66. The quality of care and welfare for students with special educational needs is very good. Students are identified in Year 6 in the primary schools and induction and reassessment in Year 7 is thorough. The Code of Practice stages are effectively reviewed and progress is monitored regularly. Additional reading assessments are effective and comments are fed back to students and parents. Annual reviews fully meet requirements and the attendance of parents at review meetings is very high. Parents and outside specialists are involved at all stages of assessment. The quality of support from external agencies is very good, particularly the counselling support for students with behaviour difficulties. Students whose first language is not English are well supported by their tutors and the learning support department. Their parents are routinely involved in discussion of their progress and development. The small number of students from Traveller families are well supported. The Essex Travellers' Education Service has provided very good supporting documentation and advice, including in-service development for teachers. Students' attendance is monitored and liaison with families is good. The learning support department co-ordinates provision and keeps very good records.

67. Support and guidance for students from Years 7 to 11 is very effective. Students are clear that there is always someone in school to whom they can turn when necessary and they feel secure in the knowledge that support is available whether the problem is academic or personal. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. A wide range of assessment data is held centrally on each student, starting with their Key Stage 2 test scores and then the results of standardised tests. To this is added three times a year, further information on their attainment of National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. This data is used well to set targets in terms of levels or grades for the end of each year and each key stage. These are written in the front of students' books. Students know the level or grade at which they are working and what their targets are. Information is shared with parents through full annual reports which include levels or grades gained in end-of-year assessments and targets set. In addition, there are termly interim reports for students in Years 7 to 11.

68. Assessment information is used well to guide curriculum planning. Every teacher is given key data on their students so that they can plan effectively and have appropriate expectations. Assessment information is used effectively for the allocation of students to sets in some subjects. Procedures for

monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are excellent. The teacher responsible for data analysis makes very good use of new technology to maintain the database, analyse all students' performance termly and give graphical and written feedback to senior management which is passed on to subject leaders. Form tutors monitor the progress of students in their tutor groups. Students making good progress are praised by senior management. Those found to be underachieving, mostly in Years 10 and 11, are mentored. Mentors are drawn from the staff, governing body and from the local community and meet with individual students on a regular basis to advise and set targets for improvement. Parents who attended the parents' meeting were very positive about the process and well informed. The termly monitoring of effort leads to students with outstanding effort grades being publicly rewarded, together with a letter to parents, while students whose effort grades are causing concern are counselled and letters sent home to parents. Students are well supported and have many opportunities for receiving extra support from their subject teachers. The system of recording student attainment, tracking student progress and setting individual student targets is set in a culture of challenge and high expectations for students and staff and has been effective in securing school-wide improvement.

69. Overall, the school takes very good care of its students. The procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress and personal development are excellent. Assessment data is very well used to track students' progress and to set targets.

## **Sixth form**

### *Assessment*

70. The very good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress which are a feature of the main school are carried through into the sixth form. On entering the sixth form students are set minimum target grades. Their attainment is then assessed at regular intervals. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress are excellent. They know how well they are attaining, what their target grades are and whether they are on course to meet them. Parents are kept informed if students are exceeding or failing to meet their targets. Teachers give their time freely if students need any help. Teachers are provided with data about student attainment and progress which they use well in planning their lessons. The system of assessing, tracking and target setting has been effective in securing improvement in standards.

### *Advice, support and guidance*

71. Overall, the support and guidance offered to students both before they enter the sixth form and during Years 12 and 13 is very good. This begins with objective advice to students thinking of entering the sixth form about the possibilities open to them, both within the school and in other institutions. Students have access to several activities during their time in the sixth form. These include talks by visiting speakers, from organisations such as the universities entrance service, representatives of a number of universities and a body that supports students in arranging gap year experience. Each year, students visit the regional education fair, normally held at Essex University. The school supports individual students who wish to arrange work experience. Some have the opportunity to work as Millennium Volunteers, supporting teachers in the school, or in neighbouring primary schools. Courses are very good. Where the school does not feel it can offer a course appropriate to a particular student's needs, it directs the student to a course at another institution. Students in the sixth form felt very strongly that all their teachers were very committed to giving them help and support whenever they felt the need. Advice and guidance on moving on to further education or into employment at the end of the sixth form course are very good. Career support and guidance, which is started very early

on in the school, is very effectively continued in the sixth form. Very effective guidance is given to students on their future course or career possibilities.

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

72. The responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and views at the parents' meeting indicate that parents are highly appreciative of the work of the school and value the education their children receive. Nearly all who responded said their child enjoyed school and was making good progress. Parents have confidence in the teaching, and would feel comfortable about approaching the school with any questions or problems. Parents demonstrate interest and involvement in their child's education through their very good levels of attendance at parents' evenings and information meetings, by regularly checking and signing homework diaries and by ensuring their child's regular attendance. The overwhelming majority of parents have signed the home/school agreement. This strong commitment to supporting their child's learning at home has a positive impact on students' attainment and progress.

73. The Friends of Beauchamps association gives strong support by organising regular fundraising events. Parents are well represented and actively involved in the work of the governing body. Two years ago the school set up a Parent Focus Group, made up of parents of younger students, to assess the impact of policies and procedures. So far the group has been evaluating the anti-bullying policy and how the induction of students into Year 7 is managed. Information provided for parents is of high quality. Formal communications, such as the prospectus and governors' annual report are comprehensive and comply fully with statutory requirements. Monthly newsletters, which are attractively set out, keep parents well informed about all aspects of school life. Students' homework diaries are used well by parents and tutors as a means of communication between home and school. Information about students' work and progress is provided termly, through written reports, the one in the summer term being more lengthy and detailed. These reports are extremely useful and of a high calibre. They show what aspects need to be improved and give a comprehensive picture of students' attainment and achievement across the curriculum. Older students are encouraged to write a self-assessment of their work and progress over the year. Parents said they were pleased with the amount and quality of information they receive.

74. Any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively, and parents are involved at an early stage when problems arise with students' work, attendance or behaviour.

75. In their responses to the questionnaire the responses from sixth formers were mixed. While nearly all agreed that teachers were generally accessible and helped them to study independently, several students were negative about areas such as the assessment of their work, support and help for personal problems and career advice. However, during the inspection all those who were spoken to were very positive about the sixth form. They talked enthusiastically about their work, expressed fulsome appreciation for the support and guidance they received from teachers and satisfaction with the courses they had chosen. They felt the school actively sought and acted on their views, and pointed to improvements in the sixth form area as the result of suggestions they had made.

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

76. The headteacher is a strong leader with a clear educational vision. He has been highly successful in taking the school forward and has secured very good progress and improvement since the last

inspection. Leadership and management of the senior team are very good. Together they have drawn up very clear and effective strategies for raising standards in tests and examinations. Central to this has been on the one hand to instil in students a belief in themselves and a desire to achieve well and on the other to set subject leaders ambitious targets for GCSE A\*- C examination grades in their subjects. These targets form the basis for school improvement plan. There is shared commitment to improvement.

77. The senior team lead by example. They have a high profile in and around the school at breaks, at the ends of lessons and during the lunch break. They are approachable and always ready to listen to the concerns of students. Subject leaders and key stage co-ordinators share the responsibility for meeting the targets and helping students achieve their potential. To help them in this task they have access to very detailed information on students' achievements that helps track their progress.

78. Management of all subjects is at least sound. In a number it is good, and in mathematics management of the subject is very good and in some respects excellent. Several subject leaders are new to management responsibilities and have been very successful, sometimes in a very short time, in tackling weaknesses and previous underachievement. There are notable successes in geography, art and design, religious education and ICT. The senior managers, whose delegated responsibilities include monitoring progress in subjects and improving teaching and learning, have been particularly effective in the core subjects. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good or excellent and standards in tests and examinations have dramatically improved.

79. The quality of leadership and management of the special needs department is very good. Teamwork between the co-ordinator and learning support assistants is effective in promoting a caring and positive environment where students feel secure. Of note is the commendable contribution made by learning support assistants to students' learning in the morning, break, lunch and after school clubs. Staffing expertise and training are a strength and all share a high commitment to integrating students with special educational needs into mainstream groups with considerable success. Accommodation and resources are good and additional funding is well used to support special needs development in the school. There are good links with the local advisory service for students from minority ethnic groups which provides both close specialist support as necessary and guidance and training for school staff. The learning support department manages and monitors what is provided for students and their progress well.

80. The governing body provides good support to the school and its students. Many have very good local knowledge thereby ensuring the school meets the aspirations of parents and the local community. Governors are very keen to see the school continue to improve. Strategic planning is very good and provides an effective framework to steer developments. Many governors take their monitoring responsibilities very seriously. They make regular visits to the school to meet with subject and year co-ordinators and to find out for themselves how much progress is being made. Such visits help governors in their decision-making and in their ability to play an active part in strategic planning. Governors with oversight of, for example, literacy, and student care and well-being, are particularly knowledgeable about developments in these areas. Others feel less confident and hold back from asking searching questions that would give them a better understanding of the school and the way it is organised. There is a productive professional relationship between governors and the senior team. Targets have been set and reviewed and the budget is appropriately monitored. The governing body fulfils its statutory role well in most respects but has not ensured that that the curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. For example, some aspects of design and technology are not taught to all students in Year 10 and in the sixth form the requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education are not met.

81. There has been significant improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection, in

particular the amount of very good and excellent teaching. Monitoring and the evaluation of teaching are excellent. The senior team regularly observe teaching as part of their annual appraisal of newly qualified and experienced staff. Senior managers monitor students' achievements in tests and examinations and on the basis of prior attainment set target grades for the next stage of their education. A key feature in the improved standards in the school has been to focus on how well students are achieving. Teachers are provided with detailed information on students' prior achievements, and this helps them use the information to set work that meets the learning needs of students and track progress towards their target grades. A number of subject leaders have used the information very skilfully to improve their teaching and to evaluate what works well and what needs to be improved. Teachers who are particularly skilled have given excellent support to others enabling them to improve their classroom practice. This has led some teachers to review the way they organise their classrooms, and others the way they frame questions. In some subjects, the focus has been on finding more effective strategies for managing behaviour or improving boys' achievement where the data showed them as under-performing compared to the girls. Overall, monitoring of students' achievements has been highly effective in securing school-wide improvement.

82. Strategic planning is very good. Governors and the senior management team have been very effective in bringing about improvements to the accommodation and appointing highly qualified teachers. The school has successfully recruited several new teachers, as the roll has increased, and has good strategies for appointing new staff with the specialist skills to reflect the future demands of the curriculum. The longer-term plans for the school, including the sixth form, are well advanced. They include the library, where book and other resources are well below the average when compared with schools of a similar size, and the number and siting of computers in subjects across the curriculum. In some subjects, such as music and religious education, computers are not used widely. A rolling programme of staff training has begun but still has some way to go before all staff have the necessary expertise to teach students all the relevant skills in their subject and realise the full potential of computers. There are very effective procedures in place for day-to-day financial management. Best value principles are rigorously applied.

83. Overall, the match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good. The school has some non-specialist teachers in geography and religious education, but this is not depressing standards. There is a good mix of experienced and new colleagues and a good range of curriculum expertise. However, there are insufficient specialists for the teaching of religious education and the school is attempting to recruit staff. There is a high level of commitment from both full and part-time staff with extra lessons scheduled before and after school. The learning support assistants are very effective in their role and give good support to students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Visiting specialists support Traveller students effectively. Staff know their students well. The school secretary, administrative, technical and library staff enhances the smooth running of the school. Mid-day and kitchen staff support the school ethos and are well respected by the students. A highly effective and pleasant team of care and cleaning staff maintains the building and its surroundings to a very good standard. Of note is the care and welfare afforded to younger students by the lunchtime supervisor in the washroom and toilet areas.

84. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are very good. Provision from the local education authority is used well and staff development audits are effectively linked to the school improvement plan. Allocation of funds is good. The induction of new members of staff and newly qualified teachers is very effective. Overall, the school's strategy for appraisal and performance management is well structured. A cycle of appraisal has been completed and perceptive monitoring by senior management ensures effective career development across all levels of staffing.

85. The quality of accommodation for curriculum areas is good. It enhances learning and allows the

curriculum to be taught effectively. Most departments have adjacent classrooms and good working space. The well-equipped laboratories, ICT, humanities and art departments have much improved facilities since the last inspection. The kiln room has not yet been relocated to the art area and as a result, opportunities for extending clay work are limited. The outdoor physical education accommodation is good and refurbishment of the changing room facilities is in hand. The design and technology studios have good practical working areas. However, space is cluttered and is not conducive to the designing and making element of the subject. The refurbishment of the new toilets and washrooms for boys, girls and staff is of high quality. The building and grounds are well maintained and an effective rolling programme of maintenance is in place. Stimulating displays in classrooms, corridors and the foyer and the visual impact of light and space in the corridors compensate for the narrowness of some stairwells. Plans for a lift to improve access for students with disabilities have not yet been realised. Overall improvement since the last inspection, is good.

86. The quality and quantity of learning resources are adequate for the school's curriculum overall. In the majority of subject areas resources are good. Almost every classroom has a computer and the computer ratio is one for every six students. Most departments have a good range of textbooks, complemented by video and information worksheets. There are a few shortcomings in some subjects, such as religious education, where, for example, a lack of resources in the library limits students' achievement.

87. Library resources are satisfactory and good reprographics and video recording facilities are available. The facilities for computers are well used by students at lunchtime and some subject areas, such as design and technology use the library for research. However, the library's effectiveness in supporting independent learning is being limited because there is no policy for gradually replenishing the book stock and the number of books borrowed by students is not known. A new librarian has recently taken over and has improved the learning environment with displays to promote reading as a source of pleasure and information and improvements are taking place.

## **Sixth form**

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

88. Those who have specific management responsibilities for the sixth form are very effective in guiding students and giving support where it is needed. Academic progress, attendance and personal development are all closely monitored and there is a quick response to any issues that adversely affect progress. The management of mathematics is very good and has some excellent features. In all other subjects in the sixth form, management is satisfactory.

89. Within the whole-school improvement plan subject leaders and the head of the sixth form have clearly expressed goals for improving the profile of the sixth form and the academic achievements of students. Alongside these targets, are others for year-on-year improvements in recruitment levels that reflect the higher number of students currently in Years 7, 8 and 9. Broadening the range of subjects and courses offered becomes a real possibility over the next few years and there are convincing plans for specialist status that will have a positive impact on the sixth form curriculum. Governors and staff strive to ensure, that the sixth form serves the aspirations of the students and complements what is offered in other post sixteen centres in the locality.

90. Academic monitoring is of very high quality and provides those with management responsibilities with detailed information about the progress each student is making. As in the main school, some subject leaders are more experienced and skilled than others in analysing the information from

monitoring and using it to develop the way they teach and organise learning.

91. The senior team and the governors are keenly aware of the small numbers of students currently in Years 12 and 13 and the pressure this places on resources. They are unswerving in their aim to take students from age 11 to 18 and have a clearly-argued rationale for an expanding sixth form. The information provided by the headteacher demonstrates how, even with the small numbers currently in Years 12 and 13 the school is operating successfully within the budget that has been provided for the purpose. Strategic planning is very good, and like the main school, best value principles are used to measure the impact and ‘added value’ from the point students join the school to when they leave.

### ***Resources***

92. The match of teachers to the needs of the sixth form curriculum is good and shares similar qualities with teaching in the lower school. The arrangements for developing and extending expertise are very good with some very well qualified staff for post-sixteen courses.

93. The sixth form are taught in mainstream accommodation and the quality is good overall with the exception of design and technology where working areas are not conducive to designing and making. Sixth form social accommodation has improved since the last inspection.

94. Learning resources for the sixth form are good overall in subject areas. The library has increased the range of books for independent research.

95. Overall, the whole school provides very good value for money.

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

96. Building on the very good improvement made since the previous inspection, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Improve standards and the achievements of students in ICT (as planned);  
*(4, 7, 32, 126, 134, 143, 161-2, 192)*

#### **97. Sixth form**

- (1) Seek to increase the number of students and range of courses offered in the sixth form (as planned).  
*(57, 206, 221)*

*(the numbers in italics show the main paragraphs in which these issues are discussed within the report)*

98. The report also identifies some other issues which governors may wish to include in the action plan to be developed following this inspection. They include:

- ensuring that statutory requirements for design and technology in Year 10, and religious education in the sixth form are fully implemented; 34, 41, 57, 59, 80, 143
- ensuring that students who are withdrawn for “opportunity groups” do not consistently miss their religious education lesson; 45, 193
- improving the management of the behaviour of a small number of boys in Years 8 and 9; 14, 18, 33, 141, 177
- developing planned provision for the highest-attainers in some lessons; 33, 35, 148, 157
- improving the effectiveness of marking in some subjects; 32, 104, 164, 225
- improving the co-ordination of the PSHE programme; 65
- ensuring that statutory requirements for an act of collective worship are fully implemented. 51

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	120
	Sixth form	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		53

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

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	6	27	47	37	2	1	0
Percentage	5	22	39	31	2	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	2	9	10	11	0	0	0
Percentage	6	28	31	35	0	0	0

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

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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	854	54
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	60	2

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	101	0

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school Year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	84	66	150

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	66	66
	Girls	62	58	57
	Total	126	124	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82(63)	81 (78)	80 (80)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (25)	53 (44)	46 (28)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	66	68
	Girls	55	60	61
	Total	115	126	129
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (88)	82 (88)	84 (83)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (61)	52 (60)	34 (29)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	63	53	116

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	28	61	61
	Girls	37	53	53
	Total	65	114	114
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	56(63)	97(97)	98 (99)
	National	49 (46.4)	(90.6)	(95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47.1 (48)
	National	38.4 (38)

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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	78
	National	n/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	7	9	16

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.9	16.6	16.7 (16.25)	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	2
White	896
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school Year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi	2	
Chinese		
White	36	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	49.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	456

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y13**

Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	22.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2,439,721
Total expenditure	2,300,061
Expenditure per pupil	2901
Balance brought forward from previous year	462,453
Balance carried forward to next year	602,113

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.8
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	908
Number of questionnaires returned	300

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	46	4	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	55	37	4	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	54	7	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	54	13	2	1
The teaching is good.	43	51	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	47	8	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	33	2	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	50	6	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	65	33	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	42	4	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	41	6	0	7

\* numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Both in the responses to the questionnaires and at the meeting held prior to the inspection parents and carers expressed great satisfaction with the school and no major issues were raised.

## **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

- Students do well in English, standards are above average and test and examination results have risen considerably.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' learning, and set challenging work that interests them.
- Very good work is being done to improve the younger students' skills in literacy, in English and their other subjects.
- Students enjoy English, and do their best to attain the targets they are set.
- The department is led and managed well.

#### Areas for improvement

- The consistency of the teaching of students in Years 7 to 9.
- Some marking, to provide more specific information on how to improve the work in future.
- The overall plan for the English curriculum, to show the concepts and skills that are to be taught each year.

99. Results in English have risen since the last inspection. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 rose to well above average in 2001. Students did very well because they were effectively prepared for the tests. At GCSE, results in English and English literature were particularly high in 2000. The results fell back a little in 2001. However, they were still above average overall in English, although average compared to similar schools. In English literature, the 2001 results were also above average; these results were particularly good in that almost all the year group took the examination, whereas nationally only about four-fifths of the students in Year 11 do so. The gap between boys' and girls' results has been reduced, and is now similar to that found nationally.

100. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is broadly average in English. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are above average. This represents good achievement, although not as high as the previous year's test results. Students learn to express themselves well orally and in writing. They have a wide vocabulary, which enables them to put forward their points of view articulately and clearly. They write with increasing fluency in a wide range of styles, and by Year 9 most construct well-argued essays based on the information and ideas discussed in class. They read with good understanding, and by Year 9 most have begun to understand issues and themes that underlie the texts they are studying. The lower-attaining students sometimes do better in their written work than in the oral work that precedes it in lessons, and so standards overall are higher in writing than in speaking and listening.

101. At the end of Year 11, standards are also above average overall. The written work scrutinised during the inspection showed that the students' achievement is very good. This judgement takes account of the average results these students gained in the national tests they took when they were in Year 9. Equally, the GCSE English results in 2001 show very good gains, when the results are

compared with those students' Year 9 test results. Students are confident writers. Their essays on literature and language topics are well-sustained, with particularly good use of evidence to support their opinions. The lower-attaining students are taught how to answer examination questions, which helps them to understand how to do well. For example, a lower-attaining class in Year 11 showed that they had gained a secure knowledge of the main events of 'Of Mice and Men', and could explain why characters felt and acted as they did. The department's newly-introduced 'burger' technique for writing helped them to organise their ideas, and to understand the importance of selecting evidence from the text to illustrate or develop points they made. Other students have made good gains in their understanding of authors' language and use of literary conventions through writing in the same style as the poem or novel they are studying. This creative work is a strength in English. The media-related work is also strong, and gives particular help to the boys because it adopts a practical approach that they enjoy.

102. Students with special educational needs do well, particularly in their GCSE courses. Almost all gain at least one grade G or better, and most gain GCSEs in both English and English literature. They are keen to do well, and tackle their work confidently. Higher-attaining students are catered for very well at GCSE as they are enabled to take three examinations: English, English literature and media studies. The quality of their work at GCSE is high, as were the results in 2001.

103. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 and 11. All the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better, and much was good. Students of all ages are interested and keen to do well. They work co-operatively and well in pair and group activities. They have a good understanding of the standard of their work and what is expected of them because teachers make good use of individual targets to motivate them. The most successful lessons were carefully planned, with well-sequenced, varied activities that students had to work hard to complete in the time available. In all the lessons, teachers explained clearly what students were expected to learn, and the work was challenging while also being appropriately matched to their needs and capabilities. Teachers' use of class discussion was often a strength in the teaching, as probing questions challenged students to explain themselves clearly and with evidence to support their opinions. Relationships were generally very good, even on the rare occasions when some students responded in a silly way, and teachers managed the learning activities firmly and well. Teachers make good use of ICT. For example, many Year 9 students have used text and pictures to create interesting, well-designed reports related to their work on a Shakespeare play.

104. Some aspects of teaching are less successful, though still satisfactory overall. In particular, teachers' marking, though regular, is often not sufficiently clear about how students are to make the improvements suggested in the brief final comments. The scrutiny of students' exercise books showed too wide a variation in the work set in Years 7 to 9. Some classes have done a very good range of independent writing and so have made very good progress during the term. Others have done comparatively little written work, much of it exercises that have not been applied subsequently in their own writing.

105. The department's improvement since the last inspection is good. The subject is well led and managed, with a sense of purpose that is shared by the English staff. Classrooms have very good displays of students' work, and the department has good resources. The curriculum is satisfactory, with some good planning being introduced for the younger year groups' work. However, at present the overall mapping of what is covered in each year focuses more on the topic or content to be covered than on the concepts and skills that students are to learn. This contributes to the variation in the teaching of classes in Years 7 to 9. Assessment arrangements are good, with regular assignments to be completed by all. However, the department makes too little use of the wealth of data, both that provided by the senior management team and that generated within English, to evaluate its

effectiveness. The department sets students challenging targets, and staff make good use of these to motivate and encourage students to do their best. Staff also provide good support through after-school activities to support students' learning and help them revise and do well in tests and examinations.

106. The introduction of improved strategies for teaching literacy is being managed very well. A staff training day has raised the awareness of all staff in the school, and given many practical ways of helping students with the reading and writing demands of the curriculum. Displays in corridors and subject areas remind students of correct spelling, and of the strategy of using mnemonics to remember difficult words. The use of the library to promote students' wider reading is being promoted well, with some good links in English. Although this work is recent, it is already having an impact in several departments. For example, in a history lesson a novel by Charles Dickens was used as a source of historical evidence in work on crime and punishment, and helped the students to gain an understanding of the issues. Other evidence showed that teachers are providing guidance on how to structure written work, and that this is helping students to write better. The promotion of literacy skills across the curriculum is currently satisfactory, and likely to be good when the new strategies are adopted widely.

## **DRAMA**

107. Drama is taught for one lesson a week in Years 7 to 9, and then as a GCSE option. Results in 2000 were better than those attained in schools nationally, but fell to average in 2001. A few lessons were observed, some students' work from Years 10 and 11 was looked at, and departmental information was reviewed. This provided insufficient evidence to judge standards at the end of Years 9 and 11, or students' achievement. However, the evidence showed that teaching and learning are good. Strengths in the teaching observed included teachers' expertise in drama, their high expectations of students' commitment, good relationships with students and effective management of practical activities. The students responded well to the approach adopted: plan first, then carry out the activity, and finally evaluate the quality of the work. They enjoyed the lessons, and worked co-operatively. The written work of the older students showed good development of their knowledge of drama, including of particular techniques, and of their skills in evaluating performances. Drama makes a good contribution to students' personal development, for example through the regular opportunities to take part in school productions. These are very popular, and the department is committed to including all who wish to take part.

108. Media studies results are above average compared to schools nationally.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 are above the national average.
- Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to plan appropriate learning experiences and to give clear explanations so that students learn.
- Subject leadership provides a clear educational direction.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Students would benefit from greater consistency in the quality of teaching.

109. Students join the school with broadly average attainment in mathematics. In 2001, the results of the tests at the end of Year 9 were above average compared to schools nationally. They were broadly in line with the average for similar schools. A high proportion of students achieved level 5 or better. The attainments of boys and girls were broadly similar. Students' performances in mathematics and science were similar but they did better in English. In recent years results in mathematics have risen in line with the national trend.

110. The standard attained by students at the end of Year 9 is above the national expectation. Students are strongest in number where they have a good understanding of number bonds and place value and perform calculations involving whole numbers, fractions and decimals. Most students can use Pythagoras' theorem to calculate lengths. Students represent and interpret data in a variety of forms including bar charts, pie charts and scattergrams. They find areas of plane shapes involving rectangles and triangles and then progress to finding areas of circles. In relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7, students make good progress and achieve well.

111. GCSE results have fluctuated slightly and are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. In 2001, they were broadly average when compared with the national results. They were below those of similar schools. In relation to their attainment in tests at the end of Year 9 students' achievement was very good. A higher proportion of girls than boys achieved A\*-C grades. Students performed less well in mathematics than in English and science. Results had been better in the previous year. In 2001 almost all students who entered for GCSE statistics in Year 10 achieved A\*-C grades.

112. The standard attained by students at the end of Year 11 is above the national expectation. The work scrutinised during the inspection shows students continue to be good at number work and this supports their work in other areas. They develop a facility with algebra and are able to solve equations, with most students being able to solve quadratic equations. They use trigonometry to find lengths and angles. The higher-attaining draw and interpret graphs of trigonometrical functions. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve well. This judgement takes account of the results students gained in the national tests when they were in Year 9.

113. Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. The setting arrangements from Year 8 onwards, with a narrower range of attainment in each set, has a positive impact on their learning. Learning support in class is effective.

114. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. Students are very enthusiastic about their work in mathematics and only rarely do they exhibit challenging behaviour. The quality of relationships is a particular strength.

115. The teaching observed was good. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and this enables them to give clear explanations as in a Year 11 lesson for higher-attaining students where the teacher explained how graphs of  $\sin x$  and  $\cos x$  could be used to understand the graph of  $\tan x$ . Teachers plan effectively, with most lessons being in three parts in line with the National Numeracy Strategy. They build suitably on students' previous learning experiences, as in a Year 9 lesson for high-attaining students where there was brainstorming to see what students could remember about "area" before taking the topic further. Time is used efficiently. For example in a Year 8 lesson for lower-attaining students, they were told how long they had to complete the work on generating sequences and this helped them to remain focused. Occasionally, students are required to copy out work and this slows

their rate of progress. Work is usually well-matched to the needs of all students in the class but occasionally this is not the case. Teachers promote good literacy skills by focusing on key words in mathematics and ensuring that correct mathematical language is used. Students have opportunities to use ICT to support their learning in mathematics, particularly in Year 7 where they spend one lesson a week on programs to support and extend their numeracy skills.

116. As a result of the good teaching, students' learning is also good. Students are mostly well-motivated and remain on task. They make a great effort to acquire new knowledge and skills. They understand how well they are doing through the regular setting and marking of homework. They know the level or grade at which they are working and what they need to do to reach their target.

117. Leadership of the subject is very good. The subject leader provides clear educational direction. He has a good understanding of best practice in mathematics. Through his monitoring of teaching, student work and the outcomes of assessment, he knows the strengths of the department. Assessment practice is well developed so that assessment, target setting and monitoring of student progress all contribute to the progress which students make. There are good schemes of work in place together with an extensive range of material to support learning.

118. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Results in external tests at the end of Year 9 have improved. A higher proportion of students are now achieving level 6 or better. Results in GCSE statistics have improved.

119. Students' standards of numeracy are good and they apply their numeracy skills well in other subjects. Numeracy skills are well taught in mathematics lessons, which usually include a mental mathematics starter. There is no whole-school numeracy policy but developments for numeracy across the school are planned. Students have good recall of number facts. They manipulate numbers including negative numbers, fractions and decimals. Calculators are used efficiently when appropriate. Students represent and interpret data displayed in a variety of forms including bar charts, pie charts and frequency diagrams. They use correct mathematical vocabulary such as factor, prime and square. Students have good opportunities to use their numeracy skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum. In geography, they analyse and display data in Year 10 on urbanisation and on European climate in Year 8. In science, Year 10 students perform calculations involving atomic masses. In design and technology, students weigh and measure during food preparation and use measurement and scale in a graphics 'bedroom' project. In history, Year 10 students work out crime rates and in Year 8 they work out life spans and birth and death rates at the time of the great plague.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in all year groups is improving, and above the national level.
- Science is taught by a team of well qualified and enthusiastic staff.
- Lessons are well prepared and resourced. Teachers use a variety of approaches in lessons and relationships between teachers and students are good.
- The assessment of students' progress is good and linked with the setting of specific science targets for individual students.
- Support for students with special educational needs is good.

Areas for improvement

- A focus on strategies for raising the attainment in boys at Years 10 and 11.
- Increased use of ICT.

120. Results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average. There has been a pattern of consistent improvement over the past five years. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Students' performances in science and mathematics were similar but they did better in English.

121. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average in science. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are above average. This represents good achievement. Year 7 students were able to describe the parts of a plant cell. They could also recall the function of most of the cell components. In Year 8, lower-attaining students could take accurate measurements of the distance travelled and the time taken and then use this data to determine the speed of objects. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 were able to explain why light can be considered to be a form of energy. They could also recall and explain the structure and function of the eye.

122. The proportion of students in science obtaining a GCSE grade of A\*-C is above the national level and well above when compared to similar schools. This represents good achievement. At the end of Year 11 most students took double certification with some higher-attaining students taking the three separate sciences at GCSE. Overall, 60 per cent of the grades obtained in science were A\*-C grades. These A\*-C grades were obtained from 52 per cent of the students, which is above the national level. The performance of girls at GCSE is better than boys. There was a significant increase in attainment in the double certification course from the previous year.

123. At the end of Year 11, standards are above average overall. In relation to their attainment in tests at the end of Year 9, students' achievement is good. Students could name and describe the electron arrangement in alkali metals and the subsequent position of these metals in the periodic table. By the end of the key stage, students were able to perform all aspects of scientific investigations including design, evaluation and drawing conclusions. Students who were predicted grade C at GCSE could distinguish between different types of reaction based on the breaking of bonds. The extensive data collected by the department from student assessment supports the view that the GCSE results should continue the upward trend next year.

124. There is a good relationship between the students and staff in science. Most students, especially the higher-attaining students, behave well and work hard in science. Students in Years 10 and 11 have the best attitude to the subject. Students are keen to enter in to class discussions, have the confidence to answer questions and use their oracy skills constructively. Students work in a safe and enthusiastic manner when performing practical work. A good example of this was in a Year 11 group undertaking a practical on exothermic and endothermic reactions. The motivation and behaviour of a few boys was, at times, unsatisfactory. The poor attitude was seen only in a few instances when classroom control was not strong and there was insufficient pace. Girls in Years 7 to 11, regardless of their attainment, produce work that is complete and well presented. Higher-attaining boys have complete notes but a lower standard of presentation. A few lower-attaining boys produce work that is often incomplete and of low quality, that reflects a poor attitude to the subject.

125. The teaching and learning in science are good. Lessons are well planned and taught by a suitably qualified and enthusiastic staff. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The best teaching was in

the upper school where over half of the teaching that was observed was very good or better. In most lessons registers were taken formally, and this helped start the lesson in an ordered manner. The teacher then described the aims of that lesson. The most successful lessons were those where there was good planning, leading to brisk learning and effective class control. One very effective lesson on distance and time in Year 8 included a clear introduction followed by a practical session where the students were able to collect their own results. The students were then suitably supported to enable them to use their results to obtain meaningful conclusions. Homework is an integral part of the lesson plans and is used as a means of reinforcing learning. Higher-attaining students taking three separate sciences at GCSE are given extra support after school. There are also many extra-curricular science activities available to students and these are well attended. Students with problems in understanding the work are well supported by the teachers who are willing to spend time outside lessons to explain further any topic.

126. Students make good progress, especially in Year 7 to 9. They are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end-of-topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis. The setting arrangements in Years 8 to 11 allow teachers to plan work that is suitable and extending. The mixed ability groups in Year 7 pose a different challenge to teachers who plan suitable activities and resources for a wide range of students with differing attainments. Students that have special educational needs are well supported in science with additional staffing and make progress. The support staff are informed of the lesson content and have the confidence to support a wider range of students. Higher-attaining students in the Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity of following all three sciences to GCSE. There is a wide range of opportunities in all years for students to use their literacy and numeracy skills both in written work and class discussions. The use of computers is satisfactory. However, improvement in the access to whole-class facilities is needed and the number of data logging units is currently insufficient to enable group use during lessons.

127. The management of the department is good. The department has ensured that almost all of points raised in the previous inspection have been dealt with and improvement has been good. This included a review of the courses offered so as to provide a relevant experience for the students and to ensure the department has sufficient resources to support the curriculum. These courses have allowed an increase in the range of teaching styles and activities of the students and this has helped raise the standard of teaching and learning in the department. The assessment of students' progress and attainment is very good. The marking of books is rigorous with written comments made on students' achievement and targets set for future attainment. In some cases, however, the targets set are not followed up.

128. The department is aware of the issues needing to be dealt with and has development plans to ensure that improvement is continued. Accommodation for science is good, with seven laboratories, most of these being in a very good condition. The department has sufficient resources with the exception of specific data logging equipment and access to computers. The recent introduction of an interactive white board will help raise the profile of ICT within the subject. The team of support staff, is efficient and well organised, and ensures that equipment and resources ordered are present at the start of lessons.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

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

Strengths
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- Greatly improved results in GCSE examinations including several students who gained the higher grades.
- Good achievement by students in Years 10 and 11, in particular the achievements of girls.
- Overall good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.

#### Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning in Years 7 to 9, that progressively builds on skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9, higher expectations and work output, clearly expressed learning objectives and assessment criteria.

129. Students join the school with standards that are below average. Their skills, knowledge and understanding are limited and few demonstrate an understanding and awareness of different working processes. The results of teacher assessments in 2001 show that most students at the end of Year 9 attained levels above those expected for their age. However, these assessments were too generous. Overall, standards were average and students achieved well relative to their starting points.

130. GCSE results have steadily improved in recent years. The percentage of A\*-C grades was close to the average in 2000 although the percentage of students gaining the higher grades was higher than in the previous year. In 2001, the results improved and were above the national average. The number of boys and girls entering for the examination varies year to year. In 2001, more girls than boys entered, which is the case nationally, whereas in the previous year it was mostly boys. Girls generally do better than the boys and in 2001 the girls gained almost all of the higher grades. In the run-up to the examinations the teachers have successfully raised the percentage of A\*-C grades by paying close attention to those students whose coursework showed them to be on the C-D grade border.

131. Overall, current standards are average and students' achievements are satisfactory. The work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 shows that students make good progress when they enter the school in Year 7 but that not all maintain the same rate of progress year-on-year. In some classes, where expectations are clearly expressed and regularly reinforced, achievement is good. Students work hard, learn new skills and speak confidently about what they have learnt. In other classes the work routines are not sufficiently well established from the outset and a significant minority of students in both higher and lower-attaining sets do not complete homework, do not work hard enough or complete enough work in lessons.

132. In Years 10 and 11 current standards are above average. The students who opted to take art and design achieve well and make good progress. Having a good understanding of the course requirements and marking criteria helps them plan their work and identify where there are weaknesses that can be tackled. Overall the girls make independent decisions and achieve particularly well, as they did in examinations. The quality of their drawing shows good observation and advanced technical skill and many are able to translate these skills into other media - painting and three-dimensional work. Some sketchbooks show thoughtful comments and observations about artists' work, and, in the best examples, students make connections between their own work and the subject matter or the techniques that artists use in their work. One student used her love for horses as the starting point for a series of observational studies. She was able to compare and contrast work by Degas, Stubbs and Marc and showed real understanding of the anatomical detail and the impact of style and colour on the viewer. Some students, mainly boys, are less willing to be experimental and try out different materials. Many have good technical skills but too often they work from secondary sources and rely heavily on the teacher to tell them what to do next rather than take the initiative themselves. In some cases, students have information about artists' work in their portfolios and sketchbooks that is copied or

downloaded from the Internet. However, they do not always understand it.

133. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11. A high proportion of the teaching seen was good in both key stages. Teaching is generally more effective in examination classes - where the course requirements and marking criteria are clearly stated and frequently reinforced. The explanations given by teachers as they review students' work is successful both in raising students' awareness of the examination criteria and in helping them critically evaluate what they have achieved so far, and where improvements are needed. In this way, students are able to make decisions for themselves and take increasingly more responsibility for their own learning. In contrast, the activities planned for students in Years 7 to 9 do not have clearly-expressed learning objectives and assessment criteria and students tend to follow instructions without a clear understanding of the longer-term goals.

134. Teachers have good subject expertise and are very keen to ensure students fulfil their potential in examinations. They work very hard and are always on hand to give additional help to those who want it. All students, including those with particular gifts and talents and those with special educational needs, make better progress in Years 10 and 11, and benefit from work that is more closely matched to their learning needs. Relationships with students are very positive. Opportunities for students to use computers, and to speak and write using subject specific vocabulary occur in some lessons. However, these aspects of the curriculum are not consistently taught and assessed alongside other skills. The subject leader recognises literacy and ICT as areas for development and both are included in the subject development plan.

135. Management is good. The subject leader has been highly successful in improving GCSE examination results and this is having a very positive effect on the take-up for advanced courses in the sixth form. In recent months the art studios have been refurbished to a high standard. The accommodation is good and includes a designated space for sixth form students to continue their art-work outside lessons. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Appropriate goals have been identified for the future improvement of the subject, including boys' achievement and the increased use of computers in all years. The need to devise a curriculum plan for Years 7 to 9 that has clear long and short-term learning goals and assessment criteria has been recognised.

136. It is inappropriate to ask students to buy sketchbooks as they are a requirement of the National Curriculum.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Students of all levels of ability, including those with special needs, are achieving well.
- Standards are improving and GCSE results in 2001 are well above the national average.
- The overall standard of teaching is good.
- A strong team of teachers who are committed to enabling students to produce their best work.
- Very good individual support for students which improves both achievement and personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning and documentation of schemes of work to ensure that all students have access to

progressive experiences in all aspects of designing and making.

- A more structured programme for the delivery of literacy, numeracy and use of computers.
- More opportunities for students to appreciate the contribution which design and technology can provide for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- To improve the working environment.

137. Students' attainment on entry in design and technology is in line with national expectation. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average and, from the evidence of the inspection, this is reflected in the work currently taking place. GCSE results for the proportion gaining A\*-C grades were above the national average in 2000 and rose to be well above in 2001. Both boys and girls perform well. A positive feature of the 2001 results is that students did very well in all of the design and technology subjects taken. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and many did better than expected. A significant proportion of students gain the highest grades and few students fail to gain at least a grade G. This indicates that all students are benefiting from the well-structured courses provided in all design and technology subjects. Students taking the vocational course in manufacturing also did well with 75 per cent gaining the pass level or above.

138. Current standards in Years 9 and 11 are similar. All students, including those with special educational needs, develop knowledge and understanding, engage in the design process and are keen to make projects in all of the design and technology subjects. By the end of Year 9, students are following the design process, producing well-drawn and presented ideas in folders and practical work that is made well. By the end of Year 11, most students produce good folders of work, in terms of both content and presentation, and well-made practical projects. In graphics and textiles, the design work of most students, is often imaginative and of a high standard.

139. Students achieve well as they move through the school. The focused tasks set enable knowledge to be gained about materials, components and ingredients and how these are used in practical work. For example, in Years 7 to 9, students use well prepared booklets to support knowledge development, fill in prepared work sheets and record their evaluations of textiles exercises and bought or self-prepared foods. Good use is made of spider diagrams and results of investigations are often recorded well in chart and graph form in food lessons. Written work and drawing skills vary with students' ability. They are satisfactory overall but spelling is a weakness. Some use of computers is included in students' work. Homework set for Year 7 during the inspection required students to use the school's computers outside lesson time. Opportunities to develop drawing skills are clearly demonstrated in the Year 8 bedroom project. Students produce relatively complex, three-dimensional views of bedroom designs as part of their introduction to isometric drawing. Elements of the design process are more evident in Year 9, when students carry out research and develop design ideas for perfume containers. Models are produced and students use computer-generated labelling to improve the quality of the final product. In Years 7 to 9, there is a good balance of tasks to develop a range of knowledge and skills. Students have good opportunities to follow the complete designing and making process through to produce more individual products.

140. The structured approach in Years 10 and 11 helps students focus clearly on the examination requirements. In the best folders, the quality of research, analysis, development and evaluation of ideas is very good. Students understand how materials and ingredients can be used safely, effectively and sometimes creatively in the development of their own ideas. Presentation of finished folder work is often very good. There is computer-generated work in many design and technology folders but this is still an area for further development. Practical work is often very good across the range of materials.

Students receive good help and advice. This encourages and enables them to use their technical abilities well.

141. Overall, teaching and learning are good. All teaching is satisfactory or better and sometimes it is very good. Teachers have very good technical knowledge and a clear understanding of National Curriculum requirements. They demonstrate new skills well. For example, in a Year 7 food technology lesson, students were shown how to prepare small cakes and this enabled them to use equipment effectively and safely. Overall, planning is good. In the majority of lessons, time is used well and a good range of teaching methods is employed. However, when students are not well managed, the behaviour of a few individuals can affect the learning of the whole-class. Marking of is good and regular written assessment, particularly in Years 10 and 11, gives specific advice on how students can improve their work.

142. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Most students respond well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and are keen to do well in their work. Most concentrate very well in lessons and many Year 10 and 11 students spend considerable time and effort outside lessons improving their work.

143. At the time of the inspection, not all students in Year 10 were able to take a design and technology subject as required by the National Curriculum. Current schemes of work are satisfactory but do not sufficiently emphasise the progressive use of numeracy, literacy, ICT and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the subject. Leadership and management are good and close co-operation between teachers is enabling good courses to be developed and standards to be raised. There is a positive approach to monitoring the development and improvement of the subject. At present there is one fewer specialist teachers than is required. Time for technician support is limited. Although there are sufficient design and technology rooms, storage for materials and work in progress is limited. This results in many areas being cluttered and consequently work areas do not provide a good designing and making environment. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

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

### **Strengths**

- The quality of specialist teaching.
- The leadership and management of the subject.
- Contribution to numeracy and social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.

### **Areas for improvement**

- GCSE results, which were below average in 2001.
- The popularity of the subject as a GCSE option.
- Provision for the higher-attaining within the different teaching sets.

144. Students join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding which are average. Teachers assessed their students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 as above average. The standards of the majority of students currently in Year 9 are average, indicating some overestimation in teacher

assessments. Students make expected progress in Year 7, in their mapping skills, although a significant minority still need the teacher's help to understand fully, for example, different ways in which relief is shown. Knowledge of places is as expected in Year 8 and many students are developing a sound understanding of the differences between the regions of Italy. In Year 9, almost all students can explain how volcanoes are formed and understand the effect that these can have on the communities which live nearby. A significant minority are attaining above average standards. These students explain in considerable detail, making a distinction between long and short term effects and showing good understanding of issues that can arise when tourism develops in an area. Many students often ask good geographical questions of their own. Overall, students achieve satisfactorily in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. In a small number of lessons in Years 7 to 9, higher attainers underachieve because of the low challenge of some of their work.

145. The most recent GCSE results are below those at the last inspection, which were average. In 2000, they remained broadly average when compared with the national results, but in 2001 they fell below the average. However, while this was particularly so for A\*-C grades, the proportion gaining at least a G grade was average. The school's targets for students taking geography and evidence of current Year 11 standards, indicate that students failed to translate what they knew into examination performance. They therefore achieved less well than expected. A new subject leader has been appointed, and the department has taken appropriate action. There is now an increased emphasis on guiding students on how to use their knowledge to answer examination questions. The proportion of students taking geography was less than in most schools. Results show no significant variation between boys and girls.

146. Students currently in Year 11 are already attaining at least average standards and are on course to achieve above average standards by the end of the academic year. All can identify coastal features and distinguish between different processes of coastal erosion. They can interpret information on a population map and identify and explain areas where the density is highest. Lower-attaining students are making good progress in lessons and securely learning about the features of urbanisation. Many are not yet confidently identifying patterns, but made good progress towards this in a lesson that was observed. In their work, incorrect answers were sometimes due to failure to read carefully what questions required, or faulty technique in answering, rather than lack of knowledge. The highest-attaining students are reaching standards that are above average and a few are well above. This was shown in a lesson in which they demonstrated deep understanding of how glacial processes form valleys. Achievement is currently satisfactory, but progress seen in lessons, if continued to the end of the academic year is likely to lead to good achievement.

147. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 were satisfactory overall. In all lessons with specialist teaching, it was good, or very good. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching and learning were consistently good. This is not yet reflected by GCSE results, or fully in the achievement of students. However, emphasis on improving examination performance was strong in a Year 10 lesson in which students were encouraged to analyse their sources, rather than just describe them and a Year 11 lesson, when criteria for higher performance were clearly identified. Teachers' extensive and up-to-date understanding of the subject ensured that the depth of students' learning was good. Teachers responded helpfully to student's own questions and gave them clear guidance on how to make full use of their learning when answering questions. In most lessons in both key stages, detailed planning provided a strong structure to the lesson. This ensured that activities were appropriate for all and the pace of work was generally at least satisfactory. Good questioning enabled students to recall, use and test their knowledge and understanding. Effective homework was given in most lessons. In the best lessons, appropriate learning objectives were clearly explained to students, so that they had good awareness of what they needed to achieve. In many lessons, brisk and enthusiastic teaching presented a good model to students of how to approach the subject. Departmentally produced worksheets provide

a good variety of tasks, and when videos are used they illustrate vividly the places and processes that students are learning about and generate high interest. In lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers occasionally failed to command the full attention of all students when speaking to the class and, in a few lessons, there was too much copying of diagrams and text from books.

148. Students with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. Learning support assistants were present in almost all of the lower sets observed, and ensured that all students had full access to activities. There is recognition that students of higher prior attainment require an enriched challenge. The organisation of classes into sets often provides this. It worked particularly well in an upper set in Year 9. The teaching, about earthquake processes, was at a level that led to good achievement by the great majority of students. However, there is a need to improve the planned provision for the highest attainers in all sets.

149. The attitudes and behaviour of students in geography lessons are good. They usually listen well and work quickly and quietly. Often, they show considerable interest. In a few lessons, the effort of a minority is lower than the general level. Sometimes, conversation while work proceeds reduces the concentration of some students.

150. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for students to use ICT while learning geography. Good use is made of the Internet as a resource for individual research and students are encouraged to compare and evaluate how useful sites are. The subject provides good opportunities for students to practise their skills in literacy and, more particularly, in numeracy. In most lessons, there is strong acknowledgement of the development of a specialist vocabulary as an important geographical skill and students often have opportunities to read aloud and listen to others. Year 7 students learned to interpret different methods of depicting relief in order to estimate and contrast this when using maps. A Year 10 lesson included teaching about the relative merits of different types of graph to show changes in urbanisation, before students chose their own.

151. Improvement since the last inspection, when relatively few targets for improvement were identified, has been satisfactory. Unlike in the last inspection, no lessons were seen in which pace was unsatisfactory and there were no significant weaknesses in the performance of boys. In some lessons, they were more confident than girls and well represented among the higher attainers. The department has made a good contribution to the achievement of some whole-school targets. These include ensuring that learning support is effective and that geography makes a strong contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. There remain a few lessons in which there is too much copying.

152. Following very recent changes, the leadership and management of the subject are now good. There has consequently been a recent acceleration in the rate of improvement. This means that capacity for future improvement is good. A good awareness of what needs to be done is shown by the high priority being given to improving standards, particularly at GCSE and a vigorous and effective approach to securing this. Already, several procedures for improving general standards and for identifying and supporting students who are likely to underachieve are in place and these are supported by improvements taking place in assessment procedures and resources.

## HISTORY

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

Strengths
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- Standards at GCSE.
- Enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching, leading to good learning for most students.
- Effective collaboration between subject leader and other teachers to improve subject performance.

#### Areas for improvement

- The popularity of the subject as a GCSE option.
- Provision for the higher-attaining within the different teaching sets.

153. Students join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding which are average. Results of teachers' assessments in 2001 were above average. Current standards are broadly similar and students achieve well. Younger students generally present their work well. Written work is correctly spelt and carefully completed. They show expected levels of knowledge about the Roman Empire and can give reasons for the power of Rome. Almost all students in Year 9 know about different ways in which events and people have been represented. Work on the different interpretations of the character of Richard III shows good progress for some students in understanding why sources might present different views. The work of some lower attainers shows that they are able to distinguish between sources that are for and against Richard, but have difficulty in explaining what they know in writing. Most students can carry out research to find out about topics such as the settlement of the American West. They can describe problems faced by settlers and explain why nevertheless many were attracted to go there. The higher attainers show a generally deeper level of understanding, explaining in detail for example, the relative advantages and disadvantages of primary and secondary sources and why particular sources might or might not be reliable.

154. In 2001, GCSE results were above average. This is an improvement upon the previous year, and the last inspection. The proportion of students taking history is smaller than in most schools. The results show no significant variation between boys and girls, although numbers are too small to make accurate statistical comparisons.

155. In Years 10 and 11, the students who have chosen to study history achieve well and the overall standard of work is above average. Work on crime and punishment showed a secure knowledge of changes that took place both over time and within specific periods. A generally good level of understanding of the process of change was demonstrated in work in which students discussed whether it always brings progress. Work is often based upon effective research, such as some on Matthew Hopkins, which enables students to reach conclusions about how typical he was as a witch hunter. No work was seen that was clearly below average.

156. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages and, occasionally, very good. Lessons were considerably enhanced by strong relationships that have been forged with students. Knowledgeable teaching ensured that students learned topics in depth. In a Year 10 lesson, students not only learned about transportation, but considered what it was intended to achieve and the extent to which it succeeded in doing so. The enthusiastic teaching was highly motivating, eliciting high interest, shown for example, in students often asking thoughtful questions. Good plans provided a strong structure to lessons and clear explanations of work provided strong guidelines to students on what they were expected to achieve. In a Year 10 lesson, good guidance was given on the criteria that would identify higher-attaining work. Although there was usually good support for students to work independently, teachers occasionally did too much for them, for example by answering their questions, rather than throwing them open to elicit other students' ideas. While teachers are usually good at including all students in activities, a very small number of students in Year 10, whose work shows a lack of effort, are clearly not benefiting fully from their participation in the course. The efforts of teachers have a

considerable impact in the lunchtime history club. A meeting that was visited during the inspection, in which students tried on Elizabethan clothes, made by a teacher and authentically based upon portraits, was excellent. It provided active learning that was both highly stimulating for those involved and led to some in-depth consideration of how Elizabethan attitudes and customs were represented in the clothes that they wore.

157. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. Good reference is made to individual education plans in identifying appropriate targets. Teachers often provide considerable challenges in the levels of knowledge and understanding that they expect. Because of the good support that they give, including the provision of differentiated writing frames, students are usually able to rise to these challenges, so that they achieve well. Work is usually well pitched to the general levels of capability within the different sets. However, while there is some planning to provide additional challenge for the higher-attaining within a set, this is not yet as effective as it could be.

158. The attitudes and behaviour of students in the history lessons that were observed were generally good and sometimes very good. Relationships with each other and the teacher were always at least good with, in some lessons, students being keen to please their teachers. Students usually listened with interest and were very willing to join in discussions. Individual work was generally carried out with good concentration and effort. On one occasion, the poor effort of a small minority led to a short-term distraction for some students who nevertheless still produced work that enabled them to make a very good contribution to a following discussion. During a lunchtime history club, interest and enthusiasm were excellent.

159. The subject provides satisfactory opportunities for students to use ICT. Students make good use of their frequent opportunities to use the Internet and CD-ROM for research. In Years 10 and 11, much work is word-processed. Good opportunities are provided for practising and using literacy and numeracy skills. Students often read aloud and there is a good focus on the development and use of a specialist vocabulary. Writing frames are used to help students to improve their writing skills. In a Year 10 lesson, 'Great Expectations' was used to provide a literary perspective on transportation as a punishment and students were shown how to extract relevant information from an extended piece of text. They were given clear guidelines on what would constitute high quality written work. For example, they were told not just to "write an essay", but to express and justify their opinions. Planned numeracy-related work includes estimating ages and lifespans in work on Elizabethan family trees, and statistical work on death rates in the Great Plague and comparing crime rates in different periods.

160. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Few aspects were identified as in need of improvement by the last inspection report. However, overall standards in GCSE results and students' work are now significantly better. Unlike in the last inspection, lesson planning was a strength in all lessons seen. Strengths that were identified have been maintained, such as the good support given to those with special educational needs through the use of differentiated materials and the more general impact of departmentally produced resources. The leadership and management of the subject are good and are strongly supported by a considerable contribution from the other teachers in the department. The effectiveness of the collaborative work that has taken place to improve standards is demonstrated by the most recent GCSE results.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

#### Strengths

- All of the ICT teaching observed was at least satisfactory.
- The school has a new specialist team of ICT teachers.
- An innovative vocational ICT course has been introduced in Year 10 for the majority of students.
- The quality and quantity of computers is good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Examination results in Year 11 and standards of ICT work in Year 9 are below average and need to be improved.
- Planning for the teaching of ICT across subjects in Years 7 to 11.
- Further training for non-specialist ICT teachers.
- Marking of students' work.

161. In summer 2001 the ICT teacher-assessed results in Year 9 were significantly above the national average. Evidence in the work seen suggests that these reported results were far too high and that actual standards were well below the national average. This is because students had not covered the full range of applications required by the National Curriculum, during Years 7 to 9, and consequently their skills were below expectation. This situation arose because of the long-term absence of the subject leader and because there is no overall plan to teach ICT across the curriculum. Since the start of this year, with new ICT teachers, students have been making satisfactory progress and achieving satisfactorily. In Year 8, standards of ICT skills are good. Students have produced good quality work covering a range of computer applications. For example, students were seen using presentation packages to create animated storyboards and they have demonstrated good page design skills using word processing. Students in Year 9 are making satisfactory progress. In Year 7, higher-attaining students are achieving well and they are able to use a range of computer programmes. However, middle and lower-attaining students in Year 7 are making unsatisfactory progress because they spend too long on simple word processing tasks.

162. In Year 11, GCSE examination results were similar to the national average in 2000 but results were very low compared to the national average in 2001. Standards of work seen in Year 11 lessons and work are low. These poor results and standards have occurred because of the lack of specialist teaching last year. With new staff, the current Year 11 are making satisfactory progress and achieving satisfactorily. However, they have a great deal to catch up if results this summer are to improve significantly. Standards of work seen in the GNVQ course are above average and students' achieve well. These Year 10 students have completed a good quantity of work using a range of computer applications. For example, students were seen confidently using a range of page set-up and design features to create good quality business documents.

163. Students enjoy their ICT lessons and are generally well motivated. Students in Year 8 were seen working co-operatively, helping each other to complete the work in order to improve their understanding. Students enjoy good relationships with their teachers and are willing both to ask and answer questions in class. A small minority of boys was disruptive and attention-seeking in a few lessons. Where this occurred, it was usually because of behavioural difficulties with the student rather than because of the teaching and was dealt with appropriately.

164. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. All of the ICT teaching observed was satisfactory or better. Teachers generally have sound subject knowledge and they are able to use this to assist students to produce good work. For example, Year 11 students were seen using teachers

commercial and ICT expertise in order to set up databases for stock control in car showrooms and record shops. In the best lessons, teachers gave students clear time-limited targets, and students knew what had to be achieved by the end of the lesson. Teachers deliberately focused the whole-class on the development of new and more demanding skills during the lesson and this led to students making good learning gains. In a minority of lessons, particularly where non-specialist staff were teaching ICT, students would have made more progress if teachers had drawn the class together periodically in order to focus on the development of particular ICT skills. The ability of non-specialist staff to do this would be improved by the provision of more focused training in the use of the computer programmes. ICT teachers make good use of opportunities to develop students' numeracy skills. For example, students were seen producing a times-table chart using a spreadsheet programme. Although teachers refer to keywords in their lesson plans, insufficient reference is made to these during lessons in order to improve literacy skills. Some work in Years 7, 8 and 9 is unmarked and as a result students are unclear about what they need to do in order to improve. This is an area in need of development. Students make good use of the Internet and they are protected from inappropriate content by a strong filtering device and a good policy on Internet use.

165. A number of teaching groups contain many more boys than girls. This is well managed by teachers in their lesson planning and in their classroom expectations. As a result, boys and girls, students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students all make satisfactory progress. The only exception to this is in Year 7 where middle and lower-attaining students need more challenging work.

166. The school has made good progress in improving ICT since the last inspection. There has been considerable investment in computer equipment, technicians and new teaching staff. Good leadership and management are seen in the innovative GNVQ vocational curriculum introduced in Year 10 this year and in the ICT lessons for Years 7 to 9. However, this course alone cannot cover all of National Curriculum in ICT. Full coverage requires the planned support of different subject departments. Although the National Curriculum is being covered, it is covered in a relatively unplanned way across subjects. As a consequence, some skills like word processing and presenting information are covered a number of times whilst areas like data logging are less well covered. To remedy this, the school needs to identify which parts of the National Curriculum subject departments will teach, and make plans for these subjects to contribute to the Year 9 overall assessment of students' ICT skills.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Results are well above the national average and have improved steadily.
- Teachers are hardworking and committed to their students.
- Students have very positive attitudes.
- Use of ICT has expanded and developed.

### Areas for improvement

- Some teaching is too focused on language structure rather than practical language use.
- There are currently no French links, exchanges or visits.
- Students need more contact with French speakers to improve their general confidence in speaking the language.

167. Since the last inspection, language provision has been rationalised to concentrate on French. The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed nearly twice as many students reaching the expected standard as the number reported nationally. The difference between the performance of boys and girls was less than that found nationally. Evidence of the inspection indicates that these assessments tended to over-estimate what students have achieved, particularly in the very high numbers achieving level 6. The evidence is that numbers are above the national average, but many students in the current Year 10 do not have quite the firm base of knowledge and the ability confidently to use a range of verb tenses that the results would imply.

168. In the current Year 9, students of a wide range of ability are working with reasonable confidence at the benchmark level 5 and students are achieving well. A higher-ability group was observed successfully tackling a GCSE French reading text. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Students make a confident start in Year 7 and can already talk about Europe and write short letters about themselves. Year 8 students show a good grasp of language structure for their age and can write fluently about their home town. Students in Year 9 can express in simple terms a range of opinions on films and television. Apart from routine access to written texts, students develop their reading skills through regular access to the Internet. Standards have risen in Years 7 to 9, with boys doing significantly better and students with special educational needs making good progress.

169. GCSE results in 2001 continued the recent upward trend and were well above the national average. The whole year group sits the examination, which is also well above the national figure. All students achieved a pass at grades A\* - C. Both boys' and girls' results are well above the respective national averages, though boys still lag some way behind girls. The department has been dealing with this issue and there is evidence of improvement coming through.

170. Standards in the current Year 11 are broadly similar. Many students produce good written work at higher GCSE levels describing, for example, past holidays. They can speak fluently and at length above themselves. Students of all levels of ability are aiming for GCSE success. Their achievement is very good overall, despite some regression at the beginning of Year 10. Students in a higher-ability Year 10 class were observed coping well with higher GCSE listening material and then generating good clusters of ideas expressing opinions on aspects of school. Students use ICT effectively to produce a good range of text.

171. Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 11. It was very good and occasionally excellent in nearly half the lessons observed. There is a high level of quality and consistency in teaching. Teachers' personal knowledge and skills are a key strength, as are their very good planning and awareness of students' needs, their dynamic presentation and excellent modelling of spoken French and their promotion of active learning through games, pair and group tasks and a high level of interaction with students. These strategies are working particularly well in improving the performance of boys. ICT is well used as both a teaching strategy and a means of encouraging students to research aspects of French life and culture. Students' work is carefully and constructively marked. There is scope for improvement in two areas of teaching: pronunciation should be taught more rigorously at an early stage and there is some over-emphasis on describing the workings of French rather than encouraging students to use it in practical contexts.

172. Students learn well: they acquire a good body of language in Years 7 to 9 and are enabled to consolidate this for GCSE by thorough and focused teaching. They work well in lessons, maintaining effort and concentration and showing genuine interest and enthusiasm for French. They are aware of what they need to do to improve and are helped by regular target-setting. They are capable of good

independent work, including the use of ICT. Students' literacy and communication skills are effectively developed in language classes and there are opportunities for them to use number – though these could be extended. Students with special educational needs make good progress, often with positive support and input from learning support assistants. A clear link between effective learning and good teaching is apparent across the department.

173. Students' attitudes to French are very positive and are a real strength. They are attentive and co-operative, respond willingly and have good relationships with each other and their teachers at all levels.

174. Curriculum planning is good, but the lack of links, exchanges and visits is inhibiting the development of students' familiarity with French life and culture as well as their confidence in using French in a broader range of settings. The department has plans to remedy this.

175. The department is very well led and has been managed through some difficult times. It now has an improved management structure which will underpin its future development. Standards and teaching have improved significantly and staffing is now much improved. The subject leader and recently-appointed full-time colleagues, together with a very experienced group of part-time staff, have the capacity to maintain this improvement.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge and planning.
- The range of resources available give good opportunities for real musical experiences.
- Extra-curricular activities make an important contribution to the life of the school.

### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for the use of ICT in this subject.
- The management of some more challenging students.

176. Overall attainment at the end of Year 9 is average, although a few gifted musicians attain standards above those expected and, this is reflected in the work currently taking place. Achievement for most students is satisfactory and no difference was observed between the achievement of boys and girls. A relatively small number of students take GCSE in music, but results in 2001 were well above average, with all students achieving A\*-C, this being a marked improvement on 1999 which was the last year in which students were entered. Current standards are similar.

177. Students' behaviour and attitudes were satisfactory or better in almost all lessons but ranged from very good to poor. Poor behaviour was seen as a result of weak classroom management in a Year 8 lesson, where a few lower-attaining students were continually disruptive, unsettling the class. This resulted in a poor standard of learning for the whole-class. Very good attitudes and behaviour were displayed in a Year 7 lesson, where students responded with enthusiasm to 'The Carnival of the Animals', considering how the instruments of the orchestra had been used to good effect. The development of students' skills in literacy was particularly evident in this lesson, where students read the text aloud, speaking and listening appropriately.

178. Teaching and learning were satisfactory overall. Students were given the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding and skills in listening, appraising, performing and composing. In a Year 9 lesson, students were led in a discussion on texture in ensembles, then they listened to examples of music in order to use similar techniques in their own music making. Strengths in the teaching observed consisted of good planning, secure subject knowledge, clear learning objectives, and good use of resources. In a Year 10 lesson, students made sound progress in their understanding of musical terms, for example they confidently used words such as statement, episode, repetition, crescendo and legato when examining a piece of music written in ternary form. They were then able to translate this learning into their practical work. Students were able to distinguish between the different tones and timbres of woodwind instruments in a Year 7 lesson, having been challenged by suitable questioning which led them to understand why instruments make specific sounds. Where teaching had significant weaknesses, for example in a Year 8 lesson, classroom management was ineffective and did not ensure that all students concentrated and completed the tasks set. This resulted in a small minority of students limiting the learning of the whole-class.

179. The management of the department is satisfactory. The subject leader has written schemes of work, and good assessment, both by the teacher and the student, takes place at the end of every project. The schemes of work indicate that this subject makes a good contribution to students' cultural development, for example the study of Chinese, African and Indian music in Years 7 to 9, and Gamelan music amongst other world music in Years 10 and 11. Correct use of grammar and spelling is encouraged and is evident in the marking of students' work. Accommodation for music is adequate and resources on the whole are good, giving opportunities for valid musical experiences. The lack of the use of ICT should be rectified, and this is an area for development of which the subject leader is aware. The collaborative work expected in both composing and performing across the school provides good opportunities for students' social development.

180. The subject leader is supported by another member of staff, who teaches class music, and six peripatetic staff who give instrumental lessons to 65 students. A range of extra-curricular activities normally take place, including a choir attended by around 80 students and an orchestra attended by over 20 students. In the week of the inspection, rehearsals for an imminent production of 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', involving 107 students musically, took precedence over the normal programme. The music department plays its full part in school functions and presents concerts and regular productions together with the drama department. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results have improved significantly to well above the national average.

- Teachers' knowledge of the different activities is very good.
- Very well motivated and committed teachers.
- Relationships are very good.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities are for students to take responsibility for their learning.
- Students do not understand well enough what they need to do to improve in the different activities.
- An appropriate programme for non-participants is not applied consistently.

181. The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with those reported nationally. The evidence of the inspection indicates that these assessments were accurate and that overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. In some activities, for example football and netball, which students have pursued since entering the school, standards are above national expectations. In football, students are aware of positional and tactical play and are able to open up the game by creating space and moving off the ball. In netball, students consistently obey the footwork rule and are adept at using appropriate spaces to send and receive a pass. In other activities, such as rugby and badminton, which have only recently been introduced to different year groups, standards are, as yet, barely at the expected levels.

182. GCSE results have shown a steady improvement since the last inspection and, in 2000, were just below the national average. However, the results in 2001 have taken a tremendous leap forward to well above the national average, with 70 per cent of students entered achieving A\* to C grades, as opposed to the national figure of 53 per cent. The standards seen during the inspection in some activities, notably in badminton, were above the national expectation for many students, particularly for those taking the GCSE course. These students were able to use a variety of shots to good advantage in a game and could comment on each other's performance with clarity and understanding. In a Year 11 core physical education lesson, students played netball with fluency and a good understanding of tactical play. The evidence of the inspection, together with the GCSE results and results of school fixtures, indicates that the overall standards in Years 10 and 11 are above national expectations.

183. The achievement of students generally in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good, since most students by this time are working at levels above national expectations.

184. The teaching and learning in physical education are good overall and in some instances is very good. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on netball, it was clear that previous teaching of the footwork rule had led to very good learning by the students, and the teaching at this stage was now concentrated on the tactical aspects of moving into and passing into space. In lessons where the teaching was very good, students were taught how and why to prepare themselves properly for exercise, skills practices were progressive and built on previously learnt skills, expectations were high and the lesson was conducted at a good pace. Very good relationships are a feature of the department and teachers' knowledge and understanding of the activities is also a strength. A very good feature of all lessons was the consistent use of key words and technical terms to increase students' physical education vocabulary. This helps students to be more confident and prepared when they reach GCSE work, and makes a significant contribution to the development of literacy. Provision for the development of numeracy is less secure and is not yet a feature of all lessons. All lessons included opportunities to evaluate what had been learnt but insufficient opportunities were given through Years 7 to 11 for students to take responsibility for their work.

185. Planning for the use of ICT is satisfactory. It is used well with the GCSE course where students have access to appropriate software and research materials. It is less well used in Years 7 to 9. However, the department is looking at ways of increasing the use of computers into the scheme of work. Teachers use ICT well for the storage of data.

186. The attitudes and behaviour of students are generally good. They show a commitment to hard work, an ability to concentrate and focus on tasks and a willingness to listen to instructions. There were a few non-participants in almost all lessons seen. Not all of these students had genuine reasons for not taking part. Although there is a bank of work available for these students, it was not used consistently. A few students, therefore, clearly viewed the physical education lesson as “free time”.

187. Teachers’ good knowledge of students with special educational needs is a good feature of the department’s work. Targets given in students’ individual education plans are interpreted to be appropriate for physical education and this ensures that these students make equally good progress alongside their peers. The department’s policy of setting within groups also enables all students to have equal opportunities to achieve and make good progress. Gifted and talented students are enabled to achieve their potential through the department’s policy of fostering links with local clubs, as well as opportunities to play at district, county and national level.

188. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The time allocation for GCSE at present severely restricts the choice of a range of practical activities which students can study in depth. The school is aware of this restriction and the fact that the teachers give up a great deal of time out of school hours to compensate and is looking at ways to resolve the situation.

189. The department is well managed and led. The effectiveness of the curriculum is monitored well through both regular observation of lessons and the good use of assessment data. Improvements since the last inspection are good.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Many inspiring lessons which gain and hold students’ interest.
- Excellent class management, resulting in good student behaviour.
- Well planned, very productive lessons.
- All Year 10 and 11 students do a short course in religious education.

### Areas for improvement

- “Opportunity group” students are withdrawn from all their religious education lessons.
- Lack of resources in the library and in the department which limits students’ achievement.
- Some non-specialist teaching.

190. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards at the end of last Year 9, but current Year 9 students are already attaining above the expected standards under the new subject leader and should exceed the expectations of the Essex Agreed Syllabus. Achievement across Years 7 to 9 is good.

Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of religious symbolism, and are able to offer explanations for religious rituals, such as carrying the Sikh holy book on the head, above everyone else. They can identify questions of meaning, such as questions connected with life after death, and can understand the answers that religions give. They extend their knowledge of vocabulary associated with different religions.

191. For the past two years, most students in Year 11 entered for the short course GCSE in religious education. Results improved greatly over the two years, but were still below average in 2001, with girls doing significantly better than boys. Current standards show some improvement and are average. Since the beginning of the academic year students have been achieving well, but they missed some work last year when the previous subject leader left and are therefore likely to gain average results in the examination. They learn about the influence of religious beliefs on people's lives, such as Christian opposition to Hitler. They grapple with religious concepts such as Aquinas' idea of the Just War, and relate these to contemporary situations such as the war in Afghanistan. However, they achieve mainly in terms of understanding religious ideas, rather than developing the skill of evaluation in which they come to their own reasoned responses to religious and moral issues. This also limits their opportunities for spiritual development. However, social and moral development are good because of their developing knowledge and understanding of the subject matter which covers issues such as human relationships, war and peace and materialism in relation to religion.

192. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good, with some very good and excellent lessons. Teachers manage classes very well, which leads to productive lessons in where students cover much material. The best lessons are inspiring, with informed and passionate presentations of figures like Martin Luther King and Bonhoeffer and issues like life after death and Third World debt. This gains and holds the attention of students throughout the lessons. Teachers who are not specialists in the subject are less confident and their lack of background knowledge sometimes limits students' learning. Lessons are clearly focused, with a variety of tasks that effectively develop and reinforce learning. Students of all levels of attainment respond well to the demanding work. However, the GCSE objective of evaluation is not emphasised enough in the planning. Consequently, students do not get sufficient opportunity to weigh up arguments for and against an issue and come to their own reasoned opinions. Some older students feel confident to express their ideas in class. These are always dealt with courteously and taken seriously by the teacher. Teachers use homework well in Year 7, encouraging students to relate what they learn from religion to their own lives, but homework is not set in most other lessons. Teachers generally mark the work well, with comments to encourage students and correct errors. Resources are limited to photocopied information sheets and worksheets, prepared by the subject leader, and the use of video extracts. Teachers extend students' literacy skills through reading and writing in class, but they do not give students the opportunity to reinforce or extend their knowledge with text-books; library resources are sparse. Students' numeracy skills are developed when appropriate. There are no religious artefacts in the department to extend learning in lessons on religions. There is, as yet, no planned use of ICT in this subject. Overall, resources are unsatisfactory.

193. Teachers are aware of students with special educational needs and adopt suitable strategies to deal with them. In the lessons seen, these students were integrated well into the lessons and coped well with the work. However, a number of students with special literacy needs are withdrawn from religious education altogether for "Opportunity Group" lessons and this is unsatisfactory.

194. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. They settle quickly and quietly at the beginning of lessons, listen to the teacher and concentrate well. They work hard to complete the tasks they are set. In Years 7 and 8, students are keen to answer questions and to share their own experiences, particularly when they are with teachers who know them well through other subjects.

195. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, notably in Years 10 and 11 where all students now follow a GCSE short course. The new subject leader has been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning and standards are rising.

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

In the inspection, five subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

*GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	1	100	63	0	17	2	1.6
Physics	1	100	53	0	8	3	1.1

*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
Art and design	2	100	96	50	45	7	6.4
Biology	1	100	88	0	34	4	5.3
Business studies	1	100	91	0	30	4	5.3
Chemistry	8	50	89	13	42	2.3	5.9
Communication studies	11	100	93	0	30	5.5	5.4
English literature	4	100	96	0	36	4	5.9
Design and technology	6	100	92	0	29	5.7	5.4
General studies	16	94	85	6	28	3.5	4.9
Mathematics	2	100	89	50	45	6	6
Other social studies	7	100	88	0	35	3.7	5.3
Physics	2	100	88	100	41	9	5.7

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on A and AS-level mathematics and AS-level biology. Work in physics was also sampled. The number of students taking A-level physics in 2000 was very low. The grades obtained were near or just below the identified potential of the students. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were good and students were attentive and approached the work in a mature manner. The attainment of these students was at their predicted levels.

#### Mathematics

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

##### Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to plan very effectively and to give clear explanations.
- The subject is very well managed.
- Teaching is very good overall.

##### Areas for improvement

- Students would benefit from an improvement in the overall consistency of teaching in line with the best practice.

196. The inspection covered the courses in A-level mathematics and AS-level mathematics provided by the school. Modules are offered in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics.

197. In 2001, results in A-level mathematics were above the national average and in AS-level they were broadly in line with the national average but the numbers of students who entered were small. The small numbers of students entered for A-level mathematics in previous years achieved well.

198. Standards in the work seen during the inspection both in lessons and in the work sample indicate that standards are at the nationally expected levels for students following each course. Students perform well in the first modules in statistics and in mechanics. They initially find the pure mathematics more challenging but gain a greater understanding after further study and revisiting of topics. Students find difficulty initially in algebraic manipulation and in using their previous knowledge of algebra to support their learning in other areas. Students' attainment is broadly average for entry to A-level and AS-level courses in mathematics and they achieve well.

199. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and are prepared to admit when they do not understand and ask for further explanation. The quality of relationships between students and staff is a particular strength.

200. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is a particular strength and this enables them to plan effectively and to give clear explanations. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher's detailed explanation ensured that students gained a very good understanding of how to resolve and take moments for systems in equilibrium. Lessons build

suitably on students' previous learning experiences, as in a Year 12 lesson, on sequences where the teacher checked their understanding of mathematical ideas on sequences prior to work on oscillating and convergent sequences. Occasionally, the choice of a difficult example hinders students' understanding of underlying principles, as in a Year 12 lesson where their lack of facility with algebra hindered their progress in learning to solve simultaneous linear and quadratic equations. Teachers set and insist on high standards of rigour, precision and presentation in written work. Students make great intellectual effort and remain on task for the whole lesson. They remain well-motivated even if they experience difficulties. Homework is set and marked regularly and students know that they can get extra help from their teachers.

201. Subject management is very good. Outcomes are carefully monitored and this has led, for example, to a change of examination syllabus to maximise students' chances of success. There are very good procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress and for setting targets. Students know how well they are doing and this contributes to the progress they make

202. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards in A-level mathematics have been maintained although the number of entries is still low.

## **Biology**

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

### Strengths

- The staff are well qualified, experienced and have a good knowledge of the subject.
- The attitude of students is very good and there are very good relationships between the staff and students.
- Lessons are well prepared.

### Areas for improvement

- To increase the uptake of the subject by students.
- A number of students fail to reach their predicted grades in the final examinations.
- The use of ICT.

203. The inspection covered AS-level biology. No students are taking A-level in Year 13.

204. The number of students taking biology post 16 was very small and cannot be compared to national figures in a meaningful manner. The school, however, uses its extensive data to identify the potential and predicted grades of students. The results at A-level in biology indicate that a significant number of students did not reach their predicted grade and this was disappointing. Appropriate action has been taken to identify and remedy areas of weakness. Staff changes have been made and the syllabus changed.

205. Year 12 students had only just started their course but were finding the transition from GCSE relatively easy to cope with and their achievements are satisfactory. The students were confident to enter into class discussions and were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject. An example of this was seen when these students described the theory behind the concept of adaptation of plants and invertebrates to their habitat during their class presentations.

206. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although the majority of lessons were teacher-led, the

staff maintained the students' interest by demonstrating a clear enthusiasm for the subject linked with a good subject knowledge and experience. The teachers were able to involve the students in well-organised class discussions. This gave the students the opportunity to demonstrate what they understood. However, the very small size of the group restricted discussion, at times, due to the lack of a variety of points of view.

207. The marking of homework and other assessed tasks is detailed, with constructive comments and grades. The students appreciate the high quality of assessment and are aware of their potential and their targets. The teachers are willing to offer extra help and support to any student who requests assistance.

208. The attitude of students to their work is very good. The written work of the students is complete and of a high standard. In class, the students were attentive, polite and confident in contributing to class discussions. All teachers enjoy a very good relationship with the students and this gave rise to an overall feeling of co-operation.

209. The management of the department is satisfactory. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory. Review and monitoring of teaching and learning are taking place to identify weaknesses and promote improvements. There is a need for the department to consider how to attract greater numbers of students to take the courses. The introduction of the use of ICT into the subject is also necessary.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus was on design and technology AS-level.

### **Design and technology**

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers' enthusiasm and working relationships with students.
- Students are able to achieve to their potential.
- Design projects have strong links with outside clients.
- Students' personal development.

#### Areas for improvement

- Development of students' learning skills, for example, the ability of students to develop and present information to different audiences.

210. The school has taken groups of students to A-level in design and technology in the past, but there is no current Year 13 group. The graphical design course is new this year. Although all students come to the course with an A\*-C grade in a technology subject, their experience of designing and making varies because of the different design and technology subjects taken at GCSE.

211. All of the relatively small number of students who took the A-level examination in 2000 and 2001 gained A-E grades, with most obtaining a C grade, but no students gained the highest grade.

212. Current standards are in line with course expectation and students' achievements are satisfactory. All students have made satisfactory advances in knowledge, understanding and skills during the early stages of the course. For example, all students carry out a range of exercises in drawing and presenting work before applying these new skills in their first design project. Their understanding of design and manufacturing practice is developing satisfactorily and being reinforced very effectively by the strong links being forged with industrial contacts.

213. Most students are achieving satisfactorily at this stage of the course. They carry out research into the work of other designers and use this effectively to generate their own ideas. All make good use of their previous knowledge and skills of working with different materials when analysing and evaluating existing products and their own design ideas. Standards of drawing and presentation skills vary with experience but a range of techniques is used, including the use of computers.

214. Almost all students show a very positive attitude to their work and are making satisfactory progress. However, progress varies considerably depending on the commitment and attitude of individual students. Students are closely monitored and given regular detailed and constructive oral and written feedback about their individual performance. In the lessons observed, all students were well focused on completing their models and their presentation to a local businessman, who would represent the client for their designed products.

215. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Shared teaching of the small group is planned effectively. Appropriate teaching strategies are being used to develop students' knowledge and skills and these use the expertise of the teachers well. Students follow the structures exercises well and are able to apply their skills effectively. For example, research into the work of other designers is analysed and incorporated into their own work. There is a high level of individual support at all times but, at this stage of the course, the contribution of students to discussions with the teacher about their work is limited. Students are very positive about their work and most demonstrate some creative thinking in the evolution of their design ideas.

216. Leadership and management of the course are satisfactory. The subject leader plans and leads the course and is well supported by one other teacher. The course and students' performance are very closely monitored and this is very effective in promoting students' personal development and the quality of their performance. As a result, students are kept in no doubt about whether their performance is satisfactory and how they might improve. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## **BUSINESS**

Business studies A-level had not been offered by the school in the previous two years but it has recently been re-introduced. It was not one of the areas inspected in detail. However, lessons were sampled and students' work scrutinised. Last summer a small group of students took AS-level business studies and results were similar to the national average. In lessons, good use is made of practical activities and role-play but more could be done to draw out business studies principles from this work. Standards in work seen in the current Years 12 and 13 are in line with students identified potential. Students demonstrate good descriptive skills but are less good at applying business concepts to the solution of problems.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was not one of the areas inspected in detail, however lessons were sampled and work scrutinised. Overall, the quality of provision in A-level physical education is good. Teaching of the theoretical aspects of sport and physical activity is very good. Standards are in line with students identified potential and the subject is well managed.

The provision for students in Year 12 to take part in physical activity is satisfactory but it is unclear whether this session is compulsory or optional. Few students attend the session on a regular basis and this makes it impossible for the physical education department to plan and implement a relevant and appropriate programme.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design AS and A-level. Media studies and drama were sampled.

Media studies is a popular subject, although comparatively few students have taken the A-level examination in past years. The results in 2001 were better than those nationally, and an improvement on the previous year. The evidence of the lesson observed and a scrutiny of coursework indicated that students' learning in media studies is good as a result of effective teaching. Students' written work showed that they develop a good knowledge of the technical aspects of the subject. This enables them to make detailed analyses, for example of film extracts. Higher-attaining students have a good grasp of theory, which they use to construct well-argued essays. The course is well-planned and organised, and teachers' expertise is good.

Drama is now a popular subject, but previously very few students took the subject at A-level. The teaching and learning observed were very good. The lesson activities were challenging, with very good opportunities to relate theory to practice, for example in the use of space, voice and language, gesture and movement, to portray status. Those who had little previous experience of drama were sensitively supported, which contributed to the excellent relationships between teacher and students. The pace of the work was fast, giving enough time for evaluative discussion of the performances. The students' written work shows good analysis of themes and characters, including use of the Internet to research information. Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent in drama, as are the relationships between teacher and students. They are highly motivated, and work very well together in practical activities. They know what is expected of them, and have taken care over their written coursework.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- Improved recruitment in Year 12 of students with mainly above-average prior attainment.
- High expectations of examination results and positive relationships.
- The development of basic skills, particularly of drawing and painting.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching of critical and analytical skills.
- The range of work and level of challenge.

217. The school offers AS and A-level art and design.

218. Results in recent years show that all those entered for an examination have gained pass grades. However, the numbers who have joined the courses are very small, one or two students in each of the last two years and four in 1999. These numbers are too small to make comparisons against national averages. Results of AS-level examinations in 2001 show students attained broadly average results. Their achievements were overall satisfactory.

219. Standards seen in Year 13 are below average for advanced level work. The work shows weaknesses in painting and drawing and in critical and contextual understanding. In Year 12, standards are higher in some aspects. For example, there is good achievement in painting and colour theory and students show an increasing understanding of colour mixing. The still life that has been arranged for them presents the challenge of representing different matt and reflective surfaces on a background of draped fabric. Studies of artists' work inform students' observations and technical skill. Working from reproductions of paintings by for example, pre-Raphaelites and 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painters, students experiment with different brush strokes and layers of colour in order to create an illusion of shadow and texture within rich folds of fabric. Their ability to analyse and present well argued personal preferences about artists' work are less well developed. The teaching of critical and analytical skills is weaker than other aspects of the course. Teachers sometimes supply 'an answer' rather than requiring students to carrying out their own research and form their own opinions. When students join the course, these skills are under-developed. Students are more confident when talking about their own work.

220. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Relationships are very positive. Students are enjoying the course and teachers encourage and support students' aspirations. Teachers are very keen that students should achieve well. They give them detailed individual feedback about their progress towards their target grades. However, in their assessments of students' work, teachers do not evaluate the impact of their teaching thoroughly enough. As a result, alternative and possibly more effective teaching and learning styles, that are better suited to the learning objectives, are not tried. In some lessons there was a lack of pace and rigour and the time was not used to the full. Questions were not searching enough and student responses, written and spoken, were often superficial.

221. The curriculum is narrow, and covers mainly two and three-dimensional work. Opportunities to work outdoors, use computers, attend a life class and explore a range of print media are limited. Students do not encounter a sufficient range of experiences to equip them fully for subsequent advanced study.

222. Management of the subject is satisfactory and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The take-up for courses has improved. Students are keen to achieve good results and meet their personal goals. The current curriculum is similar to the GCSE course. A curriculum plan is needed that covers one and two year courses, progressively building on students' prior learning and previous experiences. The more challenging demands and expectations required of them at this level need to be made clearer to students so that they make better use of the time spent working outside lesson times.

## HUMANITIES

Law and psychology were sampled in this area. Provision for law is good and 2001 AS-level results were in line with the school's expectations. The evidence of the lesson observed and a scrutiny of coursework indicated that students' learning is good as a result of effective teaching. Students' written work showed that they develop a good understanding of the subject. For example, being able to identify and use specific cases to illustrate particular points of law. Students have opportunities to visit the Crown Court and a local prison to widen their understanding. Teachers' expertise is good and the course is well-planned and organised.

In A-level psychology teaching is very good, with well-structured lessons, high-quality exposition and explanation. Students are very focused and diligent in their approach and make clear gains in knowledge and understanding, supported by practical activity. Their attainment is above average. Samples of work of students on the AS and A-level courses showed well-structured and organised work which is carefully and supportively marked with clear targets for improvement.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English in this area. A French AS-level course that has been introduced this year was sampled. Teaching is very good and students have successfully made the transition from GCSE to advanced study. They are coping well with the increased sophistication of language and topic and achieving good standards for this stage of the course.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Results have improved, and are now average compared to schools nationally.
- English is a popular subject.
- Well-sequenced work prepares students well for examination requirements.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students' confidence and independence in learning in English.
- Teachers' expertise in the language aspects of the English syllabus.
- Marking of students' work, to give detailed feedback on its quality and how to improve in future.

223. Results in English have improved since the last inspection, and in 2001 were average compared to schools nationally. The number of students taking this subject at A -level in previous years was too low to make valid judgements on how well boys and girls have done, or to compare overall results in English with those in their other subjects.

224. The standard attained by students by the end of their course is average overall, and their achievement is satisfactory. The main strength lies in their skills in writing analytically. All students

learn to do this at length, making good use of detail such as quotations to support and illustrate the points they make in their detailed commentaries on the texts studied. The higher-attaining students in Year 12 are doing well in building on their GCSE work in literature, and they explore themes and issues confidently. In general, students do best in literature-based work, and less well when the focus is on language study. For example, creative writing in response to literature studied is of high quality, but students are weaker in commenting on the language choices they made. Students of all levels of attainment make good use of the ideas suggested in class discussions preparing them for assignments. Such discussions enable all to make sound gains in their understanding of these topics. They have too few opportunities to develop flair and their own insights, which leads to some lack of confidence and independent thought in their essays.

225. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are carefully sequenced, often with a good variety of tasks. Good features of teaching include the way that students are helped to understand texts, for example through supportive questioning that encourages them to put forward their own ideas. Teachers are well informed on literature aspects of the course, but less assured in the language aspects. This is reflected in the quality of students' written work. Marking is satisfactory overall. Clear and helpful feedback is usually given, but most marking is insufficiently detailed and analytical, and misses the opportunity to give in-depth, individualised feedback and set new challenges that extend students' responses.

226. The leadership and management of English are satisfactory, as is the subject's improvement since the last inspection. Staff share a commitment to enabling students to do well, and their approachability and supportiveness are highly valued by the students. The numbers taking the subject have risen as a result. The English curriculum is closely based on meeting the requirements of the examination syllabus, without systematic planning for building on GCSE work. Assessment information is not used methodically to evaluate the department's effectiveness.