

INSPECTION REPORT

THE DEANERY C of E HIGH SCHOOL

Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106534

Headteacher: Mr Roger H Mallows

Reporting inspector: Mr Thomas Comer
15109

Dates of inspection: 26-29 November 2001

Inspection number: 189809

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	The Rev. Canon K M Forrest
Date of previous inspection:	14 October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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13762	Mr N Shelley	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4193	Mr C Radley	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? Pupils personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
11975	Mrs T McIntosh-Clark	Team Inspector	English	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Deanery C of E High School is a very large, mixed comprehensive school with 1619 pupils on roll, including 249 in the sixth form. There are more girls than boys. Only 11 pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and only two have English as an additional language. The school serves a wide area and the annual intake of pupils to Year 7 comprises a broad social mix and comes from 55-60 different primary schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average. Tests of the annual intakes of pupils indicate that their overall attainment is average for their age. The attainment of the intake to the sixth form is below average because some of the highest achieving pupils at GCSE (33 in 2001) leave to take up sixth-form places elsewhere at the end of Year 11. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs is below average but has risen since the previous inspection, and the proportion of pupils with formal statements of special educational need is average. The range of these pupils' special needs is very wide and includes physical, visual, hearing and speech impairment, and severe learning difficulties. The school is a provider of initial teacher training and has recently gained Training School status. The school provides information and communications technology (ICT) training for teachers in other schools, and has Technology College status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Deanery C of E High School is a very good and successful school which provides a high quality of education for all of its pupils, regardless of background or ability. Standards are well above average in the main school and average in the sixth form. The school's very good leadership concentrates effectively on improving teaching and raising standards. Throughout the school, pupils and students achieve well because the teaching is good and because they have very good attitudes to their learning. The school is efficient; it gives good value for money and has a cost-effective sixth form.

What the school does well

- The Year 9 test results and the GCSE results are well above national averages.
- In the sixth form, standards are highest in English and science subjects.
- The teaching is good throughout the school.
- The leadership is very effective and the school is well managed.

What could be improved

- GCSE examination results in modern languages, drama and history are below those in other subjects.
- Despite high overall standards in English in the main school some of the average and lower attaining pupils have weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Sixth-form students' independent learning skills are underdeveloped in some subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made a good overall improvement since the previous inspection in October, 1996. High standards have been maintained and the school has made good progress with most of the issues for improvement identified in the last report. The curriculum has improved and more is done now to meet pupils' special educational needs and the learning needs of gifted pupils. Performance data is used more effectively to set individual targets for pupils and to monitor their progress and annual reports to parents are satisfactory. The monitoring of the school's work as a whole has greatly improved and is now a strong feature, as a consequence of a more effective senior leadership team. The school now makes much better use of ICT, especially in Years 7 - 11.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	D	B	-	

<i>Key</i>	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Note: the national results for A-levels/AS-levels are not yet available for 2001.

Years 7, 8 and 9

The results of the national Year 9 tests (SATs) in English, mathematics and science were well above average in each of the three subjects in 2001 and in each of the previous three years. In comparison with those of similar schools, the results were also well above average. Girls tend to do better than boys in the tests but less so than is found nationally. The trend in the test results matches the slightly upwards national trend. The results of the teachers' own assessments in foundation subjects indicate that standards are well above average in art and design, design and technology, information and communications technology (ICT) and physical education. The teachers' assessments indicate above average standards in the other foundation subjects: geography, history, modern languages and music. The inspection shows that standards of the current Year 9 pupils' work in English, mathematics and science are well above average and represent a good achievement for these pupils in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Year 7. However, the written work of some average and below average attaining pupils shows weaknesses in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Years 10 and 11

The GCSE results were well above average in 2001 and for each of the previous three years, and exceeded the school's targets. The results are rising in line with the national trend of improvement. In comparison with those of similar schools, the results are also well above average. Girls tend to do better than boys in the GCSE examinations but by less than found nationally. Pupils with special educational needs do well in examinations and very few fail to achieve GCSE passes in five or more subjects. The GCSE results in 2001 were well above average in English, mathematics and science subjects. They were above or well above average in most other subjects. The GCSE results were average in drama, modern languages (French, German and Spanish) and in history, but lower than in other subjects. The inspection shows that the standards of the current Year 11 pupils' work in English, mathematics and science are well above average and that the pupils are maintaining their good achievement.

Sixth form

The A-level results were above average in 2000 but in 2001, they were not quite as high as in the previous year. The standards of the current students' work seen in the inspection are average overall and closely match the indications of the examination results. Students' overall achievement is good in relation to their attainment at GCSE, and is at least satisfactory in all of the subjects inspected in detail. The highest standards are in English and science subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school. They are keen to succeed, they co-operate with their teachers and concentrate on the work set for them both in class and at home.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils rarely misbehave and exclusion is rare. Exclusion rates are low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between pupils and staff are constructive. Relationships between pupils are harmonious; pupils work together well. There is no evidence of bullying or aggressive behaviour.
Attendance	Very high in comparison with other schools.

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.

Teaching is consistently good and meets the learning needs of all of the pupils. Consequently, the pupils learn effectively, make good progress and achieve good standards. The strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good knowledge of how to teach their subjects, high expectations of effort and achievement, and effective management of their pupils. The strengths of the pupils' learning are their rapid progress, keenness to succeed, constructive collaboration with other pupils and good pace of working. Homework is set and completed on time.

Although teaching is good in the sixth form, students' do not develop their independent learning skills sufficiently well in a number of subjects because their teachers do not provide enough opportunities for them to do so.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science subjects is good throughout Years 7-11. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily on the whole and these basic skills effectively support the pupils' learning in other subjects. However, more attention should be given to improving the spelling, punctuation and grammar of some of the average and below average pupils. Teachers mark the pupils' written work well and give the pupils a clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses.

Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and work well in mainstream classes. This aspect of the school's work is effective because the subject teachers know their pupils well and have a good understanding of their pupils' learning difficulties, as stated in their individual education plans.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall and meets all legal requirements. A rich curriculum includes drama and dance for all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and a choice of three foreign languages and Latin. Gifted young musicians begin GCSE in Year 8. Considerable numbers of gifted young scientists take three separate science subjects to GCSE. Talented young athletes compete successfully at local and national level. The sixth form curriculum includes 27 subjects to AS and A-level, and vocational courses to AS and AVCE, and nursery nursing and computer

	networking courses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Teachers meet their pupils' learning needs well and adapt their lessons appropriately.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils receive good support when at an early stage of learning English. This support is effective and pupils subsequently make the same good progress as others.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Regular worship and recent training for teachers on spirituality ensure that pupils benefit from spiritual reflection and develop a sense of inquiry and open-mindedness. The school works hard to support local and national charities and takes part in a scheme to adopt children in the Third World. Pupils participate in musical activities, visit theatres and art galleries, and make visits to European countries. Many pupils reach very high standards in sporting activities and achieve local and national distinction; for example, the Year 8 Rugby League team are national champions for the past two years.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Arrangements for child protection, welfare and guidance are very good. Assessment data are used effectively to monitor pupils' progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very effective leadership and management of the school and its sixth form. The headteacher and senior staff lead by example and provide clear direction for the school. Subjects are well managed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They monitor standards achieved overall and in each subject and have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They monitor the school's progress towards achieving its objectives and targets and play a full part in forward planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a good system to manage teachers' performance. Senior staff and subject heads monitor the performance of the subject departments in a number of ways, including observation of lessons. However, this aspect is less well developed in sixth-form physical education.
The strategic use of resources	The school is efficient and the budget is in balance. Money allocated for specific purposes, such as the education of pupils with special educational needs is spent appropriately. The principles of best value are always applied when the school makes major purchases or places contracts.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations are high. • The teaching is good and their children make good progress. • The school is approachable. • Their children become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small minority of parents would like better information on their children's progress.

Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive and the inspectors agree with these positive opinions. However, around 17 per cent of parents think that they could be given a clearer view of their

children's progress. The inspectors investigated and found that, overall, the information to parents is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is reviewed individually three times each year and their latest grades are in their planners, updated termly. The annual reports are satisfactory.

**ANNEX:
THE SIXTH FORM**

THE DEANERY CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school's large and well-established sixth form has 249 students on roll, comprising 118 boys and 131 girls. The students' social backgrounds are broadly average and representative of the town of Wigan and its surrounding rural districts. The sixth form is 'open access' and has no special qualifications for entry. More than three quarters of the school's pupils remain in full-time education after the end of Year 11 and around a half of the Year 11 choose to remain at the Deanery High School. The overall attainment of the students on entry to the sixth form is below average because a substantial number of the most highly qualified pupils, in terms of GCSE examinations, leave for sixth-form education elsewhere. A small number of students have special educational needs. The curriculum includes religious education for all students, a wide choice of 27 subjects leading to AS and A-level examinations, and a range of vocational courses leading to GNVQ, vocational AS and AVCE qualifications. Students may also take vocational courses in computer networking or nursery nursing, both of which lead to recognised qualifications

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective and meets the needs of all of its students well. Students therefore make good progress and reach average overall standards. The students achieve well because they are well taught and the school's expectations are high. The sixth form is very well managed; it is cost-effective and its ethos for learning is very good.

Strengths

- Most students achieve well and examination results are good overall.
- Standards are highest in English and science subjects.
- The teaching is good and students make good progress.
- The sixth form is well managed.

What could be improved

- Students' independent learning skills are underdeveloped in some subjects.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Teaching is good, standards are a little above average by Year 13 and represent a good overall achievement. Some of the Year 12 students have a weak background of elementary pure mathematics. Independent learning skills are generally underdeveloped.

Chemistry	Good. Teaching is good, standards are average and students achieve well but computers are not used enough.
Biology	Good. Teaching is good. Standards are above average, students achieve well and recent examination results were well above average. However, students' independent learning skills are underdeveloped and there is insufficient use of computers.
Design and Technology	Satisfactory. Students achieve satisfactory standards, which are broadly average. Computers are exploited well. Design skills are weaker than other skills and independent learning skills could be developed further.
Business Studies Voc	Good. Students are achieving above average standards. Teaching is good and students' progress is monitored well but written work could be improved. Students use computers very well and their independent learning is well developed.
Computing	Good. Teaching is good, students achieve well and standards are above average.
Physical Education	Satisfactory. Standards are below average in Year 13 because of an earlier lack of continuity in teaching in Year 12. Teaching is now good in the Year 12 AS course. However, the procedures for monitoring of teaching and learning need improving.
Health & Social Care Voc	Good. Teaching is good, standards are above average and students are achieving well. Independent learning is well developed; however, students' spoken contributions to lessons need improvement and insufficient use is made of computers.
Media Studies	Good. Teaching is good and standards and examination results are above average.
Geography	Good. The teaching is good, standards are above average and students achieve well. ICT is exploited effectively and fieldwork is a good feature. Independent learning skills are well developed but there is scope for students to practise these more in their assignments.
Psychology	Good. Teaching is good, standards are above average and students achieve well. However, boys' independent learning skills could be improved.
English	Very good. Teaching is good, standards are well above average and students achieve well.
Spanish	Good. Teaching is good. Standards are average and students achieve well. There are some weaknesses in students' grammar.

In addition to the subjects inspected in depth, lessons were also seen in physics, art and design, history and French. All of these lessons were good and the students were making good progress. Particular features were the effective use of mathematics in physics and some good work on political history. The examination results in French have shown a marked improvement in recent years and they were well above average in 2000. The A-level results in physics are very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Procedures to ensure health and safety are well managed. Pastoral care is very good and registration procedures are effective. Students with special educational needs, such as physical impairment, receive good individual support so that they can take a full part in their subject lessons. Year 13 students generally know their own progress well because assessment data are used effectively to predict target grades for individuals and monitor their progress. Form tutors ensure that students meet deadlines, and complete their action plans and their

	applications for higher education places. Careers education is very good and the school provides students with information necessary to enable them to make informed choices about their future. The school provides a good induction programme for students, with training in study skills. However, these skills are not subsequently exploited enough either in or out of lessons.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed. The examination performance, current standards, teaching and learning are monitored effectively in all subjects except physical education. All students have equal access to a high quality of education, including those with learning difficulties or physical impairment.

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"> • The teaching is good. • Students know how well they are progressing. • Care, support and guidance. • The school listens to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities for private study. • The common room is too small.

Students are pleased with the school's provision and most of them expressed positive views of the school in questionnaires in advance of the inspection. Although some negative opinions were also expressed in the questionnaires, this was not the case in interviews held with inspectors and, in these discussions, students' views were overwhelmingly positive. The inspectors agree with the students' positive opinions. They also agree that the study room facilities are limited, that the common room is very cramped, and that some rooms used for teaching are very small, having been adapted from corridors. The school does what it can to provide suitable accommodation and to improve what it has but there is no room at this crowded town centre-site for further building.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The results of Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations are well above average

1. The results of the national Year 9 tests in English, mathematics and science were well above average in each of the three subjects in 2001 and in each of the previous three years. In comparison with those of similar schools, the results were well above average. Girls outperform boys, as they do nationally. However, boys outperform boys nationally by a greater margin than girls outperform girls in each subject, especially English and science. The slight upward trend in the test results matches the national trend.
2. The results of the teachers' own assessments in foundation subjects indicate that standards are well above average in art and design, design and technology, information technology and physical education. The teachers' assessments indicate above average standards in the other foundation subjects: geography, history, modern languages and music.
3. The GCSE results were well above average overall in 2001 and for each of the previous three years and exceed realistic targets set by the governors. The results are rising in line with the national trend of improvement. In comparison with those of similar schools, the results are also well above average. Girls tend to do better than boys in the GCSE examinations, as they do nationally, but the difference in performance is less than seen nationally. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and do well in examinations and very few pupils fail to achieve GCSE passes in five or more subjects.
4. The proportions of pupils achieving the highest GCSE grades of A and A* are above average, most notably in English subjects, mathematics, science subjects, music, design and technology subjects and information technology.
5. In 2001, the GCSE results were well above average in English, mathematics and dual award science. A large number of pupils take three separate sciences (biology, chemistry and physics) to GCSE and the results in these subjects are very high. Results were above or well above average in most other subjects though they were average in modern languages (French, German and Spanish), drama and history, and in these subjects pupils tend to do less well than in their other subjects. All pupils take an examination in information technology and the results are very good. Virtually all pupils take GCSE in English Literature as well as English, and the results are equally high in each of the two subjects.

The teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7-11.

6. Teaching and learning are good overall. In lessons, teaching was often judged to be very good and almost no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils well and enables them to learn effectively, make good progress and to achieve good standards. The inspectors concentrated mainly on the teaching of English, mathematics and science throughout Years 7 – 11.
7. The strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good knowledge of how to teach their subjects, high expectations of effort and achievement, and effective management of the pupils. The strengths of the pupils' learning are rapid progress, keenness to succeed, their effective collaboration with other pupils and a good pace of working. Homework is set and completed on time and marked well.
8. The teaching of English is good. Teachers are well qualified, plan lessons well and have high expectations of their pupils. Pupils therefore make good overall progress. The school is implementing the National Literacy Strategy. Although literacy skills are taught satisfactorily, some average and below average pupils have weaknesses in spelling and grammar and in the construction of their extended writing.

9. The teaching of mathematics is good and sometimes very good. Teachers are well qualified and have high expectations of their pupils, particularly for the higher attainers, who make very good progress throughout Years 7-11. This was seen in mathematics lessons for higher attaining Year 7 pupils, for example, on probability, and in some of their previous written work in algebra. Middle attainers make good progress and achieve above average standards by Year 11 because they are well taught and because they wish to succeed and work hard. Lower attaining pupils make satisfactory overall progress though some need firm handling in order to keep them on task. Pupils' numeracy skills are taught well and the National Strategy for Numeracy was implemented ahead of time. Pupils generally have good numerical skills which effectively support their learning in other subjects.

10. The teaching of science is good. The strength of the teaching lies in the effective management of the pupils, which keeps them on task, and high expectations of effort and achievement. Teachers are very competent in their specialist areas and as a result pupils find science is easily understood. Pupils respond well to their science teaching and make good progress in consequence. Teachers mark the pupils' written work regularly and give the pupils a clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses. The school has improved its laboratory provision but some lessons are taught in ordinary classrooms.

11. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught and work well in mainstream classes. This is effective because the teachers know their pupils well and have a good understanding of the pupils' learning difficulties, as expressed in individual education plans.

The school is very well led and managed

12. The headteacher and other members of the senior team work well together and provide highly effective leadership for the school as a whole. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and raising standards. The aims of the school and its expectations are clearly expressed and well understood.

13. Since the previous inspection, a new senior leadership team is linked to subjects, faculties and the pastoral system. The management of subjects is generally good. The senior leadership team has established a very good ethos for learning, which reflects high expectations of effort and achievement. They monitor the school's work rigorously and a good system of performance management is also in place. Lessons are monitored regularly, both informally and formally, with a view to improving teaching and learning and raising standards. Subject departments monitor a chosen area of teaching and learning and members of the senior team are attached to one or more subjects to monitor and review performance. The school's work as a training school is developing the teachers' ability to look critically at their own teaching. Annual results review meetings are held between headteacher, the senior leadership member and the head of subject, to evaluate pupils' progress in relation to their prior attainment. However, departmental monitoring of teaching and learning are not yet established in sixth-form physical education.

14. The school's development plan provides a good strategic framework for raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. It comprises a simple, easy to follow three-year strategy with sufficient detail, and includes annual rolling plans, success criteria, deadlines and accountability. Subject faculties contribute to the whole-school plan through individual subject plans. The current principal priorities are appropriate. They are to continue to raise standards, especially through the school's strategies for literacy and numeracy, and to improve spiritual development.

15. The governing body does its work very well. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, not least because members of the senior leadership team act as professional advisers to governors. Governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively in all respects and their work is particularly beneficial in financial management. Statutory requirements are met in full.

16. The school is efficient; its finances are in good order and the budget is in balance. The money spent on educating a pupil at this school is above average but money is well spent. The specific grant for pupils with special educational needs is used effectively for its designated purpose. The senior staff and governors work hard to ensure that the school obtains best value and that money is well spent. The sixth form is cost-effective. Administration runs smoothly, contributing effectively to the overall efficiency of the school. The work of the technical and educational support staff makes a strong contribution to the high quality of education provided.

17. The school has improved well since the time of the previous inspection All points for action have been tackled. The school's structures are now much better for introducing and managing change. Standards are well above average and have risen in line with the national trends.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The GCSE examination results in some subjects.

18. The GCSE examination results in most subjects are above or well above average. Although they are average in history, drama, French, German and Spanish, pupils tend to do less well at GCSE in these than in their other subjects. In order to raise standards further it will be important for the school to concentrate on these subjects, identifying through the monitoring of teaching and learning how improvements can be made.

The writing skills of some average attaining pupils.

19. In English, the higher attaining pupils write at length using a well ordered style of presentation and are developing good critical responses to literature. Middle attaining pupils have a good understanding of different forms of writing and lower attaining pupils generally cope well with the reading and writing requirements of the curriculum. However, weaknesses occur in their punctuation and spelling, in their sentence structure, and in their breadth of vocabulary, although their skills in speaking and listening are good. The school is implementing the National Strategy for Literacy and the present time therefore presents a good opportunity to improve writing skills throughout the full range of subjects taught in Years 7-11.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

20. In order to improve the school's performance further, the governors, headteacher and senior staff should take the following action:

The main school (Years 7 – 11)

- (1) improve GCSE examination results in drama, history and modern languages,
 - identifying through monitoring of teaching and learning how standards can be raised further; (paragraphs 5 and 18)
- (2) improve the writing skills of average and lower attaining pupils by
 - concentrating on eliminating errors in punctuation, grammar and spelling;

(paragraphs 8 and 19)

Sixth form (Years 12 and 13)

(1) develop students' independence in their learning

- by making more use of ICT in some subjects;
- by reducing, in some subjects, the students' reliance on teachers for information and knowledge.

(paragraphs 33, 38, 74, 87, 94, 121, 134, 142 and 149)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	42
	Sixth form	83
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	0	9	19	13	1	0	0
Percentage	0	21	45	31	2	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	23	56	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	28	67	5	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 Years 7 – 11 as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1370	249
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	80	-

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	187	3

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	131	146	277

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	106	109
	Girls	121	111	118
	Total	209	217	227
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	75 (83)	78 (81)	81 (81)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	42 (53)	59 (60)	51 (49)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	107	117
	Girls	127	121	133
	Total	233	228	250
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	84 (88)	82 (83)	90 (91)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	51 (56)	57 (50)	49 (53)
	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	128	158	286

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	75	126	127
	Girls	114	154	156
	Total	189	280	283
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	66 (69)	98 (97)	99 (99)
	National	- (47.4)	- (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	48 (48)
	National	- (38.4)

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	72
	National	

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year Who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	47	50	97

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	15.2	18.5	17.1 (18.9)	2.9	4.0	3.0 (3.9)
National	n/a	n/a	n/a (18.2)	n/a	N/a	n/a (2.7)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or Units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	100
	National	-

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	9
White	1608
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	42	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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)	113.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	685

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

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

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	4448059
Total expenditure	4439568
Expenditure per pupil	2746
Balance brought forward from previous year	34594
Balance carried forward to next year	43085

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	17

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

1619

Number of questionnaires returned

634

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	45	4	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	45	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	53	3	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	58	9	1	2
The teaching is good.	40	53	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	51	15	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	40	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	28	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	56	11	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	47	46	3	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	46	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	46	6	1	10

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

21. The A-level results have been broadly average over the four-year period 1997-2000. The results were above the national average in 2000. In 2001 the results were a little lower than those of the previous year - national comparative data are not yet available.
22. The in-depth inspection of subjects showed that overall standards of current Year 13 students are broadly average and that the students are achieving well overall. Course retention rates and examination pass rates are generally good. The highest standards are found in English and science, especially physics, in which the examination results are very good. Standards are above average in biology, computing, business studies, health and social care, media studies, geography and psychology.
23. Standards are average overall in mathematics but are a little above average in Year 13. Many students achieve high standards but some of the weaker Year 12 students struggle with the demands of their courses mainly because of difficulties in algebra and trigonometry.
24. Standards are average in chemistry but students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE background. Standards are average in design and technology and Spanish. In design and technology, some aspects of the students' design work could be improved.
25. Standards are below average in Year 13 physical education because of a lack of continuity of teaching that the students experienced in Year 12. This has now been rectified and standards are good in the present physical education Year 12 AS course because of the effective teaching.
26. Only two students have English as an additional language. These students are making good progress in consequence of effective support received from carefully selected teachers.
27. Students with special needs make the same good progress as other students and succeed in their examinations because they receive effective support from support workers, and because their teachers know the students and their needs well and adapt lessons to suit them.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

28. Students' attitudes and personal development are very good and their attendance is good. These high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Parents are pleased with the standards of behaviour and students' personal development.
29. Students are enthusiastic about the school and the sixth form. Their good attendance and their enjoyment of all the experiences that are offered to them reflect this. They have a great deal of respect for their tutors and teachers. They work conscientiously, take advantage of the good range of enrichment activities provided and contribute to the school community through, for example, a paired reading scheme with younger pupils. A few students have less than positive attitudes towards their studies mainly because they feel that they have not made the right choice of course.
30. Behaviour in and out of lessons is almost always very good. The students respect and care for younger pupils; they relate very well to one another and are mutually supportive. They take responsibility for themselves through their own sixth-form council and their personal development is very positively

influenced by the several forms of community service that they undertake, and their enterprising support for charities and out of school activities, including visits abroad.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. The teaching is good overall and the students therefore learn effectively and make good overall progress. Teaching is good in English, psychology, mathematics, chemistry, biology, business studies, computing, health and social care, media studies, geography, English and Spanish. It is satisfactory in physical education and in design and technology,

32. The overall strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good subject knowledge, their good knowledge of their students and their capabilities, effective management of the students, constructive day-to-day assessment of the students' work, and high expectations of their students' effort and achievement. In response, students are confident in their teachers; they develop a clear understanding of their own achievement; they work hard and rise to the teachers' high expectations and make rapid gains in their knowledge of their subjects. In individual subjects, many examples could be given of particular strengths of provision, for example, the high quality of fieldwork in geography.

33. The weaknesses of teaching and learning lie in an insufficient use of computers in a few subjects, and also in a lack of development of the students' independent learning in some subjects. In design and technology, the teaching does not pay sufficient attention to developing pupils' ability to design independently.

34. The teachers' strong subject expertise, which builds the students' confidence as learners, was noted in many lessons, for example in mathematics, sciences, computing, health and social care, media studies, psychology and Spanish. As an example, in psychology, the teachers ensure that students learn that the subject matter is not static but dynamic and, as new topics are learned, the students find new means to investigate them. In Spanish, teachers have a very good command of the subject and they speak the language fluently; because students are accustomed to hearing Spanish spoken consistently in lessons, they develop their listening skills particularly well and they become confident at speaking.

35. The teachers know their students and their capabilities well. Because of this, for example, in mathematics, the teachers can anticipate the students' difficulties and allow for them in lesson planning so that all students can make appropriate progress and cope with the work set for them.

36. Teachers' routine assessment of the pupils is effective. Marking is thorough and adheres strictly to the criteria laid down by the examination boards, for example, in health and social care, for internal assessment procedures. In mathematics, the effective marking of written work ensures that students understand their difficulties and mistakes and can learn from them. In chemistry, marking of the students' work gives them a very good picture of their progress in the subject. In most subjects, marking is thorough and is annotated with helpful comments and constructive criticism, where appropriate, giving clear guidance for areas for improvement, so that the students know how they are progressing. However, in physical education, some of the students' work done in the past was either unmarked or weaknesses in the students' work were not always identified. This has now improved. Although teachers mark students' work accurately in computing and give them clear guidance for improvement in most respects, they need to pay more attention to the development of students' ability to analyse problems.

37. Teachers have high expectations of their students who respond well in lessons and in their assignments. In science subjects, the questioning of students is rigorous in lessons and this helps to reinforce knowledge and understanding, ensuring that students contribute to lessons. In English, students lead discussion on sections of text they have researched, with their thinking challenged and enhanced

through probing questioning both from the teacher and from other students. As a result, students learn to think quickly and to express themselves accurately, especially the higher attaining students.

38. In business studies, the students' independent learning is well developed and, in computing, students resolve their own programming problems and thereby effectively develop their ability to learn independently. In the vocational health and social care course, students undertake their own personal research and make use of local facilities such as the local library, which they visit regularly, and also local primary schools to help with their work on public services for young children. However, students' development as independent learners is less advanced in other subjects because the students tend to rely too much on the direction of their teachers. Mathematics lessons often consist of masterly exposition and development of new topics; although students understand what they are being taught and make good overall progress in these lessons, they are rarely expected to break new ground for themselves or to undertake the exposition on a new topic to the other members of the class. This means that it is the teachers, and not the students, who are doing the major part of the work for most of the time. This does not provide students with the foundation of independent study skills that they need in higher education. Even in English language lessons, students tend to depend to a great extent on the teacher for information and, as a result, become passive in their learning. The students do not have sufficient encouragement in some subjects, such as biology, to use computers for the purpose of independent study and research.

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

39. This is an inclusive school which provides an equally high quality of education for all of its sixth-form students. The curriculum is good and statutory requirements are fully met.

40. The school provides 27 AS and A-level courses, and also AVCE (Advanced Vocational) courses in Business, and in Health and Social Care. Students may also choose to study for GNVQ Business (Intermediate), a Diploma in child care and education, a qualification in computer literacy and information technology, and for a qualification in two computer network skills training programmes, which are available, too, as a 'gap year' course for Year 14 students. Key Skills courses are provided for Year 12.

41. The school provides a good course leading to A-level General Studies which a large number of students follow in their own study time. One afternoon a week is set aside for enrichment activities organised by the students themselves and include, for example, physical education, work experience, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, and paired reading with younger pupils.

42. The school works very closely with local employers, for example, through the school's own Education and Business Partnership, to ensure that it responds to local needs, and two local firms were sponsors for the school in its bid for Technology College Status.

43. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is on offer and well taken up by students. In addition to sporting activities the school produces an annual dramatic performance, and an annual musical performance; students are highly successful in several local and national Public Speaking events and in science and mathematics competitions. A significant number of students is involved in a Young Enterprise project.

44. The provision for students' personal development, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school provides opportunities for regular worship in school and in Church, and recently conducted training for teachers on spirituality to ensure that students would benefit from opportunities across the whole curriculum in, for example, spiritual reflection, self-worth, intuitive awareness, purpose and direction, celebration of life, and to develop a sense of inquiry, exploration and open-mindedness.

45. Students are involved in activities to improve their own environment, take full and active part in the School Council and have been successful in mock trial competitions in formal Crown Court settings. The school works hard to support local and national charities and has established a Charity Group of students who work throughout the year on fund-raising projects, including a full Charity Week. This school is taking part in a scheme to adopt children in the Third World.

46. Students participate in musical activities such as the school band and choral groups; they visit theatres and art galleries at home and abroad; some have taken part in work experience in France; others have established a link with a school in the Ukraine. Many students achieve high standards in sporting activities. During the week of the inspection, students presented a programme of music, song, literature and dance to celebrate 2001 as the European Year of Languages. Around 20 students are involved in teaching ICT skills to pupils from a local referral unit.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

47. Assessment of the students' achievement and monitoring of their progress is very effective. At the beginning of Year 12, students spend a full day with their tutor to ensure that, on the basis of their GCSE results, they follow courses which accurately match their abilities. In addition, teachers and students meet to evaluate their progress in individual subjects and to discuss the setting of appropriate targets. Discussions between students and teachers are recorded on the students' record cards, which show that there is frequent discussion of students' work, and include details of their attainment and targets.

48. Formal subject reports are very detailed, incorporating comment on attainment, commitment, and advice on how to seek improvement. Current performance is assessed and target grades are set for A-level. Each term, students complete checklists to show how they are meeting deadlines for activities outside subject work, for example, the completion of their action plans and applications for higher education places.

Students with English as an additional language

49. Only two students have English as an additional language and, although their competence in English is sufficient to enable them to access the curriculum, they are given weekly tuition in English by a sixth form tutor who is also a teacher of modern languages. They are making good progress.

Gifted and talented students

50. The school has a policy for gifted and talented students. Such students are identified by subject teachers, who provide enhancement activities to stretch them, for example, involvement in public speaking, in science quizzes and attendance at university lectures. Talented games players excel in local and national competitions. Significant numbers of pupils from Year 9 onwards are involved in extension activities in science and technology which lead to national awards.

Students with special educational needs

51. The students with special educational needs make good progress and are well cared for. Three students have formal statements of need and are given appropriate help by trained assistants and support workers, and effective individual support by subject and form teachers. The students with special needs succeed in their examinations, sometimes achieving high grades.

Advice, support and guidance

52. The school's arrangements for the care, welfare, academic and personal support and guidance of its students are good overall. Procedures for health and safety are in place and are well managed. Pastoral care is very strong and based on constructive and mutually respectful relationships between adults and students. Standards are similar to those found at the previous inspection. Parents are very pleased with the standard of care.

53. The school provides very good information, advice and guidance about subject choices, life in the sixth form, course options and possible career paths. Students receive very good support to enable them to make informed choices about their future. Students visit institutions of higher education and receive effective guidance and help with their applications for university places. A careers office is open throughout the day so that students may undertake private research or seek help from the careers teacher. Students have benefited, too, from a conference with local employers on what particular qualities commerce and industry are looking for in their future employees.

54. The school's policy for equality of opportunity promotes open access to the sixth form. The school does not stringently apply minimum GCSE pass criteria for enrolment in sixth form courses and in a few cases this leads to some students' potential not being suitably matched to their selected courses. This sometimes results in loss of interest in the subject or failure to pass examinations.

55. Students meet with their tutors on a very regular basis and can confidently discuss with them their academic and personal circumstances and receive appropriate help and guidance from tutors when they encounter difficulties. Through their regular contact with tutors, the commentaries on their coursework and the procedures for formal academic review each term, students know very well how their work matches expected standards and the progress they are making towards their targeted examination results.

56. An induction programme provides students joining the sixth form with training in study management and skills which is very helpful to them. However, it is not subsequently reinforced often enough in lessons.

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

57. The school continues to enjoy an effective partnership with its parents. Parents have positive views of the school and, amongst other things, are pleased with the way it expects students to work hard and do their best and helps them to become mature and responsible.

58. Some parents say they are not well enough informed about progress, but the inspectors disagree. Information is available for them to see in the students' planners; teachers are approachable, and reports are satisfactory.

59. Students are pleased with the school's educational provision. Most students expressed positive views of the school in questionnaires completed in advance of the inspection although some dissatisfaction was also recorded. Overall, inspectors agree with the students' positive views about the quality of education provided, especially teaching, the care for them exercised by the school, and the effective help and guidance provided by form tutors. The students are encouraged to manage their own affairs and the school listens to their concerns, for example, as presented by the sixth form council. Students say that they know exactly where they stand with regard to the quality of work they are producing and how they are progressing towards their targeted examination results. Students value the opportunities provided for enrichment of the curriculum, mentioning, in particular, overseas travel and community service. The

inspectors agree with the students when they say that their common room and some study rooms are too small.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

60. The senior team provide very effective leadership for the sixth form, with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and raising standards. Each member of the senior leadership team is linked to one or more subjects and the pastoral system. Sixth-form subjects are well managed. The senior leadership team monitors the work of the sixth form rigorously and lessons are monitored regularly with a view to improving teaching and learning and raising standards. In most subjects, teaching and learning are monitored to good effect but this aspect needs improvement in physical education.

61. The school's development plan provides a good strategic framework for raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Subject faculties contribute to the whole-school plan through individual subject plans. The current principal priorities, which are appropriate and achievable, are to continue to raise standards, widen sixth form opportunities, and to improve spiritual development.

62. The governing body does its work well. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively in all respects and their work is particularly beneficial in financial management. Members of the senior leadership team act as professional advisers to governors and statutory requirements are met in full.

63. The school has improved well since the time of the previous inspection. Standards have risen in line with national trends and all points for action raised in the last report have been tackled with some success, although work still needs to be done to increase students' capacity for independent learning.

64. The school's finances are in good order and the budget is in balance. The senior staff and governors work hard to ensure that the school obtains best value and that money is well spent. The sixth form is cost-effective. Administration runs smoothly, contributing effectively to the overall efficiency of the school.

Resources

65. The staffing is adequate and teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach in the sixth form. The accommodation is adequate, overall, and it is clean and in good repair. The sixth-form common room is small for the numbers of students and private study facilities are limited. The facilities for outdoor physical education on-site are limited but the school exploits the natural environment effectively for outdoor pursuits and makes good use of sports facilities elsewhere.

66. The school's resources for the sixth form are adequate for all subjects. The school has spent considerable sums of money on new resources for information and communication technology and this money has been spent effectively. The success of the school's work in ICT is a double edged sword, however, as the sixth-form students, who have good skills in ICT, expect to have access to a computer when their needs arise. The school continues to update and extend its capacity but still does not have sufficient to satisfy all the demands now being made.

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

67. In the inspection, 13 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 the 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	6	83	63	-	17	1.0	1.6
Chemistry	2	100	47	50	6	3.0	0.9
Biology	1	-	53	-	6	-	1.0
Religious studies	3	33	76	-	19	0.3	2.0

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	31	92	89	41	43	5.6	6.0
Chemistry	16	94	89	44	42	6.5	5.9
Biology	23	91	88	61	34	7.0	5.3
Physics	21	95	88	57	41	6.8	5.7
Design and Technology	10	100	92	10	29	4.2	5.4
Business Studies V	13	N/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.5	11.0
Economics	4	75	88	-	36	2.5	5.1
Computer Studies	5	100	85	60	23	6.8	4.6
Physical Education	2	100	91	-	25	5.0	5.0
Health & Social Care V	11	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.7	11.0
Art & Design	6	100	96	50	45	6.7	6.4
Music	1	100	93	100	93	8.0	5.7
Geography	7	100	92	29	37	6.3	5.7
History	17	88	89	6	34	3.8	5.4
Sociology	1	100	54	-	12	1.0	1.3
Psychology	39	100	89	39	31	6.3	5.2
Religious Studies	1	100	91	-	35	2.0	5.6
English Language (1)	6	100	90	67	29	7.3	5.2
English Literature	17	100	96	41	36	6.7	5.9
English Language (2)	5	100	92	80	31	6.8	5.4
Communication Studies	20	90	93	35	30	5.5	5.4

French	4	100	91	75	39	9.0	5.7
Spanish	2	100	90	50	40	6.0	5.8

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business and Finance	2	100	-	0	-	0	-

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

68. The school provides courses in pure mathematics, applied mathematics and statistics, all of which together were inspected in detail.

69. The inspection focused on biology and chemistry but physics was also sampled. Results in physics in 2000 were well above average. They were also well above average in 1998 and above average in 1999, but in 2001 results were lower than in previous years. Two lessons were observed and the teaching was found to be good in each of them. In a Year 12 lesson, students made good progress in their understanding of elastic behaviour due to well focused teaching that dealt with the mathematical aspects of the topic with clarity.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Most students achieve well.
- The teachers' effective assessment of the students' work.
- Students have very good attitudes to study.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Independent learning is underdeveloped.
- Some Year 12 students' background of elementary pure mathematics is weak.

70. Mathematics is a popular subject and the retention rate for courses is high – few students 'drop out'. The results of the A-level examinations are average over a period of years and were average, overall, in 2000. Of the 31 candidates in 2000, many achieved grade A or B but five students failed the examination. In 2001, the results of a much weaker group of candidates were lower than those of the previous year and far fewer students achieved the highest grades. The AS results in 2001, were better than the A-level results. Of the total of 26 candidates for the examination, 12 achieved grades A and B. The results would have been very good but for the fact that four of the students failed to pass. This proportion is similar to the national one but a good proportion of those who fail the examination at The Deanery have not had a strong background at GCSE for study at advanced level; for example, some have not passed GCSE with grades A or B, and some did not study for the higher tier GCSE examination. In cases where students

were seen to be struggling with the work, their difficulties could often be predicted on the basis of their prior attainment at GCSE.

71. The standards of work of the current Year 12 students are average overall. Students tackle a wide range of work in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. The range of attainment is very wide, however. Some students are making rapid progress and reaching high standards but some are much slower, and this can be seen particularly in their work in elementary pure mathematics, noted in both lessons and in their written work. For example, when they were developing early ideas of differential calculus through gradient functions, although students understood the principles involved, weaknesses in GCSE algebra tended to get in the way, and the students told the inspector themselves that skills of manipulation in algebra caused them difficulties. In a probability and statistics lesson in connection with binomial expansion, it was surprising that none of the students could recall, from their pre-GCSE days, ever using Pascal's triangle to extract binomial coefficients. The students' work in statistics and classical mechanics is sound. Despite the weaknesses in their foundation work for pure mathematics, most students are making good progress and are achieving well because the teaching is consistently good and because they have good attitudes to their learning.

72. The standards of work of the Year 13 students are a little above average, overall, and this represents a good overall achievement for these students in relation to their attainment at GCSE. The students' work is equally well advanced in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics, and Year 13 students do not generally have the difficulties with pure mathematics seen in Year 12. A good proportion of the students are reaching high standards, in particular those taking further mathematics, as can be seen in their written work, for example, on matrices and determinants, complex numbers and de Moivre's theorem, and in integral calculus.

73. Students have very good attitudes towards their studies and positive views of the quality of teaching. They have a very clear picture of their own progress, especially the further mathematicians, and students are diligent in the completion of their homework assignments. The presentation of written work is exceptionally good. It is well organised, neatly written, helpfully annotated and is generally very useful for revision for examinations and further study.

74. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and it is often very good. The strengths of teaching are the teachers' subject expertise, their knowledge of the examination specifications of the courses, their good knowledge of the students individually, and their effective day-to-day assessment of the students' work and progress. Because the teachers know their students so well, they anticipate their difficulties so that they can all make progress in lessons and tackle the exercises set when working individually. The effective marking of written work ensures that students understand their difficulties and mistakes and can learn from them. The strengths of learning are the students' hard work, and their concentration on tasks set for them in lessons and in their homework assignments. They are well motivated and generally make good progress but many students tend to rely heavily on their teachers for information and approval. This is because the teachers tend to do too much for the students, do not set them self-study tasks often enough in which they can break new ground for themselves, and, in general, provide insufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning. The students could take more responsibility for some of the more straightforward topics, such as centres of mass, or the solution of differential equations. However, the most advanced students, especially those taking further mathematics, tackle new mathematical work very effectively in advance of lessons, for example, through reading textbooks and attempting exercises.

75. The subject is very well led and managed. The teachers are a cohesive and effective team of enthusiastic and able mathematicians and department meetings are focused upon the subject itself rather than administration. Teaching and learning are monitored at first hand, with a view to raising standards. Since the previous inspection, overall standards have been maintained.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Consistently good teaching.
- Very good assessment of students' work.
- Effective monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT.

76. Examination results in 2000 in A-level chemistry were above the national average. Results in 2001 improved both in terms of overall pass rate and higher grades. The candidates' average point score also increased. All students entered for the examination obtained at least a pass grade. Over the past three years, the results have continued to improve at a steady sustainable rate. In 2000, there was no significant difference in the performance of male and female candidates although in previous years, girls did better than boys. An analysis of examination results in terms of value-added scores in both 2000 and 2001 indicates that students obtained results that would have been expected from their GCSE results.

77. The Year 13 students' overall standards of work are average. The department is now attracting students with a much broader profile of attainment and as a result these average standards represent good achievement in relation to the students' starting points at the beginning of the course and their GCSE grades. In Year 13 standards are average in inorganic, organic and physical chemistry. For example, in physical chemistry they can calculate the pH of a solution from knowledge of the dissociation constant of water. Practical skills are improving as a result of good teaching of this area of chemistry combined with very good assessment that gives the students a clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses. In Year 12 standards of work are also average overall and represent good achievement. In inorganic chemistry they can relate the electro-negativity of an element to its ability to polarise bonds and so improve their understanding of bonding. They are rapidly improving their investigative work as a result of regular laboratory work.

78. Teaching and learning are good overall. Students are very conscientious and work at a good rate in lessons. This is an important contributory factor to their good progress in lessons. Both Year 13 and 12 students make good progress in their studies as a result of consistently good teaching. For example, Year 12 students made good progress in their ability to measure the enthalpy of chemical reactions accurately. Numerical skills were being well developed in this practical lesson. Instructions were precise and necessary analytical skills were improving well. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and explain key concepts well resulting in good learning in lessons. For example, the concept of equilibrium was well explained in a Year 13 lesson resulting in students being able to explain how factors such as heat and pressure would affect the position of equilibrium. Teachers are very committed to the progress of their students and give their help freely when it is needed so that learning is enhanced. Management of the practical situation is good. Safety hazards are pointed out to students. Planning ensures students can carry out experiments safely.

79. Marking of students' work is very good. It is accurate and gives them a very good picture of their progress in the subject. In particular, assessment of coursework is precise. The structure of the marking highlights their strengths and weaknesses and gives the students the opportunity to improve.

80. Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject. They are hardworking and conscientious and growing in maturity. They have established very good relationships with their teachers which improves their interest in the subject. They are appreciative of the considerable extra help and advice available from their teachers that improves their progress in chemistry.

81. Students are provided with notes and exercises that complement their studies. Where numeracy occurs it is well taught although non-mathematicians often struggle with the complexities of calculations in chemistry. Students sometimes use ICT in their lessons, for example, through web sites for revision. However, this is an area that could be improved, for example, by the use of ICT for data collection.

82. The subject is well managed and places an appropriate emphasis on the monitoring of teaching and learning to share good practice and raise standards. Schemes of work are well written and are appropriate to the capabilities of the students. Staff are very committed and work very well together as a team.

83. Since the previous inspection the department has made good improvement. In particular examination results have improved consistently. The teaching is better because monitoring of teaching and learning is more effective and is now a strength. The climate for learning is good. However, group sizes in Year 13 are small and the department needs to look for ways to ensure that more students progress through to Year 13.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Examination results are well above average.
- Resources are good.

Areas for improvement

- The students' independent learning skills.
- The use of ICT in lessons.

84. The GCSE A-level results in 2000 were well above average. Of the twenty three students who entered for the examination all except one achieved a pass and the proportion of students gaining the higher grades was above average. More girls than boys gained the A-B grades. In relation to their GCSE grades they achieved well. In 2001, 18 students entered the examination and all but one achieved a pass, and 10 achieved A or B grades.

85. Standards of the current students' work seen are above average. Year 13 students have a detailed knowledge of the subject; for example, they discuss Darwin's theory of evolution confidently and can explain why different varieties of the peppered moth inhabit different areas of Britain. Essays written on the roles of water, light and chlorophyll in the process of photosynthesis show a clear understanding of the topic. In Year 12 students are building on work from their GCSE course and show good knowledge and understanding of basic biological concepts such as the structure and function of the digestive system and, for example, draw comparisons between the functions of the ileum and the duodenum. In another lesson they correctly described the roles of various types of enzymes, such as proteases and amylases.

86. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. Teachers show good subject knowledge so that they can ask challenging questions and give clear explanations of facts. Lessons are well planned and have a brisk pace. Expectations of teachers are high and there is rigorous questioning of students during lessons to reinforce knowledge and understanding, with teachers ensuring that as many students as possible contribute to lessons. There is a good working relationship between teachers and students, so that students feel able to ask for help if they need it. A broad range of written work undertaken by students consists of notes, essays, past examination questions, tests, investigations and experimental write-ups. Marking is thorough and is annotated with helpful comments and constructive criticism where appropriate, giving clear guidance to students on areas for improvement. Regular assessment takes place through end of topic tests, homework and coursework and the results are shared with students so that they know how they are progressing and target grades can be negotiated. Owing to the organisation of the timetable, it was not possible to see any practical work during the inspection week.

87. Students learn well, are motivated and make good progress in lessons. They respond well to oral questioning, rising to challenges, and are keen to contribute to lessons as shown during class discussions. They work well together and share ideas in a mature and sensible way, showing respect for each other's views. Their written work is well presented with extended writing showing depth and clarity of thought and diagrams are clearly drawn and accurately labelled. Most of the teaching is teacher led and students have little opportunity to foster independent learning skills, although this is an area which the head of biology hopes to develop, along with more use of ICT in lessons.

88. The biology department is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear focus on standards and successful maintenance of the good examination results seen in recent years. There is a good team ethos within the department, which is well resourced and has good technical support.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

89. The focus was on design and technology which comprises three linked AS/A-level courses: Design and technology (Systems and Control); Design and Technology (Product Design - 3-Dimensions); Design and Technology: (Product Design - Textiles).

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and industrial experience.
- Effective use of ICT and computer-aided design.
- High standards of visual research in textiles.

Areas for Improvement

- Design skills are generally weaker than other skills.
- Pupils' ability to work independently.

90. The GCE A-level examination results in 2000 were below average but improved in 2001. All students who took the examination achieved a pass grade in both years. Students' results were slightly lower than would have been expected from their GCSE grades in 2000 but slightly higher than expected in 2001. Results in AS examinations in 2001 were high in three-dimensional product design, and satisfactory in textiles and in systems and control.

91. Overall, the standards of work of current students are average. In Year 13 students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their GCSE results. Students taking the systems and control course have good technical capability in electronics and make good use of modelling with components and computers to design and lay out printed circuits. However, they need to consider more the needs of potential users when designing their products, for example, by undertaking appropriate research. Students studying three-dimensional product design carry out initial research thoroughly and are starting to develop imaginative ideas. For example, they are making a container for keeping snails in a nursery school so that the snails are easily visible to the children. However they need to show more initiative in determining what further research is needed and the future direction of their work. A small group of three students studying textiles have carried out good visual research which is leading to some imaginative ideas for clothing. In each of these areas students are making good use of computers to analyse and present information. Standards of manufacture are good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good individual help from teachers.

92. Standards of work in Year 12 are improving in relation to previous years and students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their GCSE results. The students of textiles experiment well, both to learn about the properties of materials and to achieve interesting visual effects. As a result their standards of work are well above average. Students of three-dimensional product design are making good use of CAD/CAM in a batch production project. Those taking the systems and control course have a sound understanding of electronics. Overall Year 12 pupils are designing to a routine rather than selecting design methods to suit specific projects. They need to ensure that there is a direct relationship between research, ideas and the resulting design. Evaluations of their designs often lack focus because some students do not have a clear objective when they start their projects.

93. Teaching is satisfactory overall and pupils learn satisfactorily as a result. More than half of the lessons observed were well taught but overall the teaching does not give sufficient attention to developing pupils' ability to select appropriate ways of designing. All teachers have good knowledge of their specialist areas and make good use of their industrial experience to stimulate students' learning both within lessons and through arranging visits to and from nationally recognised companies. They have good relationships with the students and their thorough individual help ensures that all pupils make satisfactory progress. Short tests are used in some areas to reinforce learning and thorough marking ensures that students know what they need to do to improve.

94. Students enjoy design and technology. Most choose to study it because of positive experiences during GCSE courses. Most found the courses more interesting than they expected and this motivation enhances their learning. They appreciate the greater freedom to explore their own interests when designing.

95. The subject is well managed. There were no courses in the sixth form at the time of the previous inspection. There is now a good range of courses. Standards are improving steadily and should continue to do so because a new cross-faculty management structure has recently been put in place to encourage sharing the good practice which currently exists in separate areas. Common practice in assessment, and shared teaching where there are common elements between the examination specifications, are also being established to raise overall standards.

BUSINESS

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good.
- Resources, particularly ICT, are very good.
- The students' performance is well monitored.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of some of the students' written work could be improved further.

96. Results in the GNVQ Advanced in 2000 were above average and were similar in 2001. In Year 12 in 2001, students took the new AVCE units, in which results were satisfactory but some students are taking these units again to improve their grades.

97. In the current Year 13, standards seen are above average. The students are making good progress and are achieving well. Their work reveals a good understanding of business concepts and the use of appropriate vocabulary. They enjoy working independently and apply good research methods, using ICT in their work. They can design questionnaires, target suitable retail outlets, interview managers and customers, and can analyse their results. They can then produce good reports, which include graphs, statistics and illustrations, some scanned in from the internet. A few students require more help with writing skills. Students' work benefits from immediate access to computers, and by the very good specialist knowledge of their teachers, who have established very good links with local companies through the Education Business Partnership.

98. Students in Year 12 are making good progress. They enjoy working in groups and respond very well to opportunities to produce joint projects. They are rapidly improving their skills in the use of ICT and in their skills of oral presentation. One Year 12 class prepared good materials using scanners, colour graphics and illustrations from the internet, to use presentation software on the active projection screen. All students show rapid growth in confidence and maturity from these student-centred approaches and express their enjoyment of them when interviewed.

99. Teaching and learning are good, and often very good. Teachers challenge students to develop higher levels of skill. Teachers plan work very well and use up to date vocational materials drawn from local businesses to ensure that students develop a good understanding. In one Year 12 class, the teacher's method was successful as many examples of products sold locally were used to illustrate how advertisers target specific groups. The students were then required, using ICT and drawings, to plan a campaign for a new product, designed by themselves. This method was very effective in stimulating more effort as the students were actively involved and saw the relevance of the task. Teachers show good understanding of the new assessment specifications and are able to give students a clear idea of the criteria for improving their grades. Teachers have undertaken good preparation on the exact requirements of the new curriculum to ensure that students are well prepared for all the external tests.

100. Students reveal very good attitudes to the subject. Few leave the courses and they are positive when interviewed about their choices. They also say they greatly value their teachers, as accessible and supportive, giving clear guidance on assessment. Many intend to make their career in business, either in higher education or go directly into employment.

101. The courses make a very good contribution to the development of the students' key skills. Most take a formal accreditation in Year 12 in ICT, numeracy and communication, an opportunity welcomed by the students when interviewed. Their folders show good written work and many examples of the use of statistics, calculations and graphs. Their frequent oral presentations, using the active board and presentation software, are assessed by both teachers and their peers. Business studies also makes a good

contribution to their awareness of social and moral issues, such as the ethics of advertising and the activities of global businesses.

102. Management of the subject is very good. The subject has made a good improvement since the previous inspection. The monitoring of teaching and learning is now in place and all staff are following well-planned activities in the use of ICT and the new curriculum. In recent years, improvements have taken place in the range of provision of resources and ICT and in staff secondments for business updating. Local business links have improved and Young Enterprise is flourishing. The development plan has set realistic targets to raise standards still further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103. The focus was on computing, but a networking course was also sampled. 18 students take the computing vocational course in Years 12 and 13 and eight students in Year 14. Standards are high and pupils from different backgrounds are achieving well. Teaching in the lesson observed was good. Students learn well because the teacher's thorough knowledge is used to support pupils individually and the learning resources are good.

Computing

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Teachers and students are enthusiastic.
- Standards of technical understanding are high.

Areas for improvement

- Analysis of problems and systems.

104. The A-level examination results in Computer Studies 2000 were well above average and were higher than would have been expected from the students' GCSE results. A-level results in 2001 were below average but students did as well as predicted by their GCSE grades. Results in AS examinations in Computing in 2001 were very good and students mostly did better than in their other subjects. Most students attained higher grades than would have been expected from their average GCSE grades.

105. The standards of work of current students are above average. Year 13 students are achieving well in relation to their average GCSE grades. Their standards of programming are high because the teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and the students enjoy the intellectual challenge. Most are able to sort out programming problems systematically and independently. However, many do not explain the development of their programs thoroughly even though the programs themselves are effective. Because they enjoy programming, some students are inclined to involve themselves in technicalities before fully analysing the requirements imposed by a problem.

106. Students in Year 12 are achieving well. Their programming abilities are developing well and are above average because the teacher guides them through the syntax of programming systematically. In short tests, students answer technical questions better than those about general aspects systems such as the distinction between data and information and aspects of security. Students' project work is mostly developing well but some students need to analyse problems more thoroughly.

107. Teaching is consistently good and consequently pupils learn well. All the teachers have a very good technical knowledge of computing and as a result students have confidence in them. This shows particularly in mature individual discussions during which teachers and students work together to resolve programming difficulties. Teachers are enthusiastic and this is transferred to the students who consequently are committed to their own learning. Teachers use questions skilfully to guide students' reasoning and hence they learn to reason effectively. Teachers mark students' work accurately and give them clear guidance for improvement. However teachers need to plan the development of students' ability to analyse problems and systems more effectively.

108. The students enjoy computing and consequently work hard and learn well. Most spend a lot of time developing their work outside lessons and all communicate regularly with teachers by email about their work. They work well at resolving programming problems and their ability to learn independently is very good. Many students choose the subject because they have a technical interest in computing but some others who are taking it as a supporting subject with arts or social sciences find the course quite difficult.

109. The subject is well managed. From very small numbers at the time of the previous inspection, the subject has built a significant place in the sixth-form curriculum.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Year 12 students make good progress.
- Good teaching in the AS-level course.
- Increasing popularity of the subject as an examination subject choice.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Links between theory and practical work could be stronger.

110. The school first entered candidates for the GCE A-level course in physical education in 1998. Since then, the number of students choosing the subject have fluctuated year on year. In 1998 and 2000, numbers were very small which makes comparisons with national figures unreliable. Up to 2000, students tended to achieve broadly average results, including the full range of A-level grades. However, in 2001, although national data are not yet available for comparison, the proportion of students achieving A and B grades at A-level was low and many students failed to obtain at least a pass grade. Results in the new AS-level examination were similar. The continuity of learning for these students was adversely affected by the prolonged absence of two teachers but this is no longer the case. None of the students had studied the subject at GCSE level, and this proved to be a disadvantage. This is no longer the case because the school now provides a GCSE course.

111. The standards of work of the current Year 13 students are below average. Their descriptions of their work in practical lessons sometimes go into great detail but most students do not make sufficient links between practical and theoretical work. Knowledge and understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in their chosen sports are sound and they can suggest strategies for improvement. These, however, are seldom linked effectively to the physiological and psychological processes which are involved. Their investigations are often carefully recorded and their analysis of results is generally sound. Most make use of the Internet to find information but lower attainers tend to lack discrimination in deciding

what is strictly relevant to their investigations. Nevertheless, in relation to their starting points in the sixth form, students' achievements are satisfactory.

112. Year 12 students make good progress and reach average standards despite their lack of experience of studying theoretical aspects of the subject at GCSE level. They achieve well because of good teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning.. This was evident in work seen in the study of the anatomy of joints, where good teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning had rapidly provided a foundation of knowledge and understanding which enabled them to cope with the demands of more advanced work. Students are adept at taking notes in lessons and contribute well to discussion. Some have the confidence to question their teachers and they are beginning to relate their theoretical learning, for example, of the range of movement expected from different joints, to the physical demands of their own chosen activities. In both years, the standards reached by girls tend to be higher than those of the boys.

113. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the past, during the period of teachers' absence, some of the students' work, including homework, was either unmarked, or marked poorly; for example, weaknesses in the students' work were not always identified, and teachers' comments did not help students to improve their work. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching was good or better. A strong feature of the teaching was the security and depth of the teachers' subject knowledge. For, example, in a good Year 13 lesson dealing with aerobic training methods, the teacher adapted the planned lesson in response to the perceptive questions of one of the students, capitalised on the interest which had been raised, and made the students think hard to find out the answer for themselves. Resources are exploited effectively to stimulate interest and illustrate theory.

114. After some initial fluctuation in numbers, advanced level courses in physical education are proving to be popular with students and the retention rate is good. Students generally have positive attitudes to learning but a minority of Year 13 students do not contribute enough to discussion and are reluctant to use their knowledge to improve their training in their own chosen activities. However, most students talk with reasonable confidence about their work and a number use their experiences on the course to help make decisions about future academic or career choices. Students, particularly Year 12, make good use of ICT for research and to analyse the results of their investigations.

115. The subject is well led and managed and is improving well. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be improved; for example, to link practical work more firmly to theory lessons. Examination results are analysed to show the students' strengths and weaknesses in different aspects and this results in curricular change. Good opportunities are provided for students to use their developing knowledge and skills to help younger pupils in the school as well as working with pupils from local primary schools, for example, by helping to run an indoor athletics competition. These experiences also contribute well to the students' personal development. Around half of the total number of A-level students hold representative honours in team or individual sports at school, area or national level which contributes well to the development of confidence and skills in their chosen activities.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall, the quality of provision for Health and Social Care is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students have good independent learning skills.
- Resources are good.

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT in lessons.

116. The results for advanced health and social care were below average in 2000, although most students who completed the course achieved a pass with either a merit or distinction. In 2001, both students who had completed the course gained a distinction.

117. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and students in both Years 12 and 13 are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. Students in Year 12 studying a unit involving ethical issues worked in groups to discuss whether or not conjoined twins should be separated and then presented their findings to the rest of the class. They handled the delicate topic in a mature and sensible way, exploring the points for and against separation. During the whole class discussion they listened attentively to each other's views showing respect for others' opinions. They put forward their ideas in a clear and concise manner. Year 13 students describe the role of various specialised organs in the body, for example, the function of bile in digestion. They work hard to learn complicated terminology. In one lesson, Year 13 students gave individual presentations to the rest of the class on various aspects of health and hygiene in the food industry, using an overhead projector and producing information leaflets for everyone present.

118. Teaching is good, enabling the students to learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well aware of the course requirements, so they are able to help and advise students on their coursework assignments. They encourage them to undertake personal research and make use of local facilities. Strong links with the local library and also with local primary schools help the students with their unit of work on services for young children. Many students take part in care-related work experience. They are encouraged to help each other and share ideas. Teachers encourage class discussions and take care to ensure that all students become involved and contribute to lessons. The productive working relationship ensures that students express their own ideas freely.

119. Marking is thorough and adheres strictly to the criteria laid down by the examination board for the internal assessment procedures. Each student is provided with an assessment feedback sheet for each unit of work which clearly details areas for improvement. The nature of the course means that most of the students' written work consists of their research assignments. These are well presented and those awarded the higher grades show greater clarity and depth of thought. Mathematical skills are appropriate; for example, graphs of pulse rates in the physiological measurements unit, and pie charts drawn as a result of questionnaires for members of the public, were well produced.

120. Students learn well and are very motivated. They are responsive in lessons and interested in the wide variety of topics covered. Most of them want to follow a career in the health or care services and appreciate the relevance of the work they cover in the course. They take pride in their written work, as shown by their coursework assignments, which show exploration of a wide variety of avenues in the students' effective independent research. Students collaborate effectively, help one another and share ideas in a mature and sensible way.

121. The department is well led and managed and concentrates on raising standards. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The teachers meet regularly to discuss their work and exchange ideas. The accommodation and resources are good with a well-stocked departmental library. There is little use of ICT in lessons and this is an area for development.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

122. In this curriculum area the school provides courses to AS and A-level in art and design, and in media studies. The media studies course was a focus of the sixth-form inspection. The art and design course was also sampled: a lesson for Year 12 and Year 13 students was seen in which the teaching was good

and the students were making good progress. The examination results in 2000 and 2001 for art and design have been broadly average and all students passed the examination in 2001.

Media studies

Overall, the quality of provision in Media Studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well and examination results are above average.
- Teaching is good.
- Students enjoy the subject and have very good attitudes to their work.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Some students make insufficient contribution to discussions.

123. A-level examination results in 2000 were above average. All students who took the examination passed, the majority gaining grades B and C. However, there were no candidates who achieved grade A. Results in 2001 showed an improvement in the number of higher grades, with five students gaining grade A. Girls did better than boys in both years, but students generally tend to do better in media studies than in their other subjects. Students coming into the sixth form have usually followed a media studies course at GCSE and so they have a firm foundation on which to build.

124. The standards of work of current students are also above average. In Year 13 students are achieving well in relation to their predicted grades. Media studies is a well established subject in the sixth form so teachers have a very clear understanding of examination requirements. During the week of the inspection, students were preparing for the January module of their examinations and in the lessons seen they were making good progress in getting to grips with essay questions on various aspects of publicity. Lessons focused on the quality of response and the techniques of writing, and students' good achievement was a direct result of what they had learned over a period of time. In one lesson, students were making very good progress in revising more effectively because of the teacher's emphasis on the selecting, condensing and clarifying of knowledge, and on the need to memorise key statistics. Higher attainers had retained essential facts securely and were able to produce information concisely when required. Most students quoted reference documents accurately, and were successful in relating the presentational style of different advertisements to the various target audiences. In another lesson, students used an internet study guide efficiently to highlight and exemplify key points on the methods of film distribution. They showed a good grasp of technical terms. For example, a student described a 'teaser campaign' as something which 'whets your appetite for the film'. Standards of written work are above average. Essays are well structured and ideas are expressed coherently. Coursework for AS level contained several examples of good independent research and confident use of information and communication technology. The original writing of some higher attainers is very persuasive and assured, and teachers make effective use of students' work when giving examples of good writing styles.

125. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course but they are achieving well. In the two lessons seen they were preparing for a practical test on analysis of television advertisements and music videos. The tasks were demanding and students had to absorb and evaluate a great deal of information in a very short time. However, most students responded well to these challenges because they had been given a precise explanation of what was required. In the lesson which focused on television advertisements, the teacher's clear distinction between description and analysis was effective in enabling students to clarify their observations. For example, there were two excellent responses which dealt very

crisply and cogently with the essential points. The ensuing discussion showed that most students had understood the key promotional objectives of the two advertisements.

126. Teaching is consistently good and consequently students learn well. They respond very positively to teachers' professional approach and enthusiasm for the subject. The strengths of the teaching are a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, clear objectives and good planning, and very good relationships within the classroom.

127. In a Year 12 lesson the teacher showed a very clear understanding of the intertextuality and symbolism inherent in music videos, and by offering her own initial observations as a guide, she gave students the confidence to put forward their individual ideas. However, in some lessons a minority of students are passive listeners because they are not challenged through direct questioning to take an active part in discussions. Marking of students' work is regular and helpful. Students are well aware of the standards expected of them and of the ways in which they can improve their work. They are given positive encouragement to work independently and as a result are adept at note-taking and retrieving information from reference books and the internet.

128. The subject is well led and managed and has made a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers provide innovative opportunities for students to produce media assignments in combination with their work in music or art. Practical resources are good and students in Year 13 benefit both educationally and socially from the annual schools' visit to Paris Disneyland during which they attend lectures given by media professionals and collect information for project work.

HUMANITIES

129. Within this curriculum area the school currently provides courses in geography, history and psychology. The inspection focused upon geography and psychology, and these subjects are reported in depth, but history was also sampled. In history, the examination results in 2000 were well below average but they improved in 2001. Two good lessons on political history were observed. In one lesson, the very good subject knowledge of the teacher and an example of a balanced argument enabled the students to assess the effectiveness of the Treaty of Versailles. In the other good resource materials were used to broaden the students' knowledge and understanding of appeasement.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Results are improving and are above average.
- Standards are above average and the students achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Effective use of resources, particularly ICT, to support learning.
- The range and high quality of fieldwork.

Areas for improvement

- Allow more scope for students' to practise their good independent learning skills in their assignments.

130. The A-level examination results have improved steadily since the previous inspection and were above average in 2000. This year, the results are similar but there has been a further increase in the

proportion of students gaining the higher A and B grades. In the last two years, all students on the course were entered for the examination and all passed. During the same time, value-added analyses indicate that most students achieved the results expected of them in relation to their earlier attainment at GCSE. At AS level five out of 30 students failed to pass though most of these will re-take the examination. A third of the others obtained A and B grades. The course completion rates have been high.

131. The observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work show that standards in Year 13 are above average. In relation to their performance at GCSE these standards represent good achievement. In work on tectonic activity higher attaining students describe and explain its relationship to faulting, fold mountains, earthquakes and volcanoes at different plate margins. Lower attaining students have difficulty in applying their knowledge, for example, in explaining how their graphs of the water balance in savanna regions will change at the margins of rainforests and deserts.

132. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into the AS course and standards are already above average. They have settled quickly to the demands of advanced level work and they are achieving well considering their average standards at GCSE. They have a detailed knowledge of the hydrological cycle, river basin systems and hydrographs. In practical work, most students accurately calculate features of the shape, size and drainage of two adjacent river basins. Higher attaining students use this data to explain the difference between the resulting hydrographs following a period of rainfall. The work of lower attaining students contains errors; it is too descriptive, and explanations lack detail.

133. Overall, the teaching is good and consequently the students learn well. During the inspection, teaching was consistently good and very good in half of the lessons observed. Teachers use very good resources, particularly ICT, to teach and support students' learning. In a lesson on the pattern of burglary in the local area the teacher made very good use of the inter-active whiteboard to enrich learning with maps and aerial photographs. Teachers plan learning sequentially and their expert explanations enable the students to acquire knowledge effectively as, for example, in a lesson on soil texture. Students learn skills effectively alongside the theory; for example, in a very good lesson on inner city decline, students analysed data and illustrated their results practically, on a choropleth map, to show the deprived wards of Coventry. Very good class management and relationships ensure that the students' learning is consistently good. Marking is accurate and informs students how to improve their work. Two thirds of the lessons take place in the sixth form unit in non-specialist rooms. Teachers strive to sustain good quality teaching in these small rooms that inhibit the use of their learning resources and teaching methods.

134. Students are interested and talk enthusiastically about their work in geography. In a wide range of fieldwork of very high quality they research independently, collecting, presenting and analysing data. An excellent feature of most investigations is an appreciation of the limitations of the results and how the research could be extended to secure the conclusions. Geography makes a very good contribution to the development of students' key skills through fieldwork and presentations. However, there is scope for more independent learning assignments.

135. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Standards and results have improved steadily over recent years. The new courses have been planned in detail and the quality of teaching is monitored. Students have a minimum target grade and their progress is monitored rigorously. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Good standards.

- The teaching is very good.
- The effective subject management monitors standards and provision rigorously.
- Effective individual counselling to students.

Areas for improvement

- The boys' independent learning skills.

136. The numbers studying psychology are considerable. Results in A-level examinations are above average overall. The pass rate is high but the proportions of students achieving the top A and B grades are below average.

137. Standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are above average. Students collect, present and interpret experimental and empirical data and develop an appreciation of the scientific nature of psychology. These standards are achieved because the teaching is very good. Students' attitudes are good. Gifted and talented students are sufficiently challenged in lessons. Teachers translate students' targets into curriculum targets which also cause the quality of their learning in psychology to be good. As a result, students' achievement overall is good in relation to their attainment when they began their course.

138. Standards in Year 12 are above average. Students are able to analyse behaviour and to quote standard research findings. Students are familiar with the research work of Hatcher, Gross, Hayes and Zimbardo. Students learn to think critically and analytically; for example, in their work on the famous Rosenhan 'Schizophrenia' study of 1973 and the Marsh, Rosser and Harre study on the behaviour of football fans of 1978. Key skills are well taught to help students improve their own learning and performance. Students speak, listen and write well and the key skill of mathematical analysis is used effectively to interpret information using calculations and presenting findings or using measurements for graphs and diagrams to explain the results of psychology research. Electronic sources are used to explore, develop and present information including text, numbers and images, and in preparing projects, charts and reports.

139. Standards in Year 13 are also above average. The verbal, pictorial and numerical presentation of psychological material is very clear. Students are familiar with the relationship between theory and method in psychology. Students show a good understanding of social cognition and the ways in which people attempt to make sense of their social world. They design high quality investigations to test hypotheses. Discussions are animated and students listen attentively to others and respond appropriately. Students are industrious, make good progress in lessons, and are aware that psychology is a reasoned and scientific study of human behaviour. Students are not afraid to use the experimental method, making statements about amounts or quantities. The more able students clearly demonstrate their understanding of scientific enquiry. Girls are more precise in their communication; for example, when assigning numbers to variables.

140. Most students read purposefully and beyond the notes supplied by teachers. Enquiry skills are good and students respond to tasks that allow them to develop their own ideas and consolidate their existing understanding of evidence. Students learning critically to evaluate and to make a systematic analysis of evidence.

141. Students' written work is above average overall although girls write better than do the boys. Most students present explanations, ideas and arguments in a coherent and logical form. The quality of reasoning and writing improves and standard of spoken responses, important in psychology, is good. Clear arguments are presented when students question the ideas discovered in research papers.

142. Students are encouraged to become independent learners seeking guidance on those psychological concepts which they find difficult; the boys are, however, less independent in their learning than girls.

143. The teaching and learning are good. Activities at regular intervals encourage learning. Lessons are designed to provide a clear explanation of psychology and how theory is related to practice. Students enter into that debate and express their own views. Teachers explain the issues clearly so that the work is easy to understand without lowering the quality of the content. Lessons are well presented and clearly and concisely expressed with sufficient detail. Teachers offer a clear view of what may be considered psychologically significant. Students' notes show value added in terms of knowledge, interpretation and commentary, research skills and the quality of language. Teachers have a wide-ranging and thorough knowledge of psychology which is shown through an awareness of appropriate evidence, theories and concepts. Each lesson has aims which are clearly stated and a set of appropriate strategies to meet them. Teachers communicate effectively, matching style to the varying levels of ability in the class. Students understand that the subject matter of psychology is not static. The discipline is dynamic and, as new topics are learned, students find new means to investigate them. Teachers provide clear explanations of the most commonly used terms in psychology and, by demystifying the terminology, the teachers explain beliefs about the mind and behaviour and expose the popular misunderstandings and misconceptions. Good definition of the Oedipus complex, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sensitivity training raised students' awareness of the complexity of the subject.

144. The subject is well managed and good progress has been made since the last inspection. Resources are better and ICT is used more effectively than before to gather information. The quality of marking and feedback to students about their progress is very good. The examination performance is good and improving. The quality of accommodation is, unsatisfactory: it is too small and is poorly furnished.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

145. In this curriculum area, the school provides AS and A-level courses in Spanish and French. Around 90 students are taking courses in English language, English Literature, and English Language and Literature and in Communication Studies. GCSE English is available as a re-sit course for students wishing to improve their grades. The in-depth inspection of English included the full range of courses and Spanish was also inspected in depth. Two lessons in French were also seen. A-level results in French have shown a marked improvement in recent years and they were well above average in 2000. However, the number of entries each year has remained very low. Two French lessons were observed and teaching was good in both of them and students were making good progress.

English

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

Strengths

- A-level results are well above the national average.
- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- Teachers know their students well and provide very good support for their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Some students, especially boys, are passive learners in English language.

146. Retention rates are good in both English language and English literature. English language and literature suffered from an unusually sharp drop in students continuing into Year 13. Results of A-level examinations in 2000 were high, continuing the pattern established over the last three years. Results in the most recent A-level examinations were high in English Language and good in English language and

literature but results in English literature were lower than in previous years. The results achieved by Year 12 students taking GCSE are generally good and are above what would have been predicted.

147. Standards of the Year 12 and Year 13 students' work are well above average and in relation to their GCSE results; these standards represent a good overall achievement. The students are perceptive in their understanding of language structures and development and apply the concepts of linguistics to analyse written and spoken language. Higher attaining students in the A-level course are developing good control of editorial skills and are able to adapt text for different audiences while maintaining the essential elements of information and historical and social context. Their research is thorough and their extended writing is well organised and written with a good grasp of their chosen genre. Students on the AS course understand and are able to categorise nuances of language, recognising the different ways in which written and spoken language communicates with a particular audience. On the A-level English literature course, students showed a well-developed ability to interpret the use of language, for example, in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, to increase their understanding of the Duke's use of power and social position. Students studying AS English literature are developing perceptive, well-expressed analytical skills. Their analysis of the language, for example, as used by Anthony Powell in *Clockwork Orange*, showed a mature understanding of the power of language to manipulate the reader's reactions.

148. Students have good attitudes towards their work and their relationships with teachers and other students are very good.

149. The teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their subjects very well and are good role models of scholarship. Teaching is well planned and systematic, and students' interest and commitment are sustained by their enthusiasm. Expectations are high, and a careful system of assessment, which highlights students' strengths and weaknesses, supports their efforts to improve. The pace of lessons in English literature is lively and in the relaxed but energetic atmosphere there are ample opportunities for students to express opinions and explore ideas. Students learn to think quickly and to express themselves succinctly. The oral vocabulary of higher attaining students is impressively sophisticated. Students are regularly expected to lead discussion on sections of text they have researched, and their understanding is enhanced by probing questioning both from the class teacher and from other students. In information-driven lessons in English language students tend to depend too much on the teacher, and are not actively involved in the lesson, boys in particular.

150. Students on both AS and A-level courses learn effectively. They concentrate well, following and applying guidelines carefully. Students of English language delight in the challenge of following the development of the word stock of the language, relating this to its origins in the ancient languages of Greek and Latin and to changes which were the results of foreign invasions before medieval times. They become well informed about the range of historical and social influences affecting language development. Boys and girls produce work of equally high standard, although boys are less fluent when expressing their opinions orally. Students following the combined language and literature course produce lively and imaginative work. Students on the GCSE course concentrate well and work systematically.

151. Students' work is carefully marked. Almost all work is returned with a written critique which evaluates the student's ideas and provides advice for developing and refining personal style. Outside lessons students are well supported. Students have targets, based on their GCSE results. Students' progress towards the targets is reviewed in regular personal reviews and students appreciate the willingness of staff to make time to discuss their work. Enrichment is provided by regular trips to local theatres and to productions of Shakespeare in Stratford.

152. At the time of the inspection the department was without a head but the subject was well managed by the senior English teachers, effectively overseen by the school's leadership team. Since the previous inspection, high standards have been maintained. The introduction of a teaching and learning programme has led to critical appraisal of teaching strategies. Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory

because the rooms are too small for most groups. The provision of equipment such as video players is satisfactory but some textbooks are heavily annotated by previous students and need replacing. The library is well stocked with an extensive range of fiction and students have ready access to the Internet.

Spanish

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

Strengths

- The teaching is good.
- Students develop their comprehension skills well.
- Improving subject leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Some students' work contains errors revealing an insecure grasp of grammar.

153. A-level examination results in 2000 improved slightly over those of the previous two years. Over the three-year period 1998-2000, all students passed the examination though there were very few of them, and very few students achieved grades A and B. In 2001, the small number of students entered did less well than expected and there were no passes.

154. Although there are very few students, the overall standards of work of the present Year 13 are broadly average. In relation to their GCSE results, students are generally achieving well because of their very good attitudes and attendance and good teaching. However, students in Year 13 lost some ground last term owing to staffing changes.

155. Year 13 students understand tapes and texts on a range of topics from which they can pick out details and recognise different points of view. They identify grammatical structures and can sometimes justify, for example, why the subjunctive mood is used. When they answer questions on the text or translate a short paragraph based on it into Spanish, the less capable students sometimes copy from the text without full comprehension. When translating extracts into English, the students' English style is often weak though most students generally convey the meaning. In their speaking, the more able students read aloud fluently with good pronunciation, although they rely on written support when giving a prepared presentation. All students can answer factual questions on texts and most can express personal views but only the more able attempt to go on and develop answers more fully. Whilst the most able show some ability to use more complex constructions in their writing, the quality of some students' written work is marred by weaknesses in grammatical structures.

156. Year 12 students are successfully building on their GCSE work and the work they have completed since September shows progress in dealing with more complex language. They are beginning to show a sound understanding of tapes and texts on cultural and social issues and have already learnt a considerable quantity of topic-related vocabulary. In speaking and writing they respond to questions on the texts with growing confidence, although again some students' grammatical accuracy, particularly verb and tense use, is quite weak.

157. The teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers have a very good command of the subject and they speak Spanish fluently. Because students are accustomed to hearing Spanish spoken consistently in lessons, they develop their listening skills particularly well and they become more confident orally. Although the department is short of resources, teachers work hard together, often using the Internet, to provide students with stimulating materials and challenging tasks. The Spanish assistant is also used most effectively as a valuable resource alongside the teacher. For example, the

assistant's role and the sequence of activities were carefully planned in a Year 12 lesson on bullfighting. As a brief recapitulation of the previous lesson, each student gave a short oral presentation to express their views on bullfighting. Students then benefited from hearing the native speaker's views and those of her family on the subject. This was followed by work in two groups involving reading comprehension and vocabulary building exercises. Because of the extra support provided in each group, students were able to work through a demanding text and to learn vocabulary quickly. By the end of the lesson, the students had not only improved their language skills but had also broadened their ideas about bullfighting and increased their cultural awareness.

158. Students' very good attitudes contribute significantly to their good achievement. They show interest in the subject, they are well motivated and they work hard. They make good use of their study time to attend conversation classes with the Spanish assistant or work on a joint task with a fellow student. They use the Internet to research, for example, a cultural aspect. During the week of the inspection, the students took a very active part in the musical evening to celebrate 2001 as the European Year of Languages, through song, dance and poetry in Spanish.

158. The subject leadership is good. Management is improving strongly and has made the raising of standards the first priority, and plans are under way to introduce formal monitoring of teaching and learning. The issues identified at the previous inspection have now been tackled and improvement since the previous inspection in 1996 is satisfactory overall.