

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **KING EDWARD VI SCHOOL**

Stratford-upon-Avon

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125752

Headmaster: Mr T P Moore-Bridger

Reporting inspector: Mr Akram Khan OBE  
27296

Dates of inspection: 28 - 31 January 2002

Inspection number: 190584

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Church Street Stratford-upon-Avon Warwickshire
Postcode:	CV37 6HB
Telephone number:	01789 293351
Fax number:	01789 293564
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Professor J R Mulryne
Date of previous inspection:	4 November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
27296	Akram Khan	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
16472	Catherine Stormonth	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?
10905	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science Chemistry	Sixth form coordinator
15127	William Goodall	Team inspector	Art	
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Economics	
31850	David Nevens	Team inspector	Music	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Design and technology	Assessment
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English Drama	

1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	History English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
17404	Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French	How well are students taught?
21957	Richard Vaughton	Team inspector	Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd

Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

King Edward VI is a Voluntary Aided boys' selective grammar school, which is much smaller than most secondary schools, with 443 boys on roll, 113 of whom are in the sixth form. Known traditionally as Shakespeare's School, it celebrates the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-foundation of the school in 2003. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Nine pupils (2 per cent) speak English as an additional language. They are confident and fluent in all aspects of the English language. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is high. The percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs is well below the national average. Currently no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Over 90 per cent of Year 11 pupils continue into the sixth form with only a few pupils joining from other schools at that time. This was a full inspection, which included an in-depth evaluation of the sixth form.

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

This is a very good school with some outstanding features. The headmaster, well supported by the governing body, senior management team and the local education authority (LEA), provides very effective and purposeful leadership. Teaching is good in Years 7 - 11 and very good in the sixth form. The school enables its pupils to achieve high standards in National Curriculum tests, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Advanced level examinations. The gains in personal development are good. There is a positive ethos and the school has established an effective culture of review, self-evaluation and continuous improvement. It gives very good value for money.

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

- Attainment is very high in GCSE and A-level examinations, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Highly effective leadership sets a clear direction for the school to achieve high standards. The governors provide a wide range of expertise and work very well with the headmaster and staff.
- The learning environment is excellent. Pupils' attitudes and motivation are very good and contribute significantly to their very good learning.
- The school provides a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities; it makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is a high standard of care for pupils and provision for pastoral care is very good.

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

- Pupils' achievements in modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology.
- The planned provision to meet fully the statutory requirement for ICT and design and technology.

*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 addressed satisfactorily most issues identified in the November 1996 OFSTED report and improvement since then has been very good. A full Partnership Review, undertaken by LEA inspectors in 1998, helped staff to recognise that there were levels of underachievement in the school, related principally to what went on in the classroom and to a failure to set high targets. Effective measures have been taken to raise standards and high standards have been sustained. There is a clear focus on raising the standards of attainment of all pupils based on improved systems for monitoring and target setting. However, not enough use is made of assessment to raise pupils' performance. Leadership is greatly improved. The governing body is fully engaged in ensuring high standards of education. Senior members of staff understand their roles and fulfil them enthusiastically. Teaching and learning have improved significantly and there has been a substantial improvement in academic standards. The school recognises the need to improve the use of ICT in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A*	A*	

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

*A\* indicates the results are in the top five percent of schools nationally.*

In 2001, results in English, mathematics and science in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, were very high in comparison with the national average. In comparison with grammar schools with similar socio-economic characteristics, boys' performance was well above the average in mathematics, in line with national average in science but below average in English. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A\*-C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was very high in comparison with the national average. Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations was very high in comparison with the national average and the average for similar schools, placing the school in the top five per cent in the country. In 2001, pupils performed very well in English, chemistry, economics, history, geography, mathematics, physics, and statistics. They performed relatively less well in ICT, design and technology, French, Spanish and German though, with the exception of ICT, their performance was well above the national average. In 2001, in comparison with the national average, students achieved very high standards in A-level biology, chemistry and general studies; well above average in economics, English literature, mathematics and physics; average in French and history and below average in geography. In comparison with other grammar schools King Edward VI School has been highly successful at both GCSE and A level.

Inspection evidence indicates that Year 9 pupils achieve high standards in mathematics and science; well above average standards in English, English literature, geography, history, Latin, music and religious education; above average in art, modern foreign languages and physical education; average in design and technology but below average standards in ICT. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress and reach high standards in mathematics and statistics; well above average in English, science, geography, history, Latin, music and science; above average in art, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education and below average in ICT. Their achievement is good throughout the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are very good. Motivation is high and it contributes to very good learning. Sixth form students show enthusiasm and interest in all aspects of school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is almost always very good and supports effective learning. Pupils are respectful and respond very well. Pupils are extremely polite and courteous.
Personal development and relationships	Most pupils take responsibility for their own learning. They have a very good understanding of the importance of citizenship. Relationships are very good at all levels.
Attendance	Attendance is well above the national average and supports pupils' progress. Unauthorised absence is very low. Punctuality is very good.

Most pupils are keen to do well and concentrate on tasks set. They respond well when given opportunities to show initiative, and show willingness to persevere with tasks they find demanding. When given the opportunity, they adapt easily to a more independent learning environment.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Teachers have good command of their subjects and help almost all pupils to understand new knowledge quickly. In mathematics and science, teachers' expectations are high and demanding teaching promotes critical thought and high standards. Teachers in English improve pupils' literacy skills despite these being generally high on entry. In drama, art, music, geography, physical education and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, most teachers adopt a variety of methods to consolidate pupils' understanding. Teachers' use of the interactive whiteboard enhances significantly teaching and learning in mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages. In Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form close attention to examination requirements concentrate both teachers' and pupils' minds in a very positive way. The strategies for the teaching of numeracy skills are very good and are applied consistently across most subjects. There are some examples of applications of ICT but, overall, the teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory. A strength of the teaching lies in meeting the different needs of pupils; extra demanding tasks are set for high attaining pupils, for example in mathematics, science, English, geography and history, and they benefit from a wide range of out of school learning opportunities. In a small number of lessons teaching does not promote the depth and richness of learning of which most pupils are capable.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities offered are good in Years 7-11 and sixth form courses are very well matched to students' aspirations. The statutory requirements in respect of ICT in Years 8-11 and design and technology in Years 7-9 are not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The 11 pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN) are well supported and make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Those pupils for whom English is an additional language enter the school with a good command of English; this is greatly enhanced as they progress through the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent and provision for spiritual and cultural development is very good. The PSHE programme contributes strongly to moral and social development. School assemblies provide excellent opportunities to reflect on matters of spiritual and moral value.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of pastoral support is very good. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and child protection are good.

The curriculum is successful in enabling all pupils to achieve high standards. English, mathematics, science, music and modern foreign languages plan enrichment and extension work to challenge gifted and talented pupils. More demands could be made of very high attainers in other subjects. The school has good systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headmaster and other key staff	Very good: The headmaster, ably supported by the senior management team, staff and governors provides a highly effective leadership. There is a sensitive respect for traditional values and a skilful pacing of change to embrace new initiatives. The leadership of the sixth form is very effective and provision is managed very efficiently. Most middle managers provide good leadership of their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: Governors show a strong commitment to the aims and values of the school. A high level of expertise and very good understanding of their strategic roles enable them to monitor and support effectively the departments assigned to them. Some statutory requirements are not met fully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The senior and middle managers, governors and LEA officers monitor and evaluate systematically in most subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good: Procedures to allocate funding according to planned priorities are good. The principles of best value are well applied. Efficient use is made of the school's existing staffing, accommodation and learning resources.

The senior management team and the school's governors have a good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses and have the required capacity to make further improvements. The school's financial management and the way it approaches 'best value' are very good. Valuable support is provided by non-teaching staff. Government grants have been managed efficiently though there is a need to evaluate more systematically the impact of these additional funds on pupils' attainment and achievement.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoy going to the school. Pupils work hard, are making good progress and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The information they receive about their children's progress and events in the school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Pupils' behaviour is good. They are helped to become mature, responsible and supportive of each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pupils being given the right amount of homework.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Closer partnership with the school.</li> </ul>

Parents' positive views are well supported by the inspection evidence. Arrangements for homework are generally good but there are some inconsistencies in practice. Pupils feel the homework set is usually manageable and appropriate. The tasks set could be more challenging, especially for high attaining pupils. For a small grammar school, a good range of extra-curricular activities is offered. Physical education, music and drama provide very good opportunities for pupils to display their talents and to raise the standard of their work. The school sees contact with parents to be of vital importance. The school development plan has identified as a priority to strengthen further relationships with parents. The school maintains a full system of parents' evenings to discuss pupils' progress, subject options, to introduce sixth form courses and university applications. The school website created in 2001 serves as a vehicle for reporting on events and also for contact between pupils, parents and members of staff. The Friends of King Edward VI School (FOKES) and King Edward VI Sports Tours (KESST) support the school enthusiastically and their valuable contributions are much appreciated.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this small 11-18 boys' grammar school has 113 students. By comparison with the size of the school, 443 boys, the sixth form is large. Over 90 per cent of students from Year 11 continue into the sixth form and a few students join them from other schools. A small proportion of students transfer to other schools where a wider range of Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced levels and vocational courses are available. The GCSE examination results are well above the national average so all students embark on two-year courses leading to four AS-levels in Year 12 followed by three A-levels in Year 13. The school does not offer any vocational courses.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful and overall, students learn effectively and achieve well. The sixth form caters well for its students through a wide range of academic courses, leading to GCE AS and A-levels, and provides a rich environment for personal development. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and it meets students' needs well. In 2001, AS-level and A-level results were very high compared with national averages. Leadership and management are very good and the school provides very good value for money.

### Strengths

- Students achieve well above average examination results overall and do particularly well in biology, chemistry, economics, English literature, mathematics, physics and general studies.
- Provision for general studies and critical thinking.
- Students receive very good guidance generally and particularly in their choice of careers.
- Students' have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.

### What could be improved

- Examination results in geography and modern foreign languages.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT).
- Facilities for art and for design and technology 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
Art and design	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards at AS-level examinations in 2001 were average compared with national averages. Teaching is good in accommodation which is unsatisfactory.
Chemistry	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results in 2001 at AS-level and A-level are very good and very high compared with the national averages for selective schools in chemistry. Results have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teaching is very good.
Design and technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> A-level results have improved steadily and, although AS-level results in 2001 were below average for selective schools, most students achieved results which were at least in line with expectations. Teaching is good and it supports students' development of their knowledge of materials and manufacturing skills.
Economics	<b>Very good.</b> Standards at AS-level and A-level are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Overall there has been significant

	improvement since the last inspection.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
English	<b>Very good.</b> Results in examinations at AS-level and A-level were well above average. Teaching and learning are very good.
French	<b>Good.</b> Although examination results in 2001 were in line with all selective schools, there is evidence of underachievement. Changes in management indicate that these issues are being addressed. Teaching in French is good.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Although examination results at A-level in 2001 were below average, AS-level results were very good. Good teaching and positive attitudes are leading to an overall improvement in standards.
History	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Recent results in examinations and standards in lessons are broadly average. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Pupils acquire a sound depth of knowledge but need to develop stronger analytical skills.
Mathematics	<b>Excellent.</b> Examination results in 2001 are, overall, well above the average for selective schools with AS-level being very high. Results have improved over time as a result of good teaching coupled with very responsive pupils. The commitment to high standards is well managed.
Religious education	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching, learning, leadership and management are all very good. These result in very high standards.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good quality support and guidance is provided in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is very good and students are well prepared for the requirements for AS-level and A-level courses. Students are well informed about other opportunities beyond school and about career options. Their progress is well monitored and they are provided with very good support.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management in the sixth form are <b>very good</b> . Development planning is very good. Students' performance is monitored thoroughly and appropriate steps are taken to identify and overcome weaknesses. The governors' academic committee plays a very effective role in leadership in the sixth form.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are taught well and challenged to do their best in most subjects.</li> <li>• Teachers provide help and support when it is needed.</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to study and do independent research.</li> <li>• The information about courses is clear and helpful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students feel that they are not treated as adults.</li> <li>• The school does not listen well enough to the views of students.</li> <li>• Some students feel that the school does not provide a good range of activities and enrichment courses.</li> <li>• Information about progress relative to the subjects studied is not good enough.</li> <li>• Some students feel that they cannot rely on</li> </ul>

	the school if they have personal problems.
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The number of students who responded to the questionnaire was small. Discussion between inspectors and a significant number of students, both formally and informally, indicates that students are very positive about the sixth form, the range of subjects offered and the support they receive. The strengths identified are justified but the concerns expressed by a minority of students are not. Although the teaching programme and the demands of examinations mean that free time during the school day is limited, there are many extra-curricular activities, which take place outside normal, school hours in which students can become involved. Whilst in Year 12 there is some direction in ensuring that students make the most of free time by studying in the library under the watchful eye of a teacher, relationships with teachers are based upon mutual respect and students in the sixth form are provided with many privileges. The sixth form committee provides a forum for debate with teachers and senior managers of the school who listen carefully to the views of students. Overall, their progress is well monitored by their teachers. Students have regular opportunities to discuss progress with tutors who also make considerable effort to provide help and support for those who may have personal problems.

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

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Overall attainment on entry is well above average. This is confirmed at the end of Year 6 by the standardised reading, cognitive ability and National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. Over the last three years, the best results achieved were in mathematics and the lowest scores were in science. In the 2001 entry, all boys attained standards that nationally boys are expected to reach; 91.9 per cent exceeded these standards in mathematics, 85.7 per cent in English and 80.6 in science. When Year 7 pupils are tested using MidYIS, all receive invariably a Grade A. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free meals is below the national average.
2. In 2001, by the end of Year 9 the attainment of boys in the National Curriculum tests was very high in comparison with the national average in English, mathematics and science. The percentage (100 per cent) of boys reaching level 5 in National Curriculum tests was high relative to the national average in English, mathematics and science. Similarly the percentage (100 per cent) of boys reaching level 6 or above was high relative to the national average. The 2001 results in the national tests indicate good progress in English and very good progress in mathematics and science by the end of Year 9. The results of high attaining pupils improved significantly in mathematics and science but dropped in English. The pupils' attainment in National Curriculum mathematics tests was exceptionally high. In comparison with grammar schools with similar socio-economic characteristics, pupils' performance was well above the average in mathematics, close to average in science but below average in English. Based on the figures available for the last four years, the overall trend in the school's average score for English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with the national trend.
3. There are no benchmark assessments at the age of 11 in other subjects and no available comparisons with other grammar schools nationally. The statutory teacher assessments in 2001 were well above average with nearly all pupils achieving nationally expected standards or better by the age of 14 years. These assessments were high in history and geography. The higher attaining pupils did particularly well in these subjects. The results indicate only 18 per cent of pupils attaining higher than expected levels and unsatisfactory progress made by 14 per cent of pupils in modern foreign languages.
4. In 2001, 100 per cent of boys gained five or more passes at the higher grades A\*-C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations; a very high proportion in comparison with the national average. Over the last three years, the proportion of boys gaining five or more passes at the higher grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations was very high in comparison with the national average and well above the average for similar grammar schools. These results expressed as an average points score per boy, 69.2, were very high when compared with all secondary schools; well above average in comparison with grammar schools and well above what might have been expected when comparisons are made with the boys' previous attainment in national tests at the age of 14 years. The improvement trend in the school's average points scores per pupil is broadly in line with the national trend. In 2001, pupils performed very well in English, chemistry, art and design, economics, history, geography, mathematics, physics and statistics. They performed relatively less well in information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, French, Spanish and German, though with the exception of ICT, their performance in all other subjects was well above the national average.
5. The proportion obtaining grades A\* and A in the GCSE examinations was close to the average for selective schools. Over the last four years the percentage of pupils gaining these highest grades has improved; 36 per cent in 1998 to 48 per cent in 2001. In 1999, the school achieved its best results, with 63 per cent gaining passes at the highest grades A\*/A. Nationally, approximately half of those in selective schools obtained grades A\*/A in all subjects except business studies. At this school, approximately three quarters did so in chemistry, physics and general studies; two-thirds in English, mathematics and geography and half in statistics, art and design, history, English literature and double award combined science. The proportion obtaining grades A\*/A was low in ICT, economics, design and technology and modern languages.

6. Standards in the work seen during the inspection were well above those expected nationally. Pupils' attainment was almost invariably above expectations, with high standards evident in many lessons and in much of the work scrutinised. Inspection evidence indicates that Year 9 pupils reach very high standards in mathematics and science; well above average in English, geography, history, Latin, music and religious education; above average in art and design, modern foreign languages and physical education; average in design and technology but below average in ICT. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress and reach very high standards in mathematics and statistics; well above average standards in English, science, geography, history, Latin, music and science; above average in art, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. They are below the nationally expected standards in ICT.
7. The gifted, talented and more able pupils are reaching high standards in most subjects. Pupils on the register of special needs make good progress because they are all well known to their teachers and receive appropriate individual help in most lessons. Their progress is constantly under review and twice-yearly formal review meetings take place, when they may be removed from the register if progress is good enough. In 2001 all students on the register in Year 11 passed all their GCSE subjects with grades in the A\* - C range. Pupils with English as an additional language are fluent in English and they achieve as well as their peers.
8. The school has taken positive steps to ensure that pupils use very good literacy skills in all aspects of their work; however, all departments do not have a policy to demonstrate how the Literacy Strategy is integrated into schemes of work. All pupils enter the school with very good literacy skills and they maintain this high standard in all year groups. In lessons, pupils reach high standards when debating, answering questions and communicating complex ideas clearly. They make presentations in subjects such as economics and mathematics and in music use effectively evaluative and appraisal skills, whilst in science, they speak confidently when describing and discussing experimental work. Latin makes a valuable contribution to pupils' literary and linguistic skills. Listening skills are superb in most lessons.
9. Reading skills are well developed in all subjects and they use technical vocabulary skilfully with understanding and accuracy. In history, they read and interpret difficult texts and documents with understanding. Reading aloud is always very good and pupils make good judgements in subjects based on their good vocabulary and reading skills. Technical words are not emphasised in ICT. Overall, pupils write to a high standard in most subjects and teachers address literacy skills in their teaching. For instance, in art, literacy is addressed in teaching and homework but it is implicit rather than explicit. In geography and history, pupils reach a very high standard of written work from Year 8 onwards. Their spelling is good and the older pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form students have very good essay writing skills. In mathematics and music, they use drafting and re-drafting to improve their work. There are occasional grammatical errors but this does not affect fluency and the well organised written work. Overall, pupils use formal written language very well and appropriately.
10. Standards of numeracy across the whole school are very high and all pupils confidently use a wide range of skills. The whole school policy on numeracy to ensure consistency of approach across all curriculum subjects is under development. There were many examples of good numerical skills seen. There is reinforcement in mathematics lessons and pupils' mental skills are very advanced with many pupils being able to work out involved answers in their head. For example in one lesson on probability, pupils could work in either fractions or decimals, readily converting from one to another. The efficient use of the electronic calculator is taught but there is no over reliance on this as a calculating aid. Where seen calculator use was efficient and effective. Pupils can draw, use and interpret charts, graphs and diagrams accurately in all subjects as the need arises. In geography one Year 9 class was using a spreadsheet and corresponding pie chart to show distribution of cotton production. In Year 7 science pupils can substitute numbers into formulae and by Year 9 could solve problems involving several stages in calculation and manipulation.
11. Standards in ICT are below those expected nationally at ages 14 and 16. The opportunities to use these skills in other subjects to improve the quality of learning and raise standards are unsatisfactory because provision is not well planned. Most pupils in Years 7-9 can log on to the network and access appropriate applications. They can use word processors, spreadsheets and databases. They begin to access the Internet and e-mail but more work is needed in these areas to prepare pupils more adequately to undertake research information in other subjects. Pupils in

Years 10 and 11 have unsatisfactory opportunities to learn ICT in other GCSE courses. Whilst some of the applications observed during the inspection are good, they are largely as a result of the enthusiasm of individual teachers and pupils and do not cover universally the national requirements in ICT.

## Sixth form

12. At GCE Advanced level in 2001, the pass rate was very high in comparison with all maintained schools. The average point score per student achieved in 2000 and 2001, was high in comparison with the national average and was well above the average for selective schools. The average point score per student has improved further from 28.3 in 2000 to 31.5 in 2001. In comparison with other grammar schools, King Edward VI School has been highly successful at both GCSE and A level. In 2001, the school was placed 18<sup>th</sup> in *The Sunday Times* list of the top 500 state schools and seventh best boys' school.
13. A close scrutiny of A and AS-level results indicates a consistent and upward trend. The percentage of A and B grades has improved substantially from 33 per cent in 1996 to 68 per cent in 2001. There are considerable variations across subjects over the last four years. In 2001, results were very high in biology, chemistry and general studies; well above average in economics, English literature, mathematics and physics; average in French and history and below average in geography. Students have consistently performed very well in English literature, mathematics, biology, chemistry, economics and general studies and less well in modern foreign languages. Their results have improved significantly in design and technology. Students' performance in history, geography, music and art has varied. For example, their performance in geography was well above average in 2000 and below average in 2001. In terms of the highest grades A and B at A-level, in 2001, the school's achievement in comparison with all maintained schools was very high in biology, chemistry, classical studies, economics, general studies, mathematics and physics; well above average in English literature and design and technology; above average in Spanish and below average in French, German, geography and history.
14. In line with national requirements, students took Advanced Subsidiary (AS) examinations in all subjects. A good understanding of the new examinations was an important factor contributing to above average AS results. There were high performances in biology, chemistry, economics, geography, mathematics and physics. Results were broadly average in other subjects.
15. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflected those attained in examinations. Standards are highest in English, mathematics, chemistry, geography, economics and religious education; above average in design technology and French and average in art and design and history. They were higher than the most recent examination results in geography and French. Students' work was sampled in other A-level subjects such as physics and classical civilisation. Attainment was particularly high in classical civilisation and above average in physics. In Year 12 classical civilisation lessons, students studying Sophocles, showed very good understanding of the tragedy and gave an excellent personal evaluation of characters and naval images. In a Year 13 physics lesson, students consolidated their knowledge of exponential decay of voltage across a capacitor as it discharges and related confidently mathematical models involving different variables to the experimental design. Work in music was also sampled in two lessons in Year 12 and one lesson in Year 13. The relatively small numbers of A and AS level examination results have been varied, with some students gaining grades as expected but others falling below target. All current students in both years are good performers, but their command of the theoretical, historical and analytical demands of the course are moderate at this stage. Overall their standard of attainment is average.
16. Standards of literacy and numeracy on entry to the sixth form are very good. Scrutiny of students' written work showed very good improvement in its quality, range and sophistication. A notable feature of pupils' work is the quality and extent of their written work. Good analytical skills contribute significantly to standards across many A-level subjects. In English, these skills are particularly strong. Students using a wider range of varied sources, address the subject at an appropriately high level. In mathematics algebraic skills are used effectively in calculus and students can differentiate and integrate efficiently a wide range of functions. In physics students showed very good understanding of exponential and logarithmic graphs and applied them consistently to solve problems. Some students use word processing skills for the presentation of their course work assignments and access to the Internet to increase the breadth of their

knowledge. More generally this aspect of the provision is weak. Most subjects have rightly identified applications of ICT to enhance learning as an area for future development.

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

17. Almost all pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, and especially so in lessons where the teacher has consistently high expectations. Pupils enjoy school and most have a real desire to succeed, working hard and listening carefully to advice to raise their attainment. Students confirmed that they enjoy a high quality school life and feel privileged to have such a wide variety of intellectual, physical and other rewarding challenges. Relationships throughout the school are very good, making a harmonious, vibrant and supportive community where the ethos is respectful and clearly focused on learning and high standards. Parents were highly complimentary about how the school has helped their children to become confident and enthusiastic about their learning.
18. In all physical education, personal and social education, religious education and most English lessons observed, attitudes to work were excellent. Most pupils settle quickly and are eager for lessons to start. In Year 11 mathematics and science lessons attitudes were outstanding. In science they undertake practical work sensibly and safely. They feel confident about asking their teacher questions for clarification. Pupils enjoy the mental arithmetic challenges which are usually paced well to develop their thinking skills. Elsewhere, attitudes were always at least satisfactory and often good and very good. These very positive attitudes are a very significant factor in the very good progress that pupils make throughout the school. There is a purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms and teachers are able to concentrate on the lesson's work without having to dwell on behaviour.
19. Good use is made in lessons of the pupils' high quality relationships. Pupils' very good collaborative skills are reinforced by the perceptive and thoughtful comments they make in classroom discussions and the very good respect they show for each other's views and opinions. This was particularly evident in Latin, English and PSHE lessons. This supportive environment raises pupils' self-esteem and their confidence in tackling new learning.
20. Both pupils and parents consider that most teachers successfully maintain high standards of behaviour. Inspection findings support this view. The quality of behaviour in vast majority of lessons is good and in about half it is very good and promotes learning. In Years 7-9 in some art lessons behaviour was unsatisfactory. Pupils were not fully engaged in the tasks set, there was a lack of application to the serious study of art and pupils' progress was affected adversely.
21. Behaviour around the school is very good. Students are extremely polite and helpful to visitors. They know exactly what is expected of them and the result is a lively but harmonious community. They behave very well in assemblies and show reverence during readings and prayer. Staff and prefects are very good role models and any exuberant behaviour is controlled calmly but firmly. Pupils with special educational needs and ethnic minority pupils are well integrated into the school and relationships observed during the inspection were supportive. Behaviour can be occasionally a little boisterous but this was mostly good-natured without aggression. Bullying occurs rarely and when it is reported it is dealt with speedily and effectively. There was one fixed-term exclusion last year for an incident of unsafe behaviour.
22. The personal development of pupils is very good. The school provides excellent opportunities to take on responsibility and to gain greater independence as they progress through the school. Pupils think highly of the school council and appreciate being given a voice in the running of the school. The "real game" course helps Year 7 pupils gain skills in decision making and dealing with real life situations. Participation in work experience by Year 10 pupils raises the confidence and self-esteem of those involved.
23. Attendance is very good and is well above the national average. There is very little unauthorised absence and this is well below the level of similar schools. Punctuality is very good and nearly all pupils arrive at school on time despite the long distances many travel.

### **Sixth form**

24. Sixth form students have very positive attitudes towards their work and their school life. Most Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form and they genuinely want to succeed. The students' views gauged indicate that most students were pleased with most aspects of the sixth form especially the very good teaching and approachable staff. They take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the school to demonstrate maturity, self-discipline and commitment to their future aspirations.
25. Behaviour in most lessons is very good. Students are hard working, mature and sensible and feel ready and well prepared for the next stage of their education when they transfer from the main school. They do all the work asked of them and many use their initiative to do more. They ask searching questions to deepen their knowledge and make accurate deductions based on good evidence and logical thinking. By the time they reach Year 13 students have greater autonomy, are allowed to go off site and are trusted to behave responsibly.
26. Students' personal development is very good. They have excellent social skills and most are confident and well motivated young men. They have good self-discipline and can be relied on to work both in school and at home. Students are very keen to take on responsibility and the head boy, his three deputies and all the prefects are a credit to the school. They play an important role in many everyday activities and make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. They act as excellent role models, commanding respect from their younger peers. Sixth form students organise events for sporting and other activities, act as librarians, supervise the use of the computer suite at lunchtime and chair the school council. They enjoy the sports leadership course, drama and musical events – some in collaboration with other local schools; community service at junior schools and residential homes; the engineering education scheme; business skills days and work experience. The Stratford "talking newspaper" for the visually impaired is run almost entirely by King Edward students and they provide a very valuable service.
27. Attendance is very good and most absences are due to genuine medical conditions. All students attend registration and most students are punctual.

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

28. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and enables pupils to make good progress. In the main school, it was never less than satisfactory in Years 8 -11 and unsatisfactory on only one occasion in Year 7. The school has been very successful in addressing the issues raised in the last report and as a result there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is much reduced and proportion of very good and excellent teaching much increased, since the last inspection. Teaching was good in 38 per cent and very good or excellent in a further 45 per cent of lessons. Staff have received well-planned professional support to develop effective methods in all areas of the curriculum. The quality of teaching is very good in English, mathematics, science, music, PSHE and Latin throughout the school and good in other subjects, except ICT and design and technology where it was judged to be satisfactory in Years 7-9.
29. There are significant strengths in teaching, for example teachers' subject knowledge and the management of pupils together with very good relationships. There is scope for further improvement in the use of ICT across the curriculum, in teachers' use of assessment to plan for the progress of individuals in lessons and to involve pupils in planning and evaluating their own progress.
30. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it very effectively, for example to give precise explanations in science and mathematics. In English very clear expositions and alternative interpretations develop pupils' love for literature. In drama teaching generates a positive response from pupils and challenges them to skilfully use role-play to a high standard. These approaches generate effective learning, with a high level of involvement and interest amongst pupils. In modern language lessons teachers' knowledge of French, Spanish or German enables them to conduct activities entirely in the target language and effectively develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. In music, teachers' high levels of practical skills and impressive subject knowledge combined with enthusiasm, creativity and professional musical experience provide pupils with high standards to which they aspire. In geography, teachers' considerable subject knowledge was well used to expand the topics and widen learning. In Latin teachers use their knowledge of the subject to inform pupils of the historical, social and cultural background, bringing translations to life and passing on their enthusiasm for their subject to the pupils. In religious education skilful questioning

challenges pupils' thinking. In PHSE the teacher's knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm for the subject helps to involve and motivate pupils. This enables pupils to participate in lessons without embarrassment no matter how delicate the subject matter.

31. The teaching of basic skills is good overall. In science and mathematics pupils use mental arithmetic. Key words and structures are identified on the board in modern languages and pupils are asked routinely to make connections with English words in Latin which has the effect of increasing their range of English vocabulary as well as helping them to understand unfamiliar words in Latin. Pupils use their ICT skills in modern languages, Latin and science for research and to reinforce learning. In English teachers develop pupils' technical vocabulary so that pupils use specialist vocabulary with ease.
32. The learning of pupils on the register of special needs is good, in line with the learning of their classmates, because teachers are aware of their needs and take steps to ensure understanding by giving additional help where it is needed. Currently pupils whose first language is not English are all truly bilingual, their level of language acquisition does not affect their rate of learning, which is the same as others in their classes.
33. Teachers plan their lessons effectively to ensure pupils build on previous learning. In science pupils are given individual tasks which challenge them appropriately and in English teachers plan a range of activities and resources to generate pupils' interest and build on previous learning. In most lessons objectives are clear and shared with pupils. In careers lessons very good planning helps pupils to make informed choices as they move through the school. However in a minority of lessons for example when pupils use ICT their previous learning is not taken into account sufficiently and this leads to pupils not always being challenged adequately by activities. Similarly in geography and Spanish in Years 10 and 11 the lack of appropriate challenge sometimes leads to slow progress and underachievement.
34. Teachers' expectations are usually high. In chemistry teachers ensure pupils achieve well by asking pupils to think out and explain their own ideas and test hypotheses in their investigations. In history pupils' enquiry skills are well developed and their independence fostered. In English expectations are very high and pupils are constantly challenged by probing questions; they achieve a high level of critical thinking. In modern language lessons pupils are often given strict deadlines to commit new language to memory within lessons and this together with the expectation that pupils will operate as much as possible in the target language results in rapid gains in knowledge and effective development of listening and speaking skills. In music there is an insistence on high standards which challenge pupils effectively. In the best art lessons the pupils are motivated by exciting stimuli though in a few lessons the pace is slow, the challenge low and the standards depressed. In a minority of lessons for example in Spanish and design and technology activities are not sufficiently challenging and pupils do not always achieve as well as they might.
35. Teachers use a very good range and variety of methods and teaching styles to motivate and interest pupils. In science pupils engage in independent work and pair work in chemistry for example, they undertake experiments to test their hypotheses. In religious education lesson about Buddhism Year 9 pupils were able to understand the fundamental principles of conversion because of the very skilful questioning by the teacher and made very good progress through opportunities for reflection and discussion throughout the lesson. Similarly in history the teacher's very effective use of questioning enabled Year 9 pupils to make excellent progress in their understanding of the need for effective transport systems to maintain industrial development. In design and technology the teacher used flat pack furniture to provide illustrations of security and safety levels and this enabled pupils to reflect on their own design ideas to improve their analysis and outcome. In modern languages teachers make very good use of competition, games and problem solving activities to engage pupils and generate enjoyment. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson pupils made very good progress in understanding how to deal with fractions because of a good variety of well sequenced activities and clear explanations on the board. Teachers are skilful in their questioning and use discussion and debate to challenge pupils' thinking. In some lessons, however, teacher prescribed activities decrease pupils' opportunities to explore ideas for themselves.
36. Teachers' management of pupils is very good. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils who are concerned to do well which is a major factor in pupils' learning. In art senior pupils are given clear guidance by the teacher while they are working. In a Year 10 lesson for example, pupils' problems with still life drawing were noticed and they were given expert help to complete tasks. However, in Years 7-9, pupils' lack of interest in art adversely affects their learning.

37. Very good use is made of resources to interest and challenge pupils. For example in history video clips are used to stimulate pupils' interest. In science, modern languages and mathematics the interactive whiteboard is used for presentations and effective teacher demonstrations. In Latin and modern languages interactive computer programs are used well to enable pupils to work at their own pace. For example Year 11 pupils quickly understood the rates of reaction because of the very clear and well planned demonstrations using the interactive whiteboard. In design and technology, teachers provide well informed guidance, particularly in the knowledge and use of materials, tools and equipment.
38. Teachers use questioning well to assess pupils' understanding. In English, science and mathematics teachers make effective use of well judged questioning to probe understanding and use pupils' work to exemplify good practice. In a few relatively weak lessons pupils' understanding was not secure because of lack of opportunities to discuss ideas in depth. In English constructive marking of pupils' work and evaluative comments challenge pupils to maintain high standards. In most subjects GCSE coursework assignments are marked thoroughly, often using examination criteria. However in some subjects marking does not give sufficient guidance about how to improve and pupils are not sufficiently aware of test and examination criteria to be able to take responsibility for their own progress. Similarly assessment is not always used effectively to plan for pupils' progress in lessons and to ensure that all make appropriate progress. In history Year 11 pupils understand very clearly how to improve their work because they are given clear guidance and are expected to evaluate their own performance against examination criteria. Overall, however, there are few instances of pupils evaluating their own or others' work.
39. Some parents expressed concerns about the regularity and suitability of homework. Homework is set and marked in most subjects to reinforce and extend learning in the classroom. Regular homework is set in English, mathematics, science, art and history to consolidate learning and coursework levels generally reach a good standard. In some subjects relevant and constructive tasks are set to prepare pupils for the following lessons but there are not enough examples of challenging and imaginative tasks being set for homework which is not always instrumental in bringing about learning. The school organises after-school homework clubs but not all teachers set homework according to the agreed timetable and tasks set do not always provide sufficient extension to the pupils' learning.

### **Sixth form**

40. Overall, the quality of teaching in the sixth form was very good: in almost eight out of every ten lessons it was good or better and more than half of it is very good or excellent. In a small number of lessons, although the progress pupils made was satisfactory, there was insufficient challenge to ensure they made the intellectual effort of which they are capable. Teaching is very good or excellent in English. Teachers ensure that students know their texts through their rigorous approach when assessing interpretation. They develop specialist vocabulary further. Open ended questioning allows students to give their own interpretations of literary texts. In their study of *The Tempest* and Chaucer's Prologue the effective use of background texts enables students to understand the social and historical background. Teachers make very good use of discussion and their love for their subject is transmitted to students through their knowledge and enthusiasm. In mathematics, students are given definite direction and challenge through clear explanations and very probing questioning that extends their thinking. Excellent questioning was especially evident in, for example, a Year 12 statistics lesson. Everyday applications were used to provide an appropriate context for the problem and students' understanding of Poisson, binomial and cumulative distributions was used effectively to introduce new problems involving the exponential distribution.
41. Well sequenced, imaginative activities enable students to use the language creatively and develop independence in speaking and writing in French and German. Very good use of texts from literature and the media as well as video clips increase students' understanding of the conventions and nuances of languages. High expectations coupled with very good relationships result in high levels of effort and concentration. Very effective use of questioning is used to assess students' understanding.
42. The teaching of general studies is outstandingly good and reflects teachers' excellent subject knowledge of the modules they teach. Students were totally absorbed in the history of the Arab/

Israeli conflict which was presented from both sides and gave students an insight into the intransigence that currently exists. The teaching of careers education in the sixth form specifically helps students to apply to university and is very good.

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

43. Since the last inspection the curriculum has been under review and a new timetable introduced. This has corrected some but not all of the difficulties identified at the last inspection. The school aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that enhances and challenges the pupils' interests and abilities. The various strands, academic and extra-curricular cater for the needs, aptitudes and interests of high attaining pupils. All subjects of the National Curriculum together with religious education are taught in Year 7. All pupils study drama in Years 7 – 9, Latin in Years 7 and 8, and begin a second foreign language in Year 8. In Year 9, pupils study two languages from Latin, French, German and Spanish. This offers rich opportunities in the expressive arts and in languages. To fit extra subjects into the time available, some subjects have less time allocated than is normally recommended. This has no significant effect upon achievement in English, but adversely affects attainment in the second modern language (Spanish or German). In design and technology, the allocation of time and the lack of challenge in the scheme of work substantially affect standards. The provision of two ICT lessons a week in Year 7 and the continuation of the ICT Programme of Study in other subjects in Years 8 and 9 is too limited to cover all elements adequately. The school is not meeting statutory requirements in ICT and design and technology in Years 7-9. Well planned schemes of work are now in place in most subjects, though they need further revision in design and technology and ICT. Planning does not provide the required opportunities for ICT in most subjects of the National Curriculum. The school is aware of difficulties in time allocation and is continuing to evaluate the timetable.
44. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is broad and balanced and planned with regard to the abilities of the pupils. After September 2002, all pupils will study biology, chemistry and physics instead of double award science. In addition to English language and literature, mathematics and statistics, and a short course in religious education, they may choose from a second foreign language, Latin, economics and other National Curriculum subjects. This is very good provision. Design and technology is chosen as an option subject by about half the pupils. It is currently a compulsory National Curriculum subject, although the school believes its very broad and academic offer necessitates some pupils discontinuing design and technology in favour of an additional science and modern foreign languages. The provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11 remains too limited to cover the programme of study, so the school does not comply with statutory requirements in this respect.
45. The well planned PSHE programme in Years 7 – 11 covers all the statutory requirements for sex and drugs education. Citizenship is included in the revised schemes of work. In Year 7, form tutors teach the PSHE programme which strengthens pastoral care and relationships. In other years, specialist teaching is very effective. The various residential trips in Years 7- 9 contribute substantially to personal development.
46. Provision for pupils with special needs by the learning support department is satisfactory with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. In addition to the formal register, an informal list is maintained of pupils with minor visual or aural problems. The co-ordinator maintains very clear records and keeps the progress of these pupils under constant informal review. Twice-yearly formal reviews are carried out with parents and an educational psychologist present. Liaison with subject departments raises teachers' awareness of the nature of the difficulties faced by these pupils and most, but not all, subject departments maintain subject-specific individual education plans. However, only a small number of pupils is involved and provision is individualised, mostly consisting of extra support or specialised work in lessons. Currently, no special support is needed for pupils with English as an additional language; there are strategies in place to provide bilingual teaching support should it be required.
47. Some subjects, such as English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages provide extension and enrichment work to challenge and support gifted and talented pupils but more demands could be made of these high attainers in other subjects. In music able musicians benefit

from instrumental tuition and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are given the opportunity to enrich their experience of mathematics through the Junior and Intermediate Mathematics Challenge. Pupils in Year 7 receive free musical instrument tuition, through a scheme supported by the governors. Drama, music and art collaborate effectively to stage joint productions as well as individual performances.

48. Pupils in Years 7-9 take part in well organised residential weeks for which relate to 'challenge' in alternative environments, and benefit from the excellent sports, coaching and facilities. Senior pupils can take part in World Challenge Expeditions. Regular exchanges take place, most recently to Japan and Germany and a visit to the USA. Many pupils represent the school in sporting events. The First XV rugby team competes successfully in the national Daily Mail Cup and reached the last sixteen twice in the past three years. The school fencing team has achieved some outstanding successes. Members of the team have gone on to represent Great Britain. There is a need to monitor, evaluate and promote further these positive developments, including raising parental expectations of their children's potential in order to maximise the achievement of able pupils.
49. The careers education programme is very well planned, beginning in Year 7 and linking to option choices in Year 9. Pupils organise their own two weeks' work experience in July, and already over half have firm placements. In Year 11, the emphasis is upon choosing AS and A-level subjects in relation to university degrees and future careers, though pupils who wish to seek employment immediately receive individual help and attention.
50. There are strong links with the community, some of which arise from the historic position of the school in Stratford. However, many more modern links have been forged with local business and industry in, for example, the Education Business Partnership Scheme. All primary schools sending boys to King Edward VI School will be visited in the summer to ease the transition to this school.
51. A very good programme of extra-curricular activities provides further enrichment. Pupils are offered a very wide range of games and sports, including fencing and rowing. There are many opportunities to participate in musical and drama events. During the week of inspection, 36 clubs and activities were available, such as the homework study hours, subject support groups in mathematics and modern foreign languages, interest groups such as drama, recital, auditions for plays and chess and board games; daily drama rehearsals and sports and music practices. Residential trips, exchange visits, field trips with a geographical or historical focus, and sports tours, are numerous and complement the formal curriculum very well. These well planned programmes reflect a very high level of staff commitment to providing extra opportunities to develop subject knowledge and personal interests beyond the classroom.
52. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Provision for moral and social development is excellent, provision for spiritual and cultural development is very good.
53. The focus of the school on good and respectful relationships and the creation of an environment based upon Christian values and principles influences every aspect of school life and pupils' personal development. The PSHE programme is an integral part of the school's delivery of SMSC opportunities. The religious education syllabus provides many good opportunities in these areas.
54. Provision for students' spiritual development is very good overall. Statutory requirements for collective worship are met. Assemblies take place on a daily basis, and alternate with morning chapel. This is a valuable way to begin the day. They provide opportunities for reflection, and emphasis is placed on the Christian approach to collective worship. The use of hymns, prayer and various religious and secular readings, often by pupils, provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. There is some evidence of planning in departments for spiritual development, and religious education makes a very good contribution in this area. Pupils are encouraged to explore their attitudes and feelings and to consider their responses to the meaning and purpose of life. For example, one lesson explored the use of meditation and pupils participated in a meditative exercise. Their responses demonstrated a good awareness of the use of silence and reflection. Several subjects contribute well to pupils' spiritual development. For example, in English, pupils have an increasing awareness of belief systems through studying a wide range of literary texts. In history, opportunities for reflection assisted pupils to use their imaginative and creative faculties to explore meaning. All pupils are deeply aware of the spiritual dimension in the life and traditions of the school.

55. Provision for moral development is excellent. This is a real strength in the school. Opportunities are targeted largely through the PSHE programme and in religious education. Topics such as marriage and the family, divorce, torture, human rights and drugs education provide a sound curriculum for discussion and development. In a good lesson on law and punishment pupils explored aspects of punishment and developed a good respect for the law. The school has clear expectations of students knowing right from wrong and students respond extremely well when they are corrected. The headmaster and staff are excellent role models for pupils. Assemblies make a real contribution to this area. For example, one assembly on the theme of turning the other cheek made a significant impact on the pupils who were provided with a good opportunity to reflect on this principle. In religious education, pupils are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In English, pupils have many opportunities to examine and challenge a range of issues that affect human relationships and conditions such as the moral implications of war, through a study of the war poets. In physical education, pupils demonstrate their ability to cope well with success and failure of both themselves and others. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong actions in sports, and a strong acceptance of the rules. Pupils reflect on the school's values during tutor periods and in their daily activities. There is a good support for charities that benefit greatly from the pupils' generosity.
56. Provision for social development is excellent. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The PSHE programme includes topics such as rights and responsibilities, a healthy environment, sex and love, citizenship, democracy and survival skills all provide a powerful contribution to developing attitudes and fostering independent thinking and communication skills. The house system enables pupils to develop a sense of identity and provides excellent opportunities for participation and competition. The school council provides a very effective way for pupils to influence changes. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards it and it provides the opportunity for some to exercise their skills of persuasion. Assemblies make a significant contribution to social development. Pupil participation in reading about the way peoples lives are affected by their environment was a feature of one assembly. In almost all subjects pupils collaborated very well with each other in discussion work. They demonstrated deep respect for and consideration of the views of others. This made a powerful contribution to their achievement and progress. The level of pupil interaction in English was very high and their ability to use their negotiation skills was an important feature.
57. Provision for students' cultural development is very good. Religious education makes a significant contribution, especially in terms of the study of different religions and the cultures that support them so assisting pupils to prepare for life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. The school's curriculum in PSHE provides planned opportunities for students to debate topics such as prejudice and stereotyping and challenge pupils to examine their own views about other cultures and traditions. There is an excellent Africa project in the arts that enables pupils, through dance, drama, art and poetry to appreciate cultural diversity and respect the beliefs and traditions of others. In addition, the school runs exchange visits to Japan and are actively involved in World Challenge. This has included visits to Poland and Peru. There are plans for the next visit to be to Nepal and Tibet, where students will have the opportunity to be involved with local communities as well as mountaineering activities. However, planned opportunities in the school's curriculum for pupils to explore their own cultural assumptions require further development. There are many opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own local culture through active participation in trips and visits. For example, visits to the Black Country Museum, the Millennium Dome, the Imperial War Museum, Warwick Castle, together with the many musical concerts provide enriching experiences that enable pupils to appreciate their cultural heritage. Regular drama productions, and the opportunity for pupils to work with national and local artists and organisations make very good contributions to cultural development. Exchange visits to Germany and residential visits in Years 7 and 9 also enable pupils to extend cultural understanding.
58. Since the last inspection, pupils' spiritual, moral and social development has improved significantly. Pupils' cultural development has improved, especially with regard to pupils' awareness of living in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is met.

## **Sixth form**

59. The sixth form curriculum offers a very broad and balanced academic programme of 19 AS and A-level courses, well suited to the aspirations and potential of the students. It is organised to give every student their individual choices. In addition critical thinking is offered at AS level. All students follow the general studies A-level course, which is very well planned and organised. It includes provision for PSHE and ethical, moral and philosophical topics, which fulfil the general religious studies requirements. Key skills are incorporated into subjects but no external certification is sought. The allocation of time in some subjects is below that recommended for AS levels. ICT provision has improved but needs further development.
60. The school's induction week for all Year 11 students, including those from other schools, provides a very good introduction to the demands of AS and A-level courses and sixth form responsibilities. Year 12 students have very good access to advice on university entrance and the implications for careers thereafter. Visiting speakers explain the range of careers available with many large companies. Prospective doctors, vets and lawyers are encouraged to attend appropriate pre-university courses. Throughout the sixth form there is very good guidance available. A collaborative sixth form group has been established recently between Stratford Girls' Grammar School, Stratford High School and King Edward VI School with the aim of examining how, and to what extent, the three schools may be able to collaborate over teaching within the sixth forms.
61. Key skills are taught through AS and A-level subjects as well as through general studies. Overall, provision is good. For example, students' communication skills are developed so that they know, read and synthesise information and organise writing. Numeracy and graphical skills are developed well in sciences and geography. Opportunities for developing ICT skills are more limited, although many students are required to refer to the Internet for independent research. Independent study skills are encouraged, but for many there is insufficient attention given to file organisation.
62. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities including, clubs, competitions, field trips and educational and sporting visits abroad. These activities contribute a great deal to students' personal development as well as to their academic achievements. The system of head boy, deputies and prefects, elected by staff and pupils, enables students to assume significant responsibilities as well as make an important contribution to school life. Students have the opportunity to attend sports, leadership and public speaking courses. The residential trip for year 12 consolidates team working and leadership skills. There are opportunities to participate in World Challenge expeditions to remote countries.
63. In the sixth form, the school makes very good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies provide opportunities for reflection and the use of hymns, prayer and various religious and secular readings, often by pupils provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. Statutory requirements for collective worship are met. Provision for moral development is excellent. Opportunities are targeted largely through the general studies programme and in religious education for some students. There are modules on morality and ethics, political issues and philosophy that enable students to develop moral attitudes and values. Sixth form students are excellent role models for all pupils. In religious education, students are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In Year 13, two teachers shared their expertise to challenge students to develop moral attitudes towards genetic engineering. Students demonstrated a profound awareness of the ethical issues and formed clear judgements about them. Examination courses in English, history, modern foreign languages and religious education all provide significant opportunities for students to reflect on the wider consequences of their choices and actions.
64. In general studies, topics such as art, music, and French culture, current and political affairs all provide a powerful contribution to developing attitudes and fostering independent thinking and communication skills. Research and study skills, target setting and decision making, lateral thinking, human rights issues and refugees are all topics that enable students to exercise responsibility and develop an awareness of the needs of others, both locally and in the wider world. Students help with trips undertaken in the main school. They participate well and demonstrate their leadership qualities as prefects, members of the school council and through work in a residential school. The talking newspaper for the blind is very well appreciated locally.
65. Provision for students' cultural development is very good. There are several opportunities for students to be involved in activities that extend their cultural development. The school's curriculum in general studies provides planned opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the variety

of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. In addition to opportunities for students to appreciate European culture, the school runs exchange visits to Japan and are actively involved in World Challenge. This has included visits to Poland and Peru. There are plans for the next visit to be to Nepal and Tibet, where students have the opportunity to be involved with local communities as well as mountaineering activities. These enable students to understand world cultures through direct experience. Students' appreciation of their own cultural heritage is enhanced through theatre visits and lectures. They are given the freedom to express their creative and artistic skills in drama and English through writing articles for *The Stratfordian* newspaper and organising and producing plays within and beyond the school.

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

66. The provision for the welfare of pupils continues to be good. It is underpinned by a good pastoral system that ensures that the tutor knows each pupil well. Subject staff also know their pupils well and show a high level of support and commitment to help them achieve high standards. Any emerging problems are identified quickly and are addressed at an early stage. Parents are particularly pleased about how much their children enjoy school, are expected to work hard and do their best and how to become mature and responsible individuals. There are clear and well thought out procedures to provide good support for individuals with high expectations and consistent application to encourage good attendance, good behaviour and good work habits.
67. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are exemplary. Registers are maintained consistently and all absences are followed up rigorously to minimise absence. This is reflected in the very good attendance levels and punctuality and very low levels of unauthorised absence.
68. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are outstanding. Pupils are familiar with the very high expectations for behaviour and they usually behave very well. Rewards and sanctions are used well to motivate pupils. The merits are valued and an entry into the "Book of Excellence" is highly desirable and considered an "amazing" accolade by pupils. The frequency of poor behaviour incidents is very low and bullying is simply not tolerated. Sanctions are effective and reflect the gravity of the offence. A boy who had been in a fight was sentenced to litter picking for a whole term and he confirmed strongly that this would never happen again.
69. The school operates a broadly satisfactory assessment policy but practice is inconsistent. Over the last three years the use of a faculty system has encouraged more common practice across subject areas. The school's assessment working party, however, has recognised the need to revise a policy that places considerable emphasis on encouraging greater effort through an A\*-E grading system, and less focus on helping pupils to understand the standards they are reaching in terms of knowledge and skills and what they need to do to further improve.
70. Current monitoring and assessment practice is variable between the different subject areas. Some subjects such as English have well established systems where teachers assess regularly and provide clear guidance to pupils. Other subject areas including mathematics, sciences and the humanities, have mostly good monitoring and assessment arrangements particularly where they use the National Curriculum standards in Years 7-9, and the GCSE requirements in Years 10 and 11, to complement the whole school system. Less developed features include, for example, limited assessment information in pupils' workbooks, while in modern foreign languages and mathematics, teachers make only limited use of assessment data to reflect on current teaching and learning practice. There is some unsatisfactory monitoring and assessment in ICT, design and technology, and art and design, partly because of a lack of well developed learning programmes and systematic, well managed procedures.
71. The school has a potentially good system of academic target setting based on the very good analysis of the assessment co-ordinator. Through this he is able to make use of baseline assessments of pupils on entry to the school as well as at the end of Years 9 and 11 and identify challenging attainment targets for all students in Years 10-13. The use of this data for academic target setting in different subjects is still to be implemented fully. Furthermore, while the strong pastoral system encourages pupils to identify and work towards more generalised personal targets,

the school makes insufficient use of the form tutor to monitor each pupil's overall academic development.

72. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are very good. The personal and social education program calls for pupils to evaluate their own personal skills in communication, decision making, working with others and basic practical skills. Tutors are able to give very good advice for improving attitudes, social skills and encouraging a good work ethic. Much of this monitoring is informal, based on very good relationships and a genuine willingness by tutors who want pupils to be successful. Some pupils have social targets that tutors help to set with their agreement. These targets are evaluated regularly to assess if appropriate progress has been made. The Wednesday morning tutorial period was used inconsistently. When questioned tutors were uncertain of how best to use the time and felt that they needed more guidance.
  
73. The arrangements for child protection are good and meet all the legal requirements. Staff are reminded regularly of procedures. The "designated person" is the deputy headmaster and he shared with all staff his recent training on changes in child protection legislation. The school has an adequate number of first aiders and is planning to send two more staff on the full course to increase coverage. The school caters well for the pupils with medical conditions and severe allergies and commendably all staff have been trained in the use of an EpiPen in case of emergency. There are some weaknesses in the way that health and safety is managed. Although regular risk assessments are carried out, the findings of these checks are not recorded formally and action to address known issues is not always taken effectively.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

74. Monitoring and assessment in the sixth form is good overall. Students' work is assessed regularly in most subjects and this assessment is usually thorough and includes some constructive advice. In English, for example, students have a clear idea of the assessment criteria and a number of subjects including mathematics, set regular tests and other assessments that are related to the external examinations. However, on occasion, the assessment against AS and A-level standards using letter grading is accompanied by too brief a comment to help students to improve their performance.
75. The school carries out a thorough analysis of students' prior GCSE performance and has developed its own system for estimating predicted grades. This is used well in some subjects such as the sciences where staff use the predicted and more challenging target grades to discuss progress with students on a half termly basis. This good practice has yet to be universally shared across all subjects and the regular reports do not identify clearly student progress reflected in estimates of likely grade outcomes, against the target grades set. Form tutors have a less dominant role in monitoring academic as against personal development though the practice of placing students with tutors who are specialists in at least one of a student's courses is clearly beneficial.

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

76. The school provides highly effective guidance and support for sixth form students starting at the end of the summer term in Year 11. The sixth form brochure is well written and gives a full picture of what to expect. The provisional sixth form week is very helpful in giving students an insight into life in the sixth form. The residential trip early in Year 12 helps team building and enables students to mix freely and make friends. This is especially helpful to new students who are well inducted. The fact that students have the same tutors throughout their time in the sixth form encourages very good relationships. Regular interviews to discuss progress and consider action points are helpful. Tutors know students so well that they can detect difficulties and loss of motivation and take effective action often in conjunction with parents, to help them to cope with the various pressures.
77. The careers day for Year 12 students was highly successful and helped them gain quality first hand information about the wide variety of career opportunities available at some large companies. Work experience has proved difficult for some students in Year 12 as the time pressures of AS levels mount. Those students who were able to work reported a very good range of experiences and the companies involved gave them glowing testimonials.
78. Year 12 students are expected to study in the library in their free time. Subject tutors can generate a "blue form" to raise an alert to the form tutor if performance begins to falter and an effective monitoring system comes into force to help and support students both personally and academically. Each student is able to choose a mentor from the teaching staff for help and guidance with university applications and with decision making about post-school lives. Together with their very good careers lessons, students are very happy with all the guidance they receive to achieve the early completion of their university applications. The mock interviews by some past students of the school and a local university admissions tutor help prepare students well for their real university interviews.

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

79. The school places great emphasis on working closely with parents and sees a close partnership as fundamental to its drive to raise standards. Parents hold the school in high regard and the links with parents are good. Parents are keen to support their children in their studies.
80. Around a third of parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and the responses were mainly positive. Views expressed by parents who attended the parents' meeting were equally positive. There were a few specific concerns that inspectors investigated. The first of these was homework. Here arrangements are generally good but there are some inconsistencies in practice. Pupils feel the homework set is usually manageable and appropriate. The tasks set could be more

challenging for higher attaining pupils. Homework diaries are generally well used. Parents also criticised extra-curricular activities but for a small grammar school, the range of these is very good. A closer partnership with the school was also raised; contact with the school is seen as vitally important. Parents' views about aspects of the school are frequently gauged to ensure parental satisfaction and to improve the quality of provision. There is good evidence presented by the school to indicate that parents frequently contact the school about their children's education and other issues and the school is very helpful in this regard. The headmaster is keen to strengthen relationships with parents further to enable pupils to benefit from all the educational opportunities the school offers.

81. Attendance at consultation evenings is very good and the dialogue helps to involve parents in their children's education and plays an important part in encouraging pupils to succeed and achieve a good standard of work. Other meetings include a Year 9 and Year 11 options evenings which are well attended. The annual school reports do not provide parents with sufficient information about their children's progress. The new knowledge, skills and understanding acquired during the year are not detailed enough and there is little indication of weaknesses and advice for improvement. There is no space for parents to make comments. The newsletters are excellent and give parents a full picture of news, school activities, dates for the diary and useful information. Parents receive copies of the school magazine *The Stratfordian* which is an impressive publication outlining all the year's work and celebrating students' achievements. It contains a great deal of quality information for parents. The prospectus is very detailed, parent friendly and well presented but by contrast the annual report to parents is thin and contains only the barest of information, just meeting the minimum requirements. The new website serves as a useful vehicle for reporting on events and for contact between students, parents and staff.
82. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good and is clearly seen when the FOKES and KESST support the school enthusiastically. FOKES arranges the school's busy social life and fundraising events. The new parents "Plate Party," sales of second hand uniforms, school calendars and the recent Christmas coffee morning are good examples of how useful and helpful FOKES is. Money is spent on the school minibus and other items such as the new benches in the playground. KESST raises funds to subsidise heavily some ambitious tours and tournaments. This makes tours to Australia and South Africa possible and give students some amazing experiences outside school. Large sums are raised from the profits of the tuck shop and more lucrative events such as the recent "Auction of Talents". Parents come in large numbers to support their children when they are engaged in sporting events, house competitions, the carol service, concerts and school productions. During the inspection the Year 7 concert was very well attended.
83. The transition arrangements for new pupils are very good and all prospective pupils are visited and given some very good individual advice and information. The partnership with parents is forged effectively when they are shown individually around the school and given a full picture of what to expect and are able to share information about their children which helps in the effective induction of new pupils.

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

84. The leadership of the headmaster, who has been in post since April 1997, is a real strength of the school. He provides thoughtful, perceptive and highly effective leadership. He brings determination, honesty and integrity to his dealing with staff, parents and pupils. Informed by current national developments, he has a clear and far sighted vision for the future development of the school. He has analysed a number of the school's developmental needs and identified appropriate priorities. With the support of the governors, senior management team and staff, he has set high expectations aiming for excellence with an emphasis on quality teaching and learning. Over the last four years, a number of successful initiatives have included:
  - establishment of clear policies to promote effective teaching and learning;
  - strengthening line management and the roles of senior management teams to support pastoral and academic teams;
  - a far reaching review of staffing, notably the reorganisation of academic departments into six faculties and the introduction of a new leadership group to improve performance, for example in modern foreign languages and the sixth form;

- rigorous scrutiny and evaluation of GCSE and GCE A level results;
  - the development of the structures and responsibilities of the governing body;
  - an innovative format for the headmaster's report to governors, providing a wealth of information on standards, achievements, the curricular opportunities, finance and external links.
85. These initiatives have helped to create a learning environment in which staff and pupils can succeed. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Students' performance in GCSE and A-level examinations has improved significantly. Pupils' attendance rates are well above the national average.
86. The leadership and management of the school have improved considerably since the last inspection, when several weaknesses were identified, the main being that the approach to management was insufficiently corporate. There is greater openness amongst staff in discussing practice and problems and an increasing commitment to the school's aims and improvement. After wide consultation with governors and staff, clear line management responsibilities have been assigned to senior managers, heads of faculties and middle managers. The senior management team, consisting of the headmaster, deputy headmaster, head of sixth form, director of studies and the bursar, provides complementary skills and experience. It is trusted to challenge and support staff in raising standards. There are well planned meetings of the senior management team, leadership group and curriculum and pastoral committees. The assistant headmaster spends considerable time and effort in analysing public examination results to evaluate the comparative performance of subjects and to determine value added improvement.
87. The school's commitment to continuous improvement is articulated through a school development plan. The plan has been agreed by staff and governors after an appropriate audit of the curriculum; information on performance indicators; reports from the headmaster and staff and a broad oversight of quality. The plan has many good features, such as clearly defined priorities, tasks, responsible staff, success criteria and strategies for monitoring and evaluation. The plan aims to raise achievement and increase value added contribution for all students. Appropriate priorities and tasks focus sharply on standards, teaching, learning, management and learning resources.
88. At the time of the last inspection, leadership and management at head of department level were judged not to be focussed clearly on teaching and learning, and some weaknesses were identified in departmental planning. Departments are now involved regularly in initiatives designed to improve teaching and learning and departmental planning is linked to school priorities. The delegation of responsibilities is well managed and the management structure provides effective communication. Heads of faculties and subject departments are clear about their role in action planning, monitoring and in raising standards. Most heads of department provide good professional leadership but the quality of leadership and effectiveness varies. Leadership is excellent in English and mathematics; very good in science, geography, music, physical education and religious education; good in history and modern foreign languages; satisfactory in art and unsatisfactory in design and technology and ICT. The management of pupils with special educational needs is good. In the best departments, leadership has been effective in generating new ideas, enthusiasm and support for staff. The quality of curricular planning has improved and departmental schemes of work provide an effective framework for learning. The best departments have tackled effectively issues identified in the November 1996 OFSTED report. In others, some weaknesses persist. Pupils' attainment remains relatively low in modern foreign languages and ICT. More generally there are inconsistent approaches to homework, assessment and to the challenge of high attaining pupils. Subject plans do not focus sufficiently on precise targets and on value added improvement. The pastoral team is very effective in providing good support and care.
89. There is a climate of critical scrutiny and mutual trust in which achievements are celebrated and areas for improvement acknowledged readily. Effective systems have been developed to compare the school's academic performance; improve the quality of teaching and learning; to track pupils' progress throughout the school and to raise standards. Performance management has been introduced and is proving beneficial to all staff. The members of the senior management team have participated with staff in carrying out rigorous self-reviews to evaluate the quality of teaching, standards and other curricular and pastoral aspects in Years 8, 10 and the sixth form. External evaluation and support by the LEA's inspectors have played an important part in raising standards. In 1998, the LEA's inspectors monitored and evaluated the progress made since the last OFSTED

inspection and the resulting report has been used to good effect. In 1999/2000, the art and design, geography and music departments benefited from the detailed reviews by the subject advisers. The in-service training programme is well planned and is driven by issues arising from management performance reviews. Inspection evidence indicates that additional training is needed, for example in modern foreign languages, ICT and design and technology, to improve teaching methods, raise expectations and to improve teachers' ICT skills. Procedures for the induction of teachers new to the school and newly qualified teachers are thorough and very effective.

90. The governing body is very supportive and it fulfils most of its responsibilities as required under law but it does not ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement curriculum in ICT in Years 8-11 and design and technology in Years 7-9. Governors bring a wide range of expertise, skills and experience. Curricular and financial skills are well represented. The governors' standing committees function effectively in determining policies to support a wide range of the school's activities. The governors' academic committee is involved in a variety of developments and is proving extremely knowledgeable and effective in monitoring standards, challenging underachievement and supporting strategic planning. Through various working groups, governors participate with staff in supporting various initiatives to improve the quality of provision for all pupils. Formal links with subject managers are well established which enable them to acquire a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has undertaken the performance review of the headmaster and assisted with the review of 'the leadership group'. Positive relationships and mutual trust exist between the governing body and the senior management team. The headmaster provides a wealth of information about the students' performance and all other aspects of the school's provision. Searching questions are asked of staff and performance data are analysed carefully. The chairman of governors is constantly in touch with the headmaster and is well informed about every aspect of school policy and practice. There are developing constructive curricular links with the Girls' Grammar School. The senior management teams of the two schools meet the senior to consider issues of mutual interest. A joint INSET which was held in October 2001 with the staff of both schools, proved a success in developing effective teaching and learning strategies.
91. The day-to-day administration is efficient and there are clear lines of communication both within the school, between the school and parents, and with the wider community. There is an excellent staff handbook which offers much useful information on school policies, procedures and practices. Staff feel their views are taken into account and opportunities for comments are available. The school is well served by non-teaching staff. Technicians facilitate pupils' learning through the effective practical support they provide in subjects such as science, ICT and design and technology. They ensure that audiovisual equipment and other learning resources are well serviced for the effective teaching of these practical subjects. Secretarial and other support staff provide an excellent service and the school runs well on a daily basis.
92. The school has sufficient well-qualified staff. The match of staffing levels, qualifications and experience to subject taught is good across the school. The review of staffing and the resultant formation of the faculty and management structure have provided more effective lines of responsibility and accountability. This structure, with the development of well planned schemes of work, strongly supports the curriculum and the teaching and learning priorities of the school development plan. In order to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, the school continues to employ a larger than average number of part-time teaching staff. These are now fully integrated into the faculty structure and involved in most staff development initiatives which support the school development plan. Support staff are also part of the performance management system. The preliminary survey provided by the school's application for the award of Investors in People has identified a very high level of unity and shared commitment amongst all staff.
93. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. It ranges from attractive and well-adapted historical buildings to the recently completed Levi Fox Hall. Outdoor facilities for the teaching of physical education are very good and good use is made of the on-site swimming pool. Some classrooms, however, are very cramped and poorly furnished and some subjects are occasionally accommodated in non-specialist spaces. Buildings are generally kept in a clean and tidy condition. Display in classrooms and public areas are informative and exhibit pupils' work.
94. Overall the school has a satisfactory level of resources. Subject provision has improved since the last inspection, but there are still deficiencies in design and technology. Resources in Spanish are inappropriate. Although there is an on-going investment in ICT provision, demand still outstrips

supply and specialist use is restricted in some subjects. The library is a valuable and well-stocked resource, providing good levels of supportive specialist material, a well used fiction library and additional ICT facilities with CD-Rom and Internet access.

95. The quality of financial planning is satisfactory. The bursar manages satisfactorily the financial affairs of the school, reporting to the headmaster and to the governors. The governors' finance committee is involved actively in scrutinising and agreeing the draft budget, considering the implication of all activities, and ensuring that they are in line with school priorities. Tenders are received and considered for all significant expenditure and appropriate advice is sought from the LEA on comparative value. Allocation of funds to departments is on a formula basis and teachers are aware of the amount of money each department receives. The school receives income from the Guild of Holy Cross Estate. The receipt and administration of this income is in the hands of the school trustees who have provided the school with £43,000 for upgrading the school ICT network. These funds and the government grants for the specialist National Grid for Learning, and Standard Funds have been managed efficiently, ensuring that resources are used as planned and that value for money is obtained. The school needs to evaluate more systematically the impact of these additional funds on pupils' attainment and achievement.
96. The computerised financial management system is effective and provides efficient financial control. The school accounts have been audited regularly. The recent audit report highlighted some concerns in respect of budget management, school fund administration and purchasing arrangements and income collection systems. The school has addressed most of the concerns satisfactorily. The governors' audit committee now monitors rigorously the financial arrangements of the school. The governing body has approved a 'financial and administration standards policy' to manage efficiently its budgetary obligations. The school has run a deficit budget for the last three years and the governors have agreed, with the LEA, to balance the books in the next three years. Overall, learning resources are managed prudently and the school gives very good value for money.

## **Sixth form**

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

97. The sixth form is very well led, managed and administered. The head of sixth form attends regularly the post-16 meetings organised by the LEA to share good practice. She is well informed on new national initiatives and issues relevant to sixth form provision. Overall, the strategic vision is very good. The school's management arrangements have allowed the head of sixth form considerable autonomy and encouraged her to be innovative. She works closely with heads of faculty, heads of subjects and form tutors. They all work together well in the strategic planning of sixth form development and in the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and attendance. Performance management has enabled the senior management team and heads of faculty to monitor effectively the work of sixth form teachers. As a result, the monitoring of standards; setting of targets, provision of guidance and the availability of career advice are coherent, efficient and effective. These initiatives have helped to raise achievements in most subjects.
98. The school provides highly effective guidance and support to sixth form students from induction until they leave the school. The induction procedures for post-16 students are very good. The transition from Year 11 into the sixth form is well managed. The sixth form booklet gives a full and informative summary of sixth form courses and activities, to guide students, including those who join the school from elsewhere. Admission of students into the sixth form follows well organised and structured procedures. All heads of departments explain their A-level courses to parents and pupils and sixth formers are invited to share their own experiences of life in the sixth form, and on the work they have to do. The head of sixth form advises all Year 11 pupils on post-16 options during the months preceding their GCSE examinations and interviews them to determine whether they have met the entry requirements for the sixth form. These consultations enable the students to make well informed choices.
99. A detailed analysis of students' results in AS and A2 examinations is carried out by an assistant headmaster and heads of departments are expected to scrutinise and explain performance in their subjects.

100. The school provides its sixth form students with excellent opportunities to exercise leadership, show initiative and set a positive example and tone. A sixth form committee acts responsibly taking decisions about the running of the sixth form common room and expenditure of funds. The school has considerable involvement with the local community through the sixth-form voluntary service, which involves sixth form students working in local primary schools. The prefects play a major role in the running of the school. The head boy and his deputies think highly of their school, and their roles within it, participating actively in supporting many school functions and activities. They are mature and confident pupils who give thoughtful opinions when attending meetings of the governing body. They also benefit from attending the town council meetings and participating in civic ceremonies. Students' contributions and views are valued by the senior management team, staff and governors.
101. The governing body fulfils very effectively its responsibilities in helping to shape the direction of the sixth form. The governors' academic committee, consisting of senior governors, heads of faculty and the senior management team, monitors systematically both provision and performance. The committee has supported well the strategic development and best interests of the school's sixth form. It does a great deal of productive work in support of initiatives designed to raise standards and improve the quality of education. The academic committee made a decision not to introduce vocational courses after consulting staff and others.

### **Resources**

102. Financial planning is very good. High priority is given to supporting sixth form courses and school funds and generous donations from the school's trustees are used efficiently to support a wide range of curricular opportunities. Costs for the sixth form are linked appropriately with the priority areas identified in the school's development plan. Targets for development are fully costed, with account taken of time and professional development commitments, as well as strictly financial implications. The use and monitoring of the budget for the sixth form is well controlled. The very high AS and A-level examinations results in many subjects clearly justify the expenditure allocated. The sixth form gives very good value for money.
103. Staffing is good overall, with an appropriate balance of age, experience and specialist expertise. The deployment of the teaching staff is good. The existing expertise and experience of support staff are used appropriately to support efficiently the learning of students and are a contributory factor to the good standard of teaching. The school did experience staffing difficulties in modern foreign languages and physics but the crisis was managed with integrity and new appointments have been made to rectify the situation. When new teachers are being appointed, the interview panel takes into account the candidates' ability to teach GCE A-level subjects.
104. The range and quality of learning resources are generally satisfactory though resources for ICT are under-developed. Within the school's budget, funds are allocated equitably according to a known formula. The library is a useful central resource, which is well used by students. Most departments fully exploit its usefulness as a dimension of their work. The school's accommodation for sixth form is generally satisfactory though specialist accommodation for design and technology is unsatisfactory. There is now a site and maintenance development plan, which identifies priorities promoted by the school development plan. A number of improvements are imminent.

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

105. This is a very successful school. In order to sustain the good work in many subjects and raise standards in a few, the governors and senior management of King Edward VI School, with the support of the local education authority, should now:
- (1) Raise standards in modern foreign languages, ICT and design and technology by:**
- targeting in-service training on effective teaching methods, where needed;
  - providing greater variety of activities to stimulate the pupils' interests;
  - ensuring that programmes of study in design and technology are covered satisfactorily;
  - using assessment outcomes to plan for the progress of pupils of differing ability within lessons;
  - improving learning resources in Spanish and design and technology;

- implementing subject specific recommendations in respective subject paragraphs.
- (see paragraphs 3, 4, 6, 11, 16, 170, 171-174, 193)

**(2) Meet fully the statutory requirement for ICT and design and technology by:**

- identifying the knowledge, understanding and skills in ICT and design and technology that are required;
- identifying opportunities to raise standards further in each subject of the curriculum through the use of ICT;
- monitoring rigorously the progressive development of ICT skills across the curriculum.
- (see paragraphs 6,11, 16, 149, 150, 17-171)

When drawing up the action plan, it is recommended that attention is also given to:

- Health and safety; (see paragraph 72)
- Assessment practice in some subjects and reports to parents; (See paragraph 69-71, 81)
- Deficit budget. (See paragraph 96)

### **Sixth form: areas for improvement**

106. In order to raise standards further, the headmaster, governors and staff of the school should:

**(1) Raise standards in geography and modern foreign languages by:**

- improving planning and pacing in some geography lessons;
- the teaching of independent study skills in geography;
- increasing opportunities in French for students to use the language independently of the teacher.
- (See paragraphs 13, 254, 282)

**(2) Improve ICT provision by:**

- identifying opportunities to raise the standards of key skills further in each subject through the use of ICT;
- monitoring the progressive development of ICT skills across the curriculum.
- (See paragraphs 238, 240, 243, 247, 257, 265)

**(3) Improve facilities for art and for design technology subjects to enhance teaching and students' learning experiences.**

- (see paragraphs 243, 253)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	130
	Sixth form	57
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	13	46	49	21	1	0	0
Percentage	10	35	38	16	1	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	5	24	16	12	0	0	0
Percentage	9	42	28	21	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.*

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	330	113
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	5	0

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7	3

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	Pupils	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	64	0	64

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Pupils	64	64	64
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	64	64	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	88 (98)	100 (98)	94 (94)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Pupils	64	64	64
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	64	64	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	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	Pupils	Girls	Total
	2001	62	0	62

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	Pupils	62	62	62
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	62	62	62
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (98)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	69.2
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Pupils	Girls	Total
	2001	59	n/a	59

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	31.5	n/a	31.5 (28.3)	n/a	n/a	1 0 (n/a)
National	16.9	n/a	17.4 (17.9)	2.7	n/a	2.7 (2.7)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	317
Any other minority ethnic group	2

### **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	1	0
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: Y11 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.1

#### **Education support staff: Y11 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	114

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y11 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.4
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y11 – Y13**

Key Stage 2	0
Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	19.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1488631
Total expenditure	1497400
Expenditure per pupil	3365
Balance brought forward from previous year	-98539
Balance carried forward to next year	-107308

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14

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)	None

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	443
Number of questionnaires returned	143

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	42	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	43	4	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	61	6	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	50	22	3	6
The teaching is good.	27	58	9	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	46	8	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	36	12	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	24	1	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	25	50	19	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	41	44	3	6	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	45	5	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	42	15	6	7

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- High standards in the National Curriculum test and GCSE examinations.
- The very good teaching which contributes to maintaining high standards.
- Excellent leadership and management combined with good teamwork.
- Excellent contributions to pupils' development particularly in increasing their artistic skills.

#### Areas for improvement

- Provision and use of ICT.

107. Standards achieved in the National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations in English and English literature are high. By the end of Year 9 and 11, boys' attainment exceeds the national and LEA averages. Standards have risen since the last inspection and consistently high standards have been maintained. This represents good achievement for most pupils with the highest attaining pupils making rapid progress. In 2001, the test results for Year 9 pupils were very high in relation to the national average with 85.7 per cent achieving level 6 and above. Thirty nine per cent achieved level 7 and 11 per cent of pupils reached level 8. The results were however below those for similar schools. Analysis of the results and monitoring records showed that a very small number of pupils became de-motivated. The department has taken swift action to support pupils likely to under-achieve. The average points score was slightly lower than those of mathematics and science.
108. In the 2001 GCSE English results, over one-third of pupils achieved the top grades and, altogether, two-thirds achieved the highest grades A\*/A. In English literature, 43 per cent of the total cohort achieved similar grades. The GCSE results are in line with the average for similar schools. Minority ethnic pupils achieve as well as their peers in all examinations. The relative performance of pupils in English is slightly lower than those in mathematics and the sciences.
109. The inspection evidence confirms that these standards are being maintained in Year 11 and the present cohort reflect the standards expected nationally for selective schools. Standards in speaking and listening are very high, overall. Pupils demonstrate a high level of confidence when articulating their views. They communicate their ideas very clearly and sustain the interest of listeners through the use of interesting and descriptive vocabulary as illustrated in a Year 8 lessons on telling stories. They are never at a loss for words and readily adapt their talk to different situations as seen when Year 8 pupils used all the conventions of a debating chamber when discussing capital punishment. By the end of Year 9, they are very competent speakers in all situations. The Year 11 pupils are accomplished speakers, responding quickly and persuasively when expressing complex ideas. For example, a Year 11 class discussing MacLavery's *Lamb*, made some perceptive comments about symbolism in the text. A boy's comment on the surreal nature of the author's style led to other members of the class explaining their interpretations well and taking the discussion into a different direction. Although pupils enjoy taking part in all oral activities, there are no opportunities for them to use their skills in a formal debating society.
110. Standards in reading are very high in all year groups. Reading is strongly encouraged and the department works closely with the librarian to provide pupils with comprehensive reading lists to extend their knowledge of authors and the rich literary heritage. The Year 7 - 9 pupils have impressive reading habits and habitually read widely. They review a range of books readily and Year 7 higher attaining pupils write thorough reviews. They command a wide vocabulary and use literary terms accurately. The analytical skills of pupils are strong when they explore ideas, characters and themes as seen in the perceptive response and interpretation of Year 8 pupils' work on Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*. By the end of Year 9, textual grasp and appreciation show a high standard as illustrated in their work on Hill's *I'm King of the Castle*, *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*. In particular, the higher attaining pupils demonstrate very good engagement with texts. The Year 10 and 11 pupils read with insight and engagement showing a very good understanding of how writers use language to achieve effects. They comment effectively on structure and linguistic devices and use textual evidence appropriately to support their response. Overall, they are very competent in

using a range of reading skills and use higher order skills to delve into the social background of texts. Gifted and talented pupils are given good opportunities to extend their reading skills; for example, they take part in the Carnegie Shadow competition.

111. Attainment in writing is well above average in all year groups. Portfolios of work exemplifying standards show an increasing sophistication in style and vocabulary as pupils progress through the school. The gifted and talented writers use their creative skills to produce a range of articles for *The Stradfordian* paper as well as to enter various writing competitions.
112. Pupils undertake a wide range of writing and are given many opportunities to write personal and creative pieces. They make copious notes during lessons by quickly scanning information as they identify and record the most important points. They use the writing process effectively to develop relevant material interestingly. Overall, pupils write fluently and coherently paying good attention and appropriately to form and audience. Their writing is engaging and there is precision in the use of language. Grammatical structures and punctuation marks are used accurately and effectively to clarify meaning. Complex words are spelt correctly and final drafts show confident and assured writers. There are however instances when careless proofreading and editing skills spoil work. Despite pupils not having good access to ICT in school, most use it at home to produce well-presented pieces of work.
113. Attitudes and behaviour are very good and sometimes exemplary especially in Years 10 and 11. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and are enthusiastic and motivated learners. The older pupils in Years 10 and 11 show a high level of concentration and application to their work. They possess maturity and confidence. Pupils arrive to lessons on time, take responsibility for their learning, work well collaboratively and are very much at ease with their teacher. On the rare occasion when behaviour is unsatisfactory, it is because they are talkative and only partly involved in their work.
114. Teaching is a strength. The quality overall is very good with many excellent features, which promote very good learning and high attainment in English. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge and expertise to plan and deliver interesting and well-structured lessons. Through the teachers' very high expectations, there is a high level of critical thinking as pupils are constantly challenged with probing questions. This leads to pupils being very alert when giving personal responses to literary texts. Teachers emphasis on high standards drives pupils effectively, so for example, skilful and intensive questioning such as 'Where is your evidence?' and demands such as 'Summarise this for me' contribute to deepening pupils' understanding of the subject. Teachers develop pupils' love for literature and provide them with the opportunity to begin offering alternative interpretations. They give evaluative comments and intensive review of learning to assess pupils' knowledge of the work. Their clear exposition and use of concrete visual images and examples reinforce teaching points. There is very good attention to developing pupils' understanding of linguistic and literary terms and consequently, pupils use specialist terms with ease and understanding.
115. A particular feature of the department is the emphasis placed on using assessment to inform pupils about the skills they need to apply to get the highest grades. Misconceptions and errors are dispelled and they are given good access to materials to motivate and assist them in their learning. For instance, teachers give whole class and individual support as well as de-briefing the whole Year 11 cohort after the mock exams. This makes pupils feel confident and increases their understanding of the work. There are very good opportunities for pupils to become independent learners and group work is used often. Homework is used to extend and consolidate learning and constructive marking challenges pupils to maintain a high standard, as they are made aware of their strengths and areas for improvement. Classroom management and organisation are excellent and the very good relations between the teachers and pupils contribute to the positive learning environment. On the rare occasion when teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the pupils were not fully engaged as there were insufficient strategies to hold their attention. Assessment is very good. Good use is made of assessment to guide teaching and identify disaffection and under-achievement as well as support for pupils. Reports however, do not identify pupils' strengths and areas for improvement.
116. Leadership of the department is excellent and teachers work well together as a team. Teaching and learning are underpinned by a clear sense of direction, detailed development plan and well chosen texts and units of work to challenge pupils. At this stage, the plan requires precise

measurable success criteria. Since the last inspection, the schemes of work are now being revised to reflect the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy; however, there is scope for improving the curriculum by providing medium-term plans and other provisions in the units of work. The department has developed a very good project with national and international organisations on Shakespeare online; however, computers are not used in the teaching of English and the situation has not improved since the last inspection.

117. The head of department monitors teaching effectively and staff have good opportunities to develop their skills to meet their personal targets and the needs of the department. Staffing is now good and the department benefits from having a team of highly qualified and experienced teachers. Support for the newly qualified teacher is very good. However, the present staffing would be inadequate to meet the demands of the curriculum when drama is added to the curriculum. Line management is effective and the department works closely with the link governor, a critical and supportive friend. There are insufficient language texts to reflect the changes in the Year 7 to 9 curriculum. There is only one television and video in the department. This creates problems, as classes have to change rooms to use them. The accommodation is satisfactory but some teaching rooms are small and cramped.
118. The department provides an extensive range of activities to enrich pupils' experiences and drama skills. The Year 7 Africa project makes excellent use of literature from other cultures. There are excellent contacts with minority ethnic artists, the LEA Intercultural Service and local schools. However, there is a paucity of literature from other cultural heritages in Years 8 and 9. The department has established extensive links within the community as well as national and international institutions to enrich pupils' understanding of the subject and exploit the very rich local heritage.

## DRAMA

119. The provision for pupils to take part in drama productions and activities as an extra-curricular activity is excellent. Drama is taught as part of the English curriculum and teachers use it to develop pupils' understanding of texts, in particular Shakespearean plays in Year 9. Year 7 - 9 pupils receive one lesson of discrete drama each week and occasionally, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given the opportunity to use it to approach their work. In the small sample of lessons seen, pupils' attainment in drama was always good. In the very limited curriculum time, they displayed good self-discipline and powers of concentration when using a range of drama conventions. For instance Year 7 and 8 pupils made good progress in developing role-play when improvising and evaluating their performances. The pupils' response to the subject extends beyond enthusiasm and excitement; it is very serious and shows commitment to working within a very strong culture and tradition of drama productions. They recognise this cultural practice as extremely rewarding, particularly as it provides the gifted and talented pupils with opportunities to excel, and many take part in school based and local productions.
120. Teaching generates a positive response from pupils and challenges them to skilfully use role-play to a high standard. Planning seeks to motivate pupils and teachers succeed in holding their interest by making drama lessons relevant to their work in English. The English department is presently considering offering the subject as a GCSE option; however, the present staffing and allocation of time would be inadequate to meet the demands of the subject.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Very high results in national assessments at the age of 14.
- Very high standards in GCSE examinations in both mathematics and statistics.
- Very good teaching extends pupils' knowledge to very high levels.
- The management of the department is excellent.
- Excellent relationships foster pupils' very positive attitudes to learning.
- Enrichment through entry into the Junior and Intermediate Mathematics Challenges.

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

121. Pupils' standards of attainment on entry to the school are high, with many pupils in Year 7 achieving level 5 in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 years. These results are sustained and improved, so that by the age of 14 standards are very high when compared to all schools and well above average when compared to grammar schools. The results in the 2001 GCSE level in mathematics were very high when compared to all schools as all pupils gained grades in the A\*-C range with most pupils achieving grades A\* or A. Compared with other subjects in the school mathematics results are very good, being similar to those of science and with the exception of statistics, better than others. Even if prior attainment is considered these results are still above what would be expected. In statistics over half of the pupils gained A\* or A grades and the results are better than all other subjects of the curriculum. Results in both subjects have risen since the last inspection. Even with these high standards, teachers are not complacent and constantly seek ways to improve further.
122. The evidence from work seen and lessons reflects the very high standards achieved by Year 9. All pupils have excellent number skills and confidently use mental methods in calculating answers. They can use percentages, fractions and decimals, confidently changing from one to another as they solve problems. There is a good degree of challenge as the examples given are not limited to easy conversion. They can work systematically, generalise answers and confidently explain their work to their teacher and other pupils in their class. Pupils can use algebra with confidence to generalise equations of sequences after identifying the pattern of numbers involved. The use of computers is limited by access to facilities but pupils are confident in using Logo to write instructions to draw geometric shapes. Some lessons encourage pupils to develop personal learning skills. This is started in Year 7 with the investigation on famous mathematicians. During this pupils are encouraged to undertake research and produce written results which provide an attractive display in classrooms. The range of pupils' ability is high and there are only a few pupils with special educational needs. These needs are recognised by teachers and where necessary are satisfied during lessons.
123. Attainment by the age of 16 is very high, all pupils in Year 11 can use a range of sophisticated equation solving techniques and can solve quadratic equations and use trigonometry with ease. The GCSE statistics course is integrated into the mathematics course and all pupils confidently use a range of statistical techniques to analyse information and present their findings in a variety of ways. They can discuss confidently their work with their teacher and with other pupils giving logical arguments for their method and recognising the success of others. When working through investigational tasks pupils readily share experiences and are mutually supportive in discussing various routes through a particular task. This was seen in one class in Year 10 where the techniques of working with number patterns had to be revised in order to progress.
124. Overall the quality of teaching is very good and is the main reason for these very high results and very good learning. In lessons seen, teaching was consistently good or better. This is reinforced when pupils' work is analysed. All lessons are planned well and proceed at a brisk pace. Lessons usually start with a clear exposition from the teacher after which pupils work confidently. There is little differentiation in lessons although extension material is available if needed. Exercises given to pupils are short, relevant and time limited. This sustains pace and concentration. The presentation of lessons is good and is being enhanced by the use of an interactive whiteboard. The use of this has not yet been fully exploited though teachers are changing classrooms to extend its use across all classes. With experience, creativity and more practice it will enhance teaching even further. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and comments are both encouraging and helpful in extending knowledge or giving guidance for improvement. Teachers also encourage independent thought and personal study through the coursework tasks for GCSE examinations. When developing these tasks teachers ask very open questions to stimulate pupils' thinking. Discipline and classroom management are good. When working, pupils do talk and discuss their work, but readily stop and listen when asked to do so. The aims of lessons are not always shared with the class and often there are no plenary sessions. These are not essential but could be useful sometimes especially in Year 7. Homework is set and marked regularly. The homework set during the inspection was relevant and in some cases open-ended to encourage pupils to pursue their own lines of enquiry.

125. Pupils' positive attitudes reflect the good teaching; they arrive at lessons promptly, settle quickly and work at a good pace. Teachers address them by name and they are equally polite and contribute well to lessons. They are confident in their relationship with their teacher and their fellow pupils to work solutions on the board or to present results of their work to the rest of the class without embarrassment. Pupils' response to these events is one of support and encouragement. There is mutual respect between the teachers and their pupils; this fosters a good atmosphere in which mathematics is taught. The pupils appreciate the good preparation that the teachers make for their lessons and the teachers prepare lessons that meet the needs of their pupils. In lessons where equipment is issued it is always returned or collected without any fuss. When pupils mark their own work they are expected to do so honestly and fairly. In this way the department makes a valuable contribution to moral development.
126. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented, but as pupils' standards of numeracy are very high the limits of this strategy are soon reached. It is planned for continuity and progression and covers all attainment targets. The scheme of work is referenced to the National Curriculum. Opportunities for investigational work, practical work and the use of ICT are integrated into the scheme of work. The GCSE curriculum is enriched by including statistics into the scheme. One very good feature of the Year 7 curriculum occurs when the pupils are given a mathematics trail around Stratford-upon-Avon to see the impact, use and application of mathematics in the world around them. This is continued in Year 8 when the pupils participate in a residential course at the National Sports Centre, Lilleshall where the department has devised a maths trail around the centre. The results of this study are part of the interesting displays that can be seen in the classrooms. There are opportunities within the curriculum to use mathematics from other cultures, for example Year 7 were investigating Rangoli patterns as part of their work on transformations.
127. Assessment is integral to the overall scheme of work. There are regular assessment opportunities built into the plan for each term. Class work and homework are marked conscientiously and pupils are given constructive feedback to extend their learning. In many instances work is corrected. This enables teachers to monitor progress and to take action if an individual's progress causes concern. There are discussions after assessments to analyse results. There is some target setting but this is under developed at present. The reports to parents indicate National Curriculum levels and target grades for GCSE but do not include any indications for improvement. Parents are contacted if there are serious concerns about any pupil.
128. The management of the department is excellent. The head of department leads by example. There is monitoring of teaching and learning and the department aims for higher standards. There are regular department meetings held that cover a range of topics but have a common focus on sustaining or improving very high standards. There are sufficient, well qualified, staff to teach the curriculum. They are mutually supportive and share a common desire for improvement. The accommodation is sufficient for the current timetable but with the larger classes, some rooms are crowded. This reduces the range of activities that can be used. There are adequate resources for the department but there are no computer facilities for use within the classrooms. There is a comprehensive handbook to guide the ongoing development of the department and there is a scheme of work that includes guidance for teaching and suggested timings of topics. This is reviewed on a regular basis in the light of curriculum changes.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are very high and are improving.
- The quality of teaching is very good with some outstanding features.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used fully to support teaching.
- Assessment is yet to be used fully to guide curriculum planning.

- Laboratories are in urgent need of refurbishment.

129. In 2001, National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were very high in comparison with national averages for pupils achieving level 5, or above, and also for those achieving level 6 or above. Although on comparison with all other secondary schools, results were very high, they were in line with those for selective schools. The results in science were below those for mathematics but similar to those for English. Since the last inspection, the trend has been broadly in line with the national trend. Teacher assessment indicates that teachers estimated accurately the performance of pupils. These results represent good progress in science, since the attainment of pupils on entry to the school was also high. Test results showed a significant improvement in 2001 in the numbers of pupils achieving level 6 and above compared with results in 2000.
130. By the end of Year 9, inspection evidence shows that pupils of all abilities have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts, improved their understanding of scientific concepts and have made good progress in investigative science. For example, higher-attaining pupils have a good grasp of the water transport system in plants and have a very good understanding of the particulate nature of matter, some using it well to explain why the resistance of the hot filament of a light bulb does not obey Ohm's Law. Lower-attaining pupils are less secure in their understanding but realise, for example, that water is lost by transpiration through holes in the under-surfaces of leaves and that electrical resistance is related to voltage and current. Overall, progress in lessons, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is very good.
131. In 2001 the GCSE examination results in biology, chemistry and physics were well above the national average, for those achieving A\*-C grades, when compared with all schools and above those for selective schools. The number of pupils achieving higher grades A\*/A was, overall, very high compared with all schools. When compared with all selective schools, the number of pupils achieving A\*/A grades in biology was above average, but in chemistry and physics were very high. Whilst results in chemistry and physics were similar to those for mathematics and English, those for biology were below those subjects. Results in GCSE dual award examinations were very high when compared with all schools, and above average when compared with selective schools. Similarly the number of pupils gaining the highest grades was also high. The trend since the previous inspection has shown an improvement in each of the subjects for which pupils were entered. When the standards attained at GCSE are compared with the results which these pupils obtained at the end of Year 9, it is clear that progress and achievement through Years 10 and 11, including for pupils with special educational needs, has been very good.
132. Evidence obtained during the inspection shows that standards are very high in comparison with national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils, for example, are confident in describing how acid strength is dependent upon the concentration of hydrogen ions and that neutralisation occurs when these ions react with hydroxide ions to form water. They understand how to determine the resistance of resistors in series and parallel circuits and appreciate the differences between aerobic and anaerobic respiration linking these with the chemical reactions involved. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident. For example, they appreciate how neutralisation occurs but some believe that acids exist as discrete molecules in aqueous solutions.
133. Evidence suggests that all attainment targets are well covered and that, overall, investigative science is well integrated into the teaching programmes in all three disciplines. Pupils are encouraged to make hypotheses, based upon previous knowledge, and to plan investigations. Whilst experimental results are well represented, both graphically and in tabular form, and conclusions based upon scientific evidence are well written, there is less evidence of pupils evaluating investigations.
134. The standard of literacy is very good. The great majority of pupils cope well with extended writing, using scientific terms with confidence. Pupils, throughout the school, speak with confidence, describing and discussing experimental work with a good degree of accuracy. Numerical competency is also very good and is used well for scientific calculations of, for example, pressure and resistance. Pupils draw graphs competently, making good use of lines of best fit. The use of ICT, whilst under development, is yet to be used fully as a teaching support tool. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress. They do not, however, provide focused, subject specific strengths and weaknesses in each attainment target, nor subject specific targets for improvement.

135. The quality of teaching is very good. Throughout the main school, the teaching observed was at least good in all but one lesson, in which it was satisfactory. In most lessons teaching was very good and some was outstanding. There are features which are common to most lessons. Teachers make use of their very good subject knowledge to provide very effective explanations and to ask questions which challenge pupils to explain observations or which assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They set out clear objectives which pupils understand. To achieve this, teachers ensure that, in the majority of lessons, planning, organisation and classroom management are effective and that lesson content matches the abilities of pupils. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and homework is given, when appropriate, which either consolidates or extends class work. Whilst books are always marked and helpful comments are often made which provide guidance on improvement, marking rarely indicates the level at which pupils have performed relative to National Curriculum levels of attainment.
136. Teachers identify appropriate learning objectives which offer challenge, and couple these with good support for pupils. This enables pupils to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and information. In all lessons, pupils work hard and at a good pace. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate carefully.
137. The behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to science are both very good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show enthusiasm and enjoyment.
138. The science curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The allocation of time to the teaching of science is slightly greater than national recommendations. Overall continuity is good, but there is room for greater cohesion between departments. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those who are gifted or talented, is good. The use of ICT, while being built into the department scheme of work, is, in practice, insufficiently used to enhance learning. Assessment is good. Good use is made of pupils' records to identify pupils who are underachieving and to guide teaching. For example, many teachers make good use of their assessment of homework to revisit areas of weakness, thus ensuring that misunderstandings are clarified. However, assessment is not yet used fully to guide curriculum planning.
139. Overall management of the science faculty is very good. It is led by an able and dedicated head of faculty who leads a team of heads of subject departments and subject teachers. He provides clear educational direction, is hard working and committed. Curriculum planning is good. Short-term development planning, which is in line with school development planning, is effective and manageable, but planning for long-term departmental development has yet to be carried out. Procedures for assessment are well established and are used very effectively to monitor progress and identify underachievement. The monitoring of the quality of teaching by formal and informal lesson observations is well established and it is used effectively to develop good practice. Even though the number of laboratories is good for a school of this size, many are old and in urgent need of refurbishment. The current arrangement of benches in most of the laboratories adversely affects teaching. The number of teaching staff is adequate, they are well qualified, and deployed effectively. However staffing difficulties in the physics department have affected standards adversely. Resources, in terms of books and overall scientific equipment are satisfactory, but there are shortages in computer hardware and in some of the more specialised equipment needed for the teaching of modern advanced courses.
140. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Test and examination results have improved, particularly the number of pupils gaining the highest grades at GCSE. Teaching, described as being satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, is now very good. With the continued use of the department's strategies for further development the capacity to improve is very good.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths
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- The standards achieved in national assessments and examinations are very high compared with the national figures and are above average compared with those of pupils in similar schools.
- The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects are very good, they are both practising artists and use their skills and enthusiasm very well in the classroom through direct instruction and the use of group and individual evaluations.
- The teaching of the basic skills of fine art is good, drawing is the focus for most activities and provides a firm foundation for further study.

#### Areas for improvement

- The attitude of many of the younger pupils to the subject is poor; they do not see it as a valuable area to study and their interest and concentration in class is low, which affects the standards that they achieve.
- The curriculum is narrow, focussed on two-dimensional fine art. There is a lack of work in three dimensions; little evidence of exploration and evaluation in the sketchbooks and the use of computers is minimal.

141. Overall the standards in art and design are very high when compared with the national averages, and are above average compared with those of pupils in similar schools. The results of the end of Year assessments for Year 9 pupils are above average, and the GCSE grades of the Year 11 pupils are very high. However, the standard of work observed in lessons is not as high, and much is similar to that expected nationally. In 2001, nearly all of the Year 9 pupils were judged to have attained level 5, the national expectation, or higher. Almost half reached level 6 and one in ten reached level 7, despite the lack of three-dimensional work and evidence of exploration and evaluations in sketchbooks. The levels have been introduced recently for art and design, and as yet there are no visual examples or standardised procedures to identify them securely. Pupils arrive at the school in Year 7 with little experience of art and design. Many are at level 3, but they make rapid progress to reach the higher levels by the end of Year 9. The results over the past three years have been broadly similar, but the methods of assessing and reporting have changed, and procedures for judging the appropriate level accurately need to be improved.
142. The standards achieved in GCSE examinations are very high. All the 15 pupils who took the GCSE examination in the drawing and painting option of art and design in 2001 gained grades from A\*-C, and of these 13 were A\*-B grades, which is a higher proportion than that expected from pupils in selective schools. This is a big improvement since the previous inspection. The standards of work observed in the present classes are not that high, but Year 11 pupils are only just starting to consolidate their GCSE coursework folders and finish the work to their best standard. The standards over the past three years have gradually improved, and the numbers opting for art and design are steadily increasing. The average points score of pupils taking art and design has increased steadily over the past five years, and it is now above the school average.
143. The work seen in lessons does not reflect the high levels being awarded at the end of Year 9. In particular, the attitudes of many pupils in Years 7 and 8 are poor and demonstrate a lack of application and concentration in their work linked to a perception that art and design is not a subject which they value or with which they will continue. This is a view that was evident during the previous inspection, but is one the newly appointed head of department is intending to remedy. At present the Year 9 pupils are starting to complete projects and develop their folders, but much work is still unfinished. Several have completed intaglio prints to a high standard, based on their drawings of fruit and vegetables, and are now starting vigorous pencil drawings of a stimulating and challenging still life arrangement, some of which are very good. In Years 7-9, the emphasis of teaching is to improve the pupils' basic drawing skills and to develop their critical awareness, both of the standards of their own work and the links with other artists. The introduction of discussion sessions both during and at the end of lessons is already allowing the pupils to do this constructively, and is encouraging them to evaluate their work and search for improvement. The educational visits to museums and galleries are also extending the pupils' experience of art, craft and design. The basic skills of observation and drawing are overall satisfactory, but higher level skills such as analysing outcomes, exploring different social and cultural contexts and developing their ideas to take account of purpose and audience, all of which need to be evident to reach a level 6, are absent. Homework is set regularly to research on the Internet for artists or art movements, and sketchbooks are being used for some visual research, but there is little work of quality in them. The main limiting factor in the achievements of the pupils is the lack of breadth in their studies. Pupils do no three dimensional work, and the curriculum in Years 7-9 is very fine art based. This does not give the pupils the range of opportunities they need to succeed in art, craft and design studies.

144. The results of the drawing and painting GCSE examination in 2001 have been outstanding. The work seen in class indicates that the present Year 11 are producing some work of a good standard, but have a long way to go to match this previous excellent performance. The nature of the course means that much of the work will be completed in the final term, but the controlled test takes several weeks to prepare and so time is short. Some of the work in progress and in folders is disjointed and unfinished, and the new head of department is emphasising the need for a higher pace and more involvement in signing off each project so that the pupils can demonstrate their highest standards in the examination. The painting skills of the Year 11 pupils are good, especially when they are challenged to complete work in acrylic on card in a double lesson, and some of the work in sketchbooks shows detailed research and an exploration of media and styles. Many pupils still rely on copying from photographs however, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection. They are gradually being weaned from this to base their work on direct observation and personal development. The Year 10 pupils are already showing the benefits of this approach, they are producing strong tonal drawings, discussing their progress with the teacher and others, and developing the work in their sketchbooks more confidently.
145. The quality of teaching in art and design is satisfactory, although there are still some inconsistencies. In the best lessons the pupils are motivated by exciting and stimulating situations which challenge them to consider their responses and focus on the work for the entire lesson. Both the newly appointed staff are well qualified, experienced, and as practising artists bring their skills and enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils. When this happens the teaching is good and the pupils are clearly progressing. At other times, although similar tasks are set, the pupils are allowed to gossip and their attention wanders. Although the teachers visit each individual in turn and give appropriate advice and support, the rest of the class is not concentrating and little work of quality is completed. In these lessons the pace is slow, the challenge low, and the standards depressed. When asked about their attitudes to their work several pupils, notably in Year 7, were complacent expressing the view that art and design "is not for them", and they don't see the purpose of working hard when there is so much else to do. This is similar to the views expressed at the time of the previous inspection, and something, again, that the newly appointed staff intend to change. The planning for art and craft has been greatly extended following the previous inspection and subsequent advisory visits. The handbook and schemes of work devised by the previous head of department are extensive and detailed. They relate clearly to the National Curriculum and the levels for the subject, with analyses of results for previous years. These are no longer being used, and the newly appointed staff need to develop a compromise between the possibly unwieldy detail of these plans, and the list of activities which constitutes the present schemes of work. Identifying the learning objectives for each series of lessons that make up a project is a priority. At the moment it is not clear what areas of the National Curriculum are being covered, and so assessing the levels of the present Year 9 will again become hampered by a lack of information.
146. Overall, assessment is weak. Ongoing verbal information is given to each pupil as they develop their work, and this is helping them to improve their work. The introduction of class discussions is helping this process, but it is not clear how the teachers identify what pupils know, understand and can do when they arrive in Year 7, and how they help them to progress through to Year 9 is not clear. In the GCSE classes pupils need clearer guidance on which of the assessment objectives of the GCSE syllabus they need to work on to achieve higher grades, and how well they are progressing in their work. The information thus gained could inform the planning process. There is no specific planning for pupils with individual needs. The teaching makes provision for all pupils through the individual attention each is given in class, and close personal knowledge the teachers have of them.
147. Since the last inspection, progress in the art and design department has been satisfactory. The results in both Year 9 assessments and GCSE examinations have improved significantly. There is now more pace and challenge in Year 10 and 11 lessons, and the profile of the subject is being raised in the school through visits, displays and an artist in residence. The new head of department has clear and relevant plans to address the other issues, but as yet many of them are still unresolved. The curriculum is still too narrow; the sketchbooks are still not used enough; much work in folders is still incomplete and the progress in Years 7-9 is uneven, partly due to the negative attitudes of some of the younger pupils. The planning has been developed, but has now been changed back to a format that looks similar to the one criticised before. Resources for art and design are good, the Years 7-11 classes have very good purpose built accommodation, they use high quality materials, and have access to a good range of books and slides. Provision for the use

of ICT is minimal, with one second hand PC and printer, and no suitable software available. As spending for the subject is low, materials and equipment cannot be replaced when required and staff use their own resources.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teachers have positive relationships with pupils.
- Younger pupils particularly, appreciate the opportunities for practical making activities.
- The introduction of GCSE electronic products provides greater enrichment.
- The workshop area is well maintained with good technician support.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of achievement are below the average for similar schools.
- The curriculum in Years 7-9 is unsatisfactory in its breadth and challenge and does not cover the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.
- The development of ICT within the subject is too limited.
- The assessment systems are limited and provide insufficient guidance for students.
- The accommodation and resources are inadequate.

148. In recent GCSE examinations, standards were above the national average though below the average for similar schools. In general, pupils did a little less well in design and technology compared with their performance in other GCSE courses.

149. Pupils come to the school with limited practical making skills and initially make sound progress in their knowledge and handling of different tools and materials. Subsequent progress is limited by the restricted curriculum and lack of timetable time and by the end of Year 9 the pupils achieve significantly less well than they should. Pupils have good literacy and numeracy skills and this is reflected in the way they are able to communicate their ideas and measure materials with some accuracy. Most have a sound understanding of a design process but few are able to appreciate material constraints or show clear awareness of the user. Work in folders is restricted in range and demonstrates limited graphical and modelling techniques. While during the inspection, new and promising work was seen in the use of computer aided drawing there was little evidence of ICT in pupils' work. Pupils' interest and concern for quality help to ensure that they work with some accuracy and constructional skills are sound with the higher attaining pupils able to review their progress and modify their making plans. Overall standards are about in line with national average though below the average for similar schools.

150. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is broadly satisfactory given that pupils are developing from their more limited earlier experiences. This is well illustrated in the new GCSE electronic products course where the Year 10 pupils are making steady progress in their understanding of electronic systems and components albeit from a low knowledge base. Similarly in the Year 10 resistant materials group, the students' work with different mechanisms indicates, developing knowledge and good graphical and written communication skills, with pupils able to develop their own ideas for an automaton toy. Much of this work involving the strengthening and development of pupils' knowledge and skills results in a later start for the major project with many Year 11 pupils consequently producing more modest outcomes.

151. In lessons and work seen, standards in Year 11 are above the national average with most pupils predicted to gain grades A\*-C. However, the proportion of pupils on target for the highest grades is well below that for similar schools. All pupils are able to produce a range of proposals for a design specification and have strengths in practical making but most design solutions are modest in terms of originality and sophistication with limited awareness of industrial applications. The great majority produce well ordered and relevant research information with the higher attaining pupils more likely to model their design ideas and present their work using ICT.

152. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where the GCSE work provides more challenge. Most pupils respond well to good classroom management based on mutual respect, some humour and clear expectations about appropriate

behaviour. Both the main teachers provide well informed guidance, particularly in the knowledge and use of materials, tools and equipment. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson where pupils learnt how to use a measuring gauge and wood plane and, by working in pairs, were able to evaluate and improve their performance jointly. Similarly in a Year 11 lesson, pupils explored a range of plastics and their properties helped by exemplar material and effective use of question and answer.

153. The main areas of weakness that detract from the otherwise positive teaching are the lack of challenge in the learning programme in Years 7-9 and insufficient rigour in monitoring and assessing pupils' progress. The teaching and learning activities do not progress sufficiently to enable pupils to reach the higher levels of attainment, particularly in the areas of developing ideas, planning, communicating and evaluating. Assessment practice is insecure and not related sufficiently to the National Curriculum criteria in ways that enable pupils to evaluate and improve their performance. While teaching is usually good in the GCSE courses the project assessment lacks clear deadlines and target grades.
154. There continue to be unsatisfactory features in the management and provision of design and technology. There has been some progress in curriculum planning since the last inspection but the scheme of work in Years 7-9 is still too narrow and undemanding. This is exacerbated by the limited curriculum time and current provision does not meet the National Curriculum requirement. Monitoring and assessment practice is also weak and results in less reliable judgements at the end of Year 9.
155. Provision in Years 10 and 11 has improved with the introduction of electronic products, which is a more challenging course and has contributed to a small increase in the take up of design and technology. However, only around half of pupils take design and technology in Key Stage 4 where it is made an option despite still being a compulsory National Curriculum subject. There are certain conditions under which pupils can withdraw from the subject and the school believes that its very broad and academic provision necessitates a large proportion of pupils discontinuing design and technology in favour of modern foreign languages and the three science subjects.
156. Funding for the subject is modest and there are practical making facilities in only one of the three rooms used. This creates problems when two or more classes are timetabled together. The department has recently acquired computer aided manufacturing equipment and there is some improvement in ICT access, though limited facilities for graphics and systems and control contribute to restricted pupil progress in Years 7-9.
157. There has been some staff development but the lack of a permanent team and problems in the faculty leadership has resulted in less effective monitoring of, and support for, the subject leader.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Attainment at GCSE is well above the national average.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Monitoring and self evaluation.

### Areas for improvement

- Provision of spiritual and moral development.
- Use of ICT by pupils in their lessons.

158. Standards of attainment are well above average, both in examination results and in work seen during the inspection. Pupils come into the school with average geographical skills and knowledge and by the end of Year 9 teacher assessments for the past three years show them to be well above the national average with an improving trend. In 2001, GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were 100 percent in the A\* - C range which is well above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. These results are significantly higher than the average for all subjects in the school. The trend has been one of steady overall improvement.

159. Achievement is very good by the end of Year 9 because pupils are interested in their work and they are well taught by experienced teachers. Pupils have gained good map work skills and are learning to analyse information and to pose and answer geographical questions about human activity and the environment; for example some impressive work has been done by Year 9 pupils investigating the volcanic island of Stromboli. Achievement is good by the end of Year 11. Pupils asked perceptive questions when analysing patterns of employment in relation to economic development and they very quickly mastered the construction and application of a 3-variable graph. Pupils with special needs progress as well as other pupils because they are known to teachers who keep an eye on their progress. Little special provision was seen for gifted and talented pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language and those from ethnic minorities are well integrated into their classes and achieve as well as other pupils.
160. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and one was excellent, when the teacher raised pupils' spiritual awareness by giving them the time and means to reflect on their perceptions of Brazil and Japan. In the best lessons the pace was fast and a succession of tasks developed understanding and knowledge, for example in a Year 8 lesson about the ecosystems of coral reefs. Teachers' considerable subject knowledge was well used to expand the topics and widen pupils' learning. Some lessons were enlivened by the use of the interactive whiteboard to display photographs and other resource material in a dramatic fashion which further stimulated learning. In some lessons too much teacher talk and direction meant that pupils were not actively engaged in their own learning. On occasion the pace was too slow which meant that pupils were not well challenged, as in a Year 10 lesson about river systems where interest waned as the lesson progressed. Marking was generally up to date but contained few helpful comments on how to improve, and there was little assessment by questioning during lessons. Management of lessons was good, particularly in the short single lessons when time constrained the way topics could be taught. Homework was always well used to extend the learning themes of the lessons. Although a number of pupils use home computers for their work there was little evidence of the structured use of ICT as a tool for learning. A high standard of literacy was an integral part of lessons, with material to be read and new vocabulary to be learned. Numeracy was used in graphs and statistics and always well-understood by the pupils.
161. On the whole, pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They work diligently and have very good relationships with their teachers. However, there were some instances of poor and inconsiderate behaviour in Year 7 and Year 8 classes which disturbed the learning of others.
162. Leadership and management are very good. The department has good documentation and both pupil progress and overall performance are extremely well monitored. Suitable schemes of work are in place but these do not cover the important aspects of spiritual and moral development. Appropriate fieldwork is in place. Assessment is good but is not sufficiently well linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7- 9. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. Resources have been updated and expanded. Teaching is being monitored. A well written development plan drives the work of the department. Teachers are committed to high standards and this leads to a good capacity to improve.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Standards in examinations and lessons are well above average in Years 7-11.
- Consistently good teaching is a factor in the good progress overall.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT is limited in all years.

163. Standards in Years 7 – 11 are well above average in lessons and work seen, in Year 9 teacher assessments and in GCSE results. Pupils enter Year 7 with above average standards and their good progress maintains these levels of attainment.
164. In GCSE examinations in 2000 and 2001, A\* - C grades consistently exceed the national average and are broadly in line with the results of similar schools. The proportion of A\* - A is also in line with these schools and well above the national average. The average points score is in line with similar schools. Pupils do rather better in history than in their other subjects.
165. Pupils in Year 9 have a good depth of knowledge and understanding. They understand the significance of dates and use them accurately to support an argument. Their ability to link features of the past together and then analyse them is very well developed. For example, when Year 9 pupils were discussing the development of transport, they quickly understood that though canals aided the Industrial Revolution, they were necessarily superseded by the railways. Pupils are able to express their ideas in speech and in writing logically. Their extended writing, usually formal essays, is very good indeed. In essays on Robert Owen, the nineteenth-century social reformer, they not only describe his theories, but consider their impact upon society.
166. In Year 11 lessons, similar strengths emerge. There is good knowledge and understanding. Pupils question and compare sources very well and then use their knowledge to develop ideas further. Their written work is very good. They are accustomed to writing detailed answers within examination time limits, which contributes to their successful GCSE results. Other factors are the attitudes and motivation of pupils who, by Year 9, take their work seriously. An unusual feature of lessons in all years is the strong cross-curriculum element. Pupils raise questions relating history to science, for example, thus discovering for themselves the links between subjects.
167. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in all the lessons seen. In most lessons, they were good, and in a few, very good or excellent. The outstanding feature is the subject knowledge of the teachers allied to effective questioning skills. In lessons where teachers knew exactly what they wanted to elicit, their questions helped pupils reason, make links and find supporting evidence. Pupils of all abilities are well challenged in this way. They are also very well prepared for examinations. They have confidence in their teachers, who plan well for success but still make time to follow up pupils' interests in lessons. So in a Year 10 class, a good and informed discussion resulted when a pupil enquired whether Nietzsche's ideas were linked to Nazi ideology. Good use is made of video material to supplement textbooks. Teaching and learning were most effective when the traditional and well tried methods were combined with video material that conveyed the atmosphere of the period or events. Homework is set regularly and exercise books are well marked with clear indications of how to improve.
168. Management of the department is good. Since the last inspection the schemes of work have been revised. Often the materials and sources used are demanding and well suited to the ability levels. The curriculum, through the Programmes of Study selected in Years 7 – 9, the breadth of the School Council GCSE syllabus, the seventeenth-century English and European history in Years 12 and 13 for AS and A level, challenges pupils at every level. The programme of visits locally and overseas does much to reinforce interest in the subject. The only gap is the use of ICT. The head of department is aware of this and planning is beginning to expand its use as an historical tool. The analysis of GCSE results has led to reorganisation of revision times to raise standards further. Until this present year, there have been staffing difficulties. These have now been overcome and successful teamwork established.
169. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Though there is only one specialist classroom, the range of posters, photographs and artefacts promotes history vividly. The standards of the last inspection have been well maintained.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Recent investment in new computer equipment and interactive whiteboards.
- Pupils enjoy ICT and show very good, responsible attitudes towards their work.
- Good technical support has been provided recently.

#### Areas for improvement

- There are still insufficient computers for use by pupils in other subjects.
- Statutory requirements for ICT are not met fully in some subjects.
- Lack of time in Years 8 – 11 contributes to pupils' unsatisfactory achievement.
- Pupils' ICT work is not assessed systematically and their progress is not monitored effectively.
- Marking is not frequent; pupils do not know how they are progressing.
- Teachers' expertise and competence are variable.

170. Standards by the end of Year 9, as assessed by teachers are average overall, though these assessments have not been moderated and are based on limited evidence. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Not all National Curriculum requirements can currently be met, either in specific ICT lessons or in other subjects by the end of Year 9, mainly because of shortage of equipment and variable staff expertise.

171. Pupils' attainment in ICT on entry to the school has improved. In Year 7, most pupils make satisfactory progress and learn to use word processors, spreadsheets, databases and graphics. During the inspection pupils were able to interrogate confidently a database on nutritional values of food. Most pupils quickly went on to produce graphs to compare the fat and energy values of foods. By the end of Year 9, most pupils develop, explore and communicate information well, particularly through integrating text and graphics and researching on the Internet for homework. Their skills in responding to, and controlling, events by planning, testing and modifying sequences of instructions are less secure. In Years 8 and 9 pupils undertake further satisfactory applications in some lessons, for example in mathematics and modern foreign languages. However, these applications are largely as a result of the interest and at the discretion of individual teachers; there is no systematic teaching of the subject in these years. Statutory requirements in design and technology, art, music, English and science are not yet met fully. There is a need to extend aspects of ICT Programmes of Study throughout the school.

172. Overall, attainment in Years 10-11 is below average because there is no planned or co-ordinated provision of lessons for over one-half of the pupils. The school has well-developed plans to improve the curriculum. Last year 24 pupils took the short GCSE course in ICT but less than a quarter obtained the higher A\*-C grades, a result which is well below the national average. No full GCSE entries were made in 2001, and the course has been discontinued this year. Planned opportunities for pupils to develop ICT competence in other subjects have been inconsistent.

173. During the inspection, a number of lessons were seen in French and Latin where pupils used computers to practise sentence construction and develop creative writing. In Year 11 lessons, pupils ably translated their work experience reports from into French, and used word processing effectively to draft and edit their work quickly. They enjoyed using the special software which helped them to analyse their progress. In mathematics, pupils drew curves to show quadratic equations, and changed them rapidly after seeing the teacher's proficient demonstrations on the new whiteboards. Many pupils use computers in language clubs or at home, and develop good competence in ICT skills. The religious studies web site and yearly Shakespeare's birthday event give opportunities for many pupils to explore the potential of ICT. Data logging is demonstrated in science but pupils have limited opportunity to use data loggers. Pupils in science and mathematics rarely use spreadsheets to solve problems involving modelling techniques. The school's arrangements in Years 10 and 11 do not meet either the aims of the school or national requirements. Although there has been some improvement in standards since the last inspection, standards are not sufficiently high.

174. A small number of timetabled lessons were seen during the inspection, including programmed ICT lessons, ICT in Year 7 and some lessons in other subjects. Teacher absence due to illness meant specific ICT lessons were covered by non-specialists, and this affected the quality of teaching seen in Year 7. However, non-specialist staff had the assistance of a competent technician, and pupils were well motivated and keen to learn. Teaching in the Year 10 and 11 French, Latin and

mathematics lessons was good. Where teaching and learning was less than good it was largely because of large classes in Years 7 - 9 with too few computers available. Teachers covering Year 7 lessons related well to pupils but lacked the expertise to challenge higher attaining pupils. Teachers managed pupils well. Pupils generally co-operated very well with teachers, although when sharing machines younger pupils sometimes wasted time chatting or waiting for assistance. All pupils, including the very small number needing additional support, used equipment safely and were keen to use computers, even when sharing. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that homework is not set consistently to stimulate interest and consolidate knowledge and understanding. Pupils' written assignments are not evaluated and pupils do not know what level they were working at and how they could improve. In the best-planned French and Latin lessons in Year 10 and 11, teachers' high expectations encouraged pupils to explore and extend their own vocabulary and assess their own progress by comparing their work with others.

175. Teaching and learning have not yet shown consistent improvement overall since the last inspection due to lack of timetabled lessons, shortages of equipment and lack of staff training. However, there are examples of very good practice. The new religious studies website allows pupils to obtain study notes, and examination tips, and they can link into numerous websites. The annual Shakespeare's birthday event is very well co-ordinated to involve King Edward VI School pupils in an international 'virtual' celebration in which a world-wide audience can participate over the net. Pupils use computers to key in questions for visiting speakers to debate.
176. Overall management of ICT in the school is unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator has several diverse responsibilities and finds it difficult to lead ICT effectively. He is not an ICT specialist and, until recently has had to manage an old computer network and deal with technical problems himself. The school does not give priority to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' ICT progress in other subjects, although this was an issue from the last inspection. An able technician with good industrial experience has recently been appointed and considerable sums have recently been spent on upgrading equipment, with further expansion planned to meet national requirements. The impact of these changes will need to be measured. The limited, cramped, specialist accommodation shows little improvement in quality since the last inspection. The co-ordination of ICT use in other subjects and assessment of pupils' progress has been inadequate. There are well-managed lunchtime clubs for ICT use in foreign languages. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory overall.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Standards of pupils' attainment are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Pupils' key skills in performing, composing and listening are well developed by an appropriate balance of integrated activities.
- Teaching is consistently very good and always challenging and supportive.
- Pupils' enthusiasm, good organisational skills and desire to improve, promote good achievement.
- Musical opportunities are enriched by the generous provision of instrumental lessons, ensembles and performance experience.

### Areas for improvement

- There are limited opportunities for pupils to gain computer skills during Years 7- 9.
- The development of pupils' critical judgement through self and peer appraisal is restricted in Years 7-9.

177. In 2001, attainment as measured by teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 was above average. Standards of attainment observed in Years 7 - 9 were well above average. Pupils enter Year 7 with a wide variety of prior attainment and experience in music. Some pupils already show promising standards in instrumental performance. Others have limited skills and knowledge. Even halfway through Year 7 all pupils have developed above average skills in performing, as singers and on tuned and untuned percussion instruments. They can sing sensitively in tune and in textures of up to three independent parts. They can maintain a regular rhythmic pulse and relate it accurately to more complicated rhythms in three or more parts. They can combine singing and playing in a whole class performance with confidence and read fluently from graphic and representational notation.
178. Good achievement is also evident in composing. By Year 9 pupils respond positively and imaginatively in sounds to pre-imposed creative limitations, such as representing a journey, describing an atmosphere or mood and depicting an illustration or passage of text. They understand the dramatic effects of contrast between sound and silence, of loud and soft and how instrumental and vocal colour can highlight their creative ideas. The sources of their musical material reflect keenly the wide range of music which they experience as performers and listeners. They are influenced by multi-cultural styles, rock, pop, jazz and classical models.
179. All pupils in Years 7- 9 are good listeners. They are wholly attentive and the success of their concentration is demonstrated by their developing confidence in analysing and appraising when answering the probing questions of their teachers. They use some technical language and show average levels of background knowledge. Their written records of work covered are accurate and well presented overall. They show intelligent attempts at simple individual research, for example, basic information about the life and major compositions of a particular composer. More of this type of independent activity would extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject and underpin their good practical achievement, as well as contribute to the development of their general basic skills.
180. Results in GCSE examinations are above the national average. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 play an instrument, learning mainly in lessons available in the school, and some have reached a high standard for their age. Their practical skills and musical knowledge, including confidence with conventional music notation, together with their good achievement and positive experiences in Years 7 - 9, mean that they are well prepared at the beginning of the GCSE course. Attainment in Year10 is well above average in performing and composing. Achievement is consistent in Year 11 when all pupils are composing at a high standard. In some cases their work shows impressive levels of sophistication and a determination to refine their technical skills in order to improve the realisation of their creative ideas. All pupils in Year 11 record and store their compositions on Sibelius Music Notation Software; submitted coursework shows professional levels of presentation.
181. Pupils in Year 11 have recently attempted their trial GCSE listening examination. In one lesson a review of the results showed that their attainment in the areas of knowledge and understanding of music is not as good as their practical skills. They lack instant recall of basic musical procedures

- and structures. They make rapid improvement when promoted by their teacher, who employs a variety of methods to challenge them to do better and to test the accuracy of their responses.
182. Teaching is consistently very good. Both teachers have high levels of practical skills and impressive subject knowledge over a wide area. These qualities, in combination with their enthusiasm, creativity and professional music experience provide pupils with high standards to which they can aspire. Teaching is well planned and uses the available time efficiently to manage the wide variety of activities which pupils experience. Teaching builds effectively on prior learning and although pupils at all levels of attainment are well supported, teaching style encourages pupils' responsibility for their own achievement.
  183. Pupils are always clear about the context of a particular activity, and what its objectives and outcomes should be. As a result their levels of concentration are generally impressive and this contributes, together with their own co-operative and positive responses, to good levels of achievement. Pupils are given strict time limits for creative activities or group practice and this together with the expectation that they will be ready to perform at a high standard, encourages an urgency which keeps all pupils on task and promotes supportive inter-personal relationships.
  184. Pupils in Year 7 were set the task of rehearsing and performing an African 'call and response' song with percussion accompaniment of three-part rhythmic texture. Pupils listened to a recording of an example of this style, and perceptively analysed its main features. They learned the vocal part, in Swahili, and practised it rigorously, at each rehearsal adding another performance element, such as dynamics, tempo changes and foot stamping. At the same time a group of nine pupils rehearsed a three part rhythmic texture, reading from a graphic score, for drums, shakers and claves. The instrumentalists' rehearsal time was restricted to five minutes in a period which lasted only thirty-five minutes. After two full class rehearsals, the performance was of a high standard. Pupils were not only accurate and co-ordinated but also enthusiastic and lively.
  185. In Years 7- 9 pupils and teachers have animated discussions about the music to which they listen. Pupils' experience is extended by challenging questions and pupils' responses are intelligent and articulate. Their critical judgements would be improved if they had more formal written opportunities to record the evaluation of their own work and to appraise that of their peers. Class and group performances are not audio recorded, which means that there is no permanent storage of creative work that the school could use to monitor standards of practical attainment.
  186. Pupils receive regular and useful feedback in lessons and the assessment process, which is linked to end of term tests and eventually to the teacher assessments in Year 9, builds a profile for each pupil. It is adapted from the whole school system in a manner appropriate for the practical nature of the subject. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are assessed on a target basis which is usefully linked to the marking scheme for GCSE.
  187. Through Years 7 -9 the extensive scheme of work gives pupils access to a wide variety of musical styles and types, from conventional classical music to rock, soul and folk. Music from Africa, India, Indonesia and the Caribbean contribute to the pupils' understanding of different cultures. Pupils' learning and their development of literacy and numeracy are enhanced by cross-curricular connections, through topics on film music, opera, seasons, war, nationalism and pictures. However, these pupils have no provision for the development of computer skills in music, although converted accommodation with new computer resources have been approved. Two computers with midi-keyboards and good software are well used by pupils in Year 10 and 11.
  188. The musical experience of many pupils is enriched by the extra-curricular provision. More than one third of pupils have individual music lessons, taught by visiting instrumental teachers in the school. The quality of their teaching is very good. These pupils, and those who also have individual tuition outside the school, can join brass and string ensembles and the orchestra, which is a joint collaboration with Stratford Grammar School. Singing is popular and the standard of the choir is commendable.
  189. The school makes an important contribution to the development of instrumental provision by offering free instrumental lessons to pupils in Year 7 for one term and continuing to subsidise lessons for a second term. The response of pupils and their parents is encouraging. The growing musical resources this investment provides supports the development of even more opportunities for pupil enrichment as well as being a significant factor in the raising of musical standards and the profile of music in the school. During the inspection all pupils in Year 7 gave an impressive evening concert.

The programme included 28 solo items, six ensembles and finale using all pupils, some as singers and others as instrumentalists. This was one of some 40 events which involve pupils in musical performances during each academic year and also provide opportunities for their original compositions to be performed.

190. The very good leadership and co-ordination of the large number of varied musical opportunities for pupils, is a positive factor in the success of the subject. The director of music manages all aspects of the curriculum, the work of eleven visiting teachers, the preparation for and organisation of concerts and recitals, with energy and enthusiasm. The work of the department is monitored and evaluated honestly and effectively and its development plans reflect a shared commitment to improve standards.
191. The improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching, previously judged unsatisfactory, is now consistently very good. Composing is developing to a high standard. There is a good scheme of work and assessment procedures are effective. The number of pupils choosing music in Year 10 has increased dramatically. All pupils have equal opportunity to extend their learning in instrumental lessons and participate in extra-curricular activities. Overall these improvements have ensured that attainment and achievement have improved from average to well above average.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The provision for modern languages is **good**. Pupils make good progress because of the good quality of teaching and their positive attitudes towards their learning.

### Strengths

- Teaching enables pupils to make good progress in lessons.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Teachers very good subject knowledge.
- Effective use of ICT.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards achieved in GCSE and A/S and A-level examinations.
- Use of assessment to plan for the progress of pupils of differing ability within lessons.
- Resources for Spanish in the main school.

192. Standards achieved in French, German and Spanish in GCSE examinations in 2001 are well above national averages but below average when compared to similar grammar schools. This represents a slight fall in standards achieved in the previous year. Pupils achieve higher standards in other subjects of the curriculum than they do in French, German and Spanish. The standard of work seen in lessons is well above average in French and German and average in Spanish.
193. By the end of Year 9 pupils make rapid progress in developing their knowledge of French this is evident in the high standard of writing they produce and in their understanding of written texts. However their confidence and competence in speaking and listening are less secure. This is reflected in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. In German they achieve above average standards by the end of Year 9 but in Spanish they achieve below average. This represents significant underachievement.
194. In lessons pupils describe events in the past, present and future in French and German and take part in short dialogues about a number of topics such as their school, home, family and their leisure activities. They express their opinions and preferences and give reasons for their views. For example in a Year 7 French lesson pupils described their home in detail and in a Year 8 German lesson pupils constructed their own sentences using new language items to describe the weather and were rapidly able to link this with previous learning in describing the weather in different towns and countries in Europe. All pupils understand and apply accurately patterns in German and French to express their views. In Spanish pupils are less confident in speaking and responding spontaneously. Because pupils have studied French for more time they have a wider range of structures and vocabulary and a more secure understanding of the way the language works than in German but in German they are more confident in speaking and responding in the language. Writing is usually well presented and accurate in French and German. Pupils describe events in the past

- and present for a variety of purposes for example in simple accounts and letters but in Spanish writing is below average. Pupils write in the present tense and their range of vocabulary and structures is limited. They write simply to a model and although they have a good understanding of the way the language works and apply rules accurately there is little evidence of their applying this knowledge independently in their writing. Progress is too slow and there is significant underachievement by the end of Year 9.
195. By the end of Year 11 all pupils increase their range of vocabulary and structures, are able to transfer language from one topic to another and develop all four skills. Pupils' listening skills are well developed; they respond promptly and appropriately to the extensive and often exclusive use of French, German and Spanish in lessons. In French and German they respond in full sentences but in Spanish their responses are brief. Speaking skills are less secure. In French and German pupils participate in dialogues and respond in full sentences to questioning and in response to visual cues but some lower and average attaining pupils are hesitant and lack confidence when operating independently of the teacher. In Spanish speaking skills are below average because pupils' range of vocabulary and structures is severely limited.
196. By the end of Year 11 pupils' reading and writing skills are well above average in French and in German they are above average. They write with fluency and at length and display a very good understanding of the way the languages work and are able to manipulate the language effectively to express their ideas, linking them together successfully and justifying their views, using language from a variety of topic areas. They write at length for a variety of purposes including narrative accounts and formal letter writing. They make good progress and achieve well in relation to prior attainment. In Spanish pupils' writing is limited in range and they are dependent upon models to write at length. Progress is too slow and pupils achievement is unsatisfactory in relation to their capabilities and prior attainment.
197. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better and more than 8 out of every 10 were good or better. In almost a third of lessons the quality of teaching was very good or excellent. Examples of very good or excellent teaching were seen in German in Year 8 and in French, and German in the sixth form. Teaching is characterised by very good relationships, the very effective and often exclusive use of the language being learned in lessons, effective use of questioning to enable pupils to rapidly identify and apply patterns for themselves and the usually high expectations of the teachers. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last report.
198. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, they use it very effectively to conduct activities in the language being learned and as a result pupils' listening skills are well developed and higher attaining pupils are challenged effectively by interpreting for others. Their command of the language is very good and this allows pupils to have frequent exposure to very good role models; as a result pupils have very good pronunciation and respond promptly and appropriately to instructions and questions. The language used is usually well matched to pupils' capabilities and previous experience. Objectives are clear and usually shared with pupils. Teachers use recap and review at the beginning and end of lessons to assess how well pupils have learned and to reinforce the main points. In Spanish and German pupils are given demanding tasks such as committing new language to memory under strict deadlines and as a result they make rapid gains in knowledge. In all lessons effective questioning enables pupils to respond appropriately and well sequenced activities enable them to build effectively on previous learning.
199. Teachers make good use of the resources available and excellent use of ICT interactive programmes in French, for example, enables pupils to work effectively at their own pace and evaluate their own progress. In a Year 8 German lesson pupils made excellent progress in developing all four skills when the interactive whiteboard was used together with very effective questioning to introduce and practise the weather. As a result pupils were confident and moved swiftly on to link this with previously learned language to describe the weather across European cities and countries. In the majority of lessons activities present an appropriate challenge and interest and motivate pupils to participate. This was particularly effective when activities presented an element of competition or involved problem solving. In a Year 7 French lesson the overhead projector was used effectively to recap vocabulary and pupils enjoyed the challenge presented by gapped words which they attempted to reproduce and spell. New vocabulary and patterns in the languages are usually presented very clearly using the overhead projector, the interactive whiteboard or the board so that pupils rapidly understand and are able to use the structures for themselves. Teachers usually have high expectations and are effective in supporting pupils during

activities while placing great emphasis on accuracy both in writing and speaking, this was evident in a Year 9 French lesson where pupils were using the computer to write about their holidays.

200. In the less effective lessons opportunities for pupils to use the languages for themselves are sometimes decreased and the pace slowed by lengthy teacher led activities. In some lessons speaking activities are restricted to the rehearsal of familiar dialogues rather than to pupils finding out information for themselves. In these circumstances responses are brief and pupils do not always participate in oral activities in front of the class and are reluctant to experiment with less familiar vocabulary. In a minority of lessons presentations are not sufficiently clear and key words are not always identified on the board so that pupils are not always certain about what is required which hampers their progress. Opportunities are sometimes missed to enable pupils to take responsibility for example in reporting back or making presentations to the rest of the class which leads to lack of independence and confidence in speaking. The needs of the most and least able are not always addressed adequately in lesson planning. Resources used in Spanish do not always provide enough challenge for pupils and this hampers their progress.
201. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are very positive. They settle quickly, listen attentively, are keen to participate in both class and pair work activities and are concerned to do well. Pupils displayed enjoyment in competitive games and in pitting themselves against the programs being used on the whiteboard or on the computer. When asked to work in pairs and small groups they stay on task and ask for help when they need it. Pupils usually have very good relationships with their teachers and each other. In a minority of lessons pupils lost concentration or became restless when not directly involved in activities for lengthy periods.
202. Since the last report good progress has been made. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly and there is now greater consistency across the department. Standards have remained the same in examinations but it is clear from inspection evidence that in response to the improved quality of teaching and learning standards are improving in German and French. Overall, the management of the department is good. Although the head of faculty has only been in the school for a short time she has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the department and has already begun to address the issues raised in the last report. Teachers now meet regularly and are beginning to work together as a team. A system of monitoring and evaluating teaching has been set up and resources are improving considerably. However resources used for Spanish need to be reviewed urgently since those being used at present do not meet the needs of the pupils nor the requirements of the GCSE examination. Schemes of work are currently being reviewed and opportunities for enhancing learning through the use of ICT are being identified and developed. Procedures for assessment and recording are satisfactory but as yet teachers do not make effective use of assessment neither to ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress in lessons nor to identify underachievement against predicted grades. The curriculum provision is very good with all pupils able to study two languages and is enhanced by pupils' contact with native speakers in all three languages. Timetable provision for some classes, in particular in the sixth form in German, is uneven and slows progress over time. The department has suffered severe difficulties in the recent past because of staffing problems but now these difficulties have been resolved and all teachers are committed to raising standards, have worked hard to overcome problems and, as an effective team, have a very good capacity to improve.

## CLASSICS

The provision in classics is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The very good quality of teaching and learning.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge.
- The contribution to pupils' literacy.
- The use of ICT.

### Areas for Improvement

- There are no significant areas for development.

203. Standards reached in Latin and classical civilisation both in lessons and examinations are high. Pupils have a very good grasp of grammar and apply it accurately in their translations. They have a

very good range of vocabulary and make rapid progress in developing reading and writing skills from Year 7. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are concerned to do well. They respond very positively to problem solving activities, for example in a Year 7 class they were enthusiastic and relentless in trying to find the pattern for verb endings in the perfect and imperfect tenses. They also have a good understanding of the cultural, social and historical background of the Roman empire and use the Internet very effectively to increase this knowledge.

204. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils are challenged rigorously by activities and by effective questioning of their teachers. Teachers make their lessons interesting and excite their students with their excellent subject knowledge, their ability to give detailed background information and their contagious enthusiasm for the subject. In a Year 12 lesson in classical civilisation where students compared contemporary writers in a discussion about *Oedipus Rex* and were encouraged to evaluate characters and images because of the teacher's skilful and probing questioning challenged their thinking and increased their understanding of the play. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge, skilful questioning and comparisons with the current role of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan made a story they were translating come to life for a Year 8 Latin class and pupils made very good gains in knowledge. Resources are used very effectively to interest and motivate pupils. Year 9 pupils, for example, used an interactive computer program to revise previously learned vocabulary and were able to work at their own pace, set their own targets and evaluate their own performance. Pupils are challenged routinely in their lessons to find similarities between Latin and English and make links with other languages; as a result teachers make an excellent contribution to developing pupils' literacy.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The quality of the provision is **good** for physical education.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching across a range of sports and activities is good to excellent and rarely less than satisfactory.
- The teachers in the department create a learning environment in which pupils want to succeed.
- Exemplary pupil attitudes to their work and each other.
- Enthusiastic participation by pupils in extra-curricular sports.
- Very effective links with local and central centres of sporting excellence.
- The residential programme of activities for pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- To maximise the use of pupil assessment procedures to inform planning and target setting.
- The effective uses of ICT to enhance teaching and learning, and for target setting.
- To monitor teaching and learning.

205. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectation. Pupils develop precision and control in a range of basic skills. Most are able to link skills and techniques accurately. When asked, they are able to analyse their own and others' performance and suggest improvements. Some are able to apply their knowledge to develop strategies and tactics in small-sided games. Pupils expect to warm up, and when given the opportunity they can take responsibility for this part of the lesson by selecting and demonstrating appropriately safe stretching exercises. Some are able to name muscle groups and explain the effect of exercise on the body.

206. At the end of Year 11 standards are in line with national expectations and often above. A wide range of quality performance exists, some of which is very good. Pupils are given opportunities to draw on their own knowledge to develop advanced tactics and plan ways to improve their own and others' performance. They know how to warm up. Most work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of the principles of invasion games. A significant number of pupils and teams achieve very good standards in extra-curricular activities at local, regional and international levels, for example fencing and rugby.

207. Pupils in Years 7-9 acquire and develop new skills whilst refining and adapting existing skills. At the end of Year 9 most are working broadly in line with national expectations. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by analysing,

evaluating, refining and organising their own and others' practice. They are encouraged to develop their tactical awareness and modify these changing circumstances and conditions. Progress in rugby and swimming is linked to good teaching that provides interesting yet challenging activities that make progressively increasing demands on pupils. The very small number of pupils with special educational make progress because of teachers' understanding of their particular needs.

208. The quality of teaching is good. In well over half the lessons observed teaching was good or excellent and was never less than satisfactory. A major strength of the teaching is the quality of relationships, which creates a positive ethos for activity, learning and enjoyment. The natural enthusiasm of the teachers is passed on to the pupils who are encouraged to attempt new skills and accept responsibility. Pupils are often given opportunities to demonstrate prior learning and to plan and evaluate performance.
209. Teachers have good subject knowledge covering a range of activities thus enabling them to plan lessons effectively with linked progressive practices. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and work hard to meet the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. Lessons are well structured, managed effectively and characterised by a brisk pace. The single lesson does not give time for health related activity, for example, cool down and showers. The department could further develop the use of pupil assessment procedures to inform planning and target setting.
210. Learning activities are interesting and progressively challenge pupils. All teachers use a range of teaching approaches. They give clear demonstrations and explanations of skills and question pupils effectively to help them recall what they have learned. Pupils are set targets for their performance within lessons, and teachers use competition to motivate and interest them pupils.
211. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Participation rates in classes are very good and standards of kit are high. Pupils enjoy their lessons and volunteer readily to demonstrate and answer questions. They are confident to talk about performance and suggest methods for improvement. Most listen carefully to the teachers and have a strong commitment to their own learning and a desire to improve. They behave very well in lessons. Relationships with each other and with teachers are very good. The teaching approaches adopted take account of pupils' interests and provide opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility for their own learning. The pupils respond very positively to this approach and are able to work cooperatively and with purpose. Almost all pupils take part in, and benefit from, the range of extra-curricular activities at inter-house or inter-school level.
212. Indoor accommodation is very good and has a positive effect on learning. Outdoor facilities are good and include excellent, very well drained fields, which enables them to be used for large periods of time without disruption. It would be appropriate for the department to have its own computer and direct links with the school ICT system.
213. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The teaching staff, full and part time, and the specialist coaches, make a well-balanced and complementary mutually supportive team which has a commitment to continuous improvement and is deployed suitably to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Day to day routines are well established, consistent systems operate and high standards and expectations are shared. The department is well positioned to move forward with its plans and achieve the aim of raising attainment further in physical education and contributing to other areas of the school curriculum. The areas identified in the previous inspection have been addressed and built upon.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Attainment in GCSE short courses.
- Pupils' management is excellent.
- Management of the department is very good.
- Curricular provision in Years 7-11 is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- The setting of detailed targets against which pupils' performance can be evaluated.
- The assessment of attitudes, values and the spiritual dimension.

214. Attainment in Years 7-9 is well above expectations for 14-year-olds in relation to the Warwickshire LEA Agreed Syllabus. In Years 10 and 11, attainment is well above the national average for all schools and above for similar schools in the GCSE short course. The percentage of A\* - C is 96.8 per cent and A\* - B is higher than the previous year.
215. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment in Years 7- 9 is much higher than expected levels. There are many good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. Pupils make sense of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. In Year 7, pupils demonstrated a good knowledge of aspects of prayer. They knew the difference between supplication, thanksgiving and confession. In addition, pupils offered thoughtful and considered explanations about the concept of miracle and, through discussion, they were able to express their attitudes towards different kinds of miracle. In Year 8, pupils developed a good understanding of the holocaust through a well-directed discussion. They were able to reflect on the historical, social and theological issues and explore their feelings about how Jewish people might have felt at the time. In Year 9, pupils understood the importance of reflection and meditation in Buddhism. They used the principles of meditation in a well-structured practical exercise. They appreciated how it feels to participate in a meditation exercise, which enabled them to begin to examine themselves and their feelings. They were able to provide useful links with everyday experiences. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work were useful aids to improve speaking and written skills. Overall, learning is very good.
216. In Years 10 and 11, attainment is higher than national expectations. In Year 10 GCSE, pupils' attainment is well above national expectations. They show a very good understanding of issues such as natural and moral evil. In one lesson they explored ideas about the existence of evil and implications for the existence of God. Through an excellent discussion, pupils produced profound and well-balanced arguments from the standpoints of both a believer and non-believer. They had a deep respect for the views of others, and this enabled all pupils to feel confident in expressing their views in an open and honest way. In Year 11, pupils explored the different cultural attitudes towards Jesus. They understand how the Bible was used by the Dutch Reform Church to reinforce their racist views. They extend their understanding of equality in a study of the Hindu principles and relate this to Christian views. Pupils demonstrate good skills of critical analysis and the ability to present balanced arguments. Pupils' achievement could improve further if the examination course itself was more challenging. Overall, learning is very good.
217. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those who are gifted or talented make significant progress.
218. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They behave extremely well, are well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupil behaviour makes an excellent contribution to their achievement and progress.
219. Teaching is always good, in many cases very good and occasionally excellent and has a significant impact on pupil achievement. Planning is very good, and this assists pupils to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. Lesson aims are shared with pupils in all cases. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to learn from as well as learn about religion. This assists pupils to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are very well used, especially worksheets and the use of computer technology. Teachers manage pupil behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect to allow pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, which are very effective in contributing to pupil achievement. Assessment of pupils' work is generally good and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Assessment

informs the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department does not set targets that are related to levels of attainment. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised as an area for development.

220. The curriculum in Years 7 - 9 is broad, balanced and meets the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the Warwickshire LEA Agreed Syllabus. The schemes of work are very appropriate and are linked to the fundamental aims of the syllabus designed to assist pupils both to learn about and learn from religion. Very good lesson plans provide opportunities that enable pupils to reflect on the information they gain in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow the GCSE short course which provides a very good curriculum that is in line with the agreed syllabus requirements. This provides continuity with the syllabus in Years 7 - 9. The department may wish to consider whether the full GCSE course is more appropriate for all pupils in view of the fact that so many achieve very high standards.
221. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, so providing opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages pupils to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues, and work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, so preparing pupils for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.
222. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pupils are provided with a rich diet of religious education in all year groups. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. Planning is very good. The departmental development plan does address appropriate priorities. It will form a good basis for future action. Policy documents are linked closely with the school's mission statement.
223. Accommodation is very good. The quality of display that celebrates pupils' achievement is very high. Curriculum resources are generally good, but, as the department grows, these will require updating. The department makes very good use of ICT to enable all pupils to learn appropriately, to conduct research and to assist with the presentation of material. The development of the departmental website, through the enthusiasm of the head of department is a very good facility that enables pupils to have access to revision materials.
224. Since the last inspection, attainment by Year 9 has improved. Good improvements have been made in planning and in the schemes of work. The assessment procedures have improved, although the use of levels of attainment and the provision of targets for pupils requires further development. There has been a significant improvement in the contribution religious education now makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Overall, the improvements since the last inspection have had a very good impact on standards, pupil achievement and progress.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001 for which national comparisons are available.

### ***GCE AS-level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	2	100		0		3.00	
Biology	16	100		68.8		2.73	
Classical Civilization	11	90.9		27.3		3.55	
Chemistry	20	100		50		3.55	
German	6	100		33.3		3.00	
Design and technology	6	100		16.7		2.50	
English	30	100		23.3		2.67	
Economics	28	89.3		67.9		3.50	
French	9	100		44.4		2.67	
Geography	12	100		75.0		3.92	
History	12	91.7		41.7		2.83	
Mathematics	57*	91.2		66.7		3.60	
Music	5	100		80.0		3.80	
Physics	13	100		69.2		3.77	
Spanish	5	100		60.0		3.60	

### ***GCE A-level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	12	100	88	83	34	8.33	5.25
Chemistry	15	100	90	73	43	8.27	5.90
Classical Studies	3	100	95	100	49	9.33	6.51
Economics	10	90		70		7.60	
English Literature	27	100	95	52	37	7.04	5.91
French	6	100	89	17	38	5.67	5.90
Design and technology	2	100	91	50	30	8.0	5.38
General Studies	59	98	85	95	30	9.51	4.91
Geography	13	85	92	31	38	4.92	5.74
German	3	100	91	33	40	6.67	5.81

History	18	94	88	28	35	5.33	5.45
Mathematics	45	91	87	71	43	7.56	5.80
Music	2	100	93	0	35	5.90	5.0
Other Languages	1	100	93	-	56	6.0	6.84
Physics	12	92	88	75	40	7.50	5.67
Spanish	2	100	89	50	39	7.0	5.70

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

225. The focus of the inspection was on chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled. In biology, and physics, AS-level and A-level examination results were very high compared with other selective schools. Results were in line with those expected considering GCSE results. Biology results have improved steadily since the previous inspection, but results in physics have been more variable. Chemistry results in 2001 were very high compared with other selective schools. They were in line with those expected when compared with students' GCSE results. Results in chemistry have shown a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

226. Only two lessons were observed in physics. Teaching was well organised and included extensive practical work and students were learning well. Their investigational skills are well developed and demonstrate some of the essential characteristics of physicists, such as concern for accurate data and willingness to consider alternative hypotheses. They show good subject knowledge and the ability to solve problems.

### Chemistry

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

#### Strengths

- Examination results are very high.
- Students have a very good grasp of concepts and apply them well.
- Pupils work well together and with their teachers.
- Teaching is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of ICT as a support for learning.

227. The GCE AS-level and A-level examination results in 2001 were very high compared with other selective schools. A-level results showed improvement on the results for 2000. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining higher grades, A and B, was very high compared with other selective schools. In relation to their GCSE results, they performed as well as was expected.

228. The current standards of students are well above average. In Year 13, students are achieving very well in relation to their GCSE results. In lessons students are doing very well as a result of the very good rigorous teaching. In one lesson observed, students used previous knowledge of 'redox' reactions to help them understand the difficult concept of standard electrode potentials and how this can be used to predict reactions. Work in folders indicated a good understanding of other physical chemistry concepts such as chemical equilibria and the Lowry-Brønsted theory of acids and bases. Most students recall knowledge very well. Written work is well presented on the whole and matches the confidence which students display in the classroom.

229. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Nevertheless they are achieving very well. They show good knowledge and understanding of introductory work on atomic theory, structure and bonding. Most have developed considerable confidence in tackling calculations, for example in

volumetric analysis and are very successfully moving on from GCSE work into new areas of chemistry.

230. Teaching is very good and promotes effective learning. The principal features of teaching are the use of very good subject knowledge by teachers, very good well-focused planning and a range of methods which maintain interest and engender learning. In a lesson on electrode potentials, for example, the teacher used very good subject knowledge to challenge students to think and apply previous knowledge to new situations.
231. Homework is set which extends class work and often takes the form of structured questions. Day-to-day marking is thorough and comments on students' work often indicate how they can improve their work.
232. Students learn very well. They respond well to challenge, work hard and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature discussion as part of their learning. They undertake independent work maturely. Most can extract information and make their own notes on, for example, the order and rates of chemical reactions.
233. Leadership in chemistry is very good. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to maintaining very high standards. A new scheme of work, reflecting new subject requirements, provides a consistent approach to the teaching of chemistry and identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning. A good range of learning support materials is being developed, but more attention needs to be given to the use of ICT both as a teaching and learning tool. Target setting, based on analysis of students' performance in tests, is in place and used effectively to provide learning goals.

## Mathematics

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

### Strengths

- Very high results in public examinations with some students gaining three A-level grades.
- Enrichment of students' experiences through the Senior Mathematics Challenge.
- Very mature and positive relationships at all levels.
- Courses well matched to students' needs.

### Areas for improvement

- Applications of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

234. As part of the inspection all aspects of sixth form mathematics at both AS and A Level were inspected and a range of lessons from different parts of the syllabus were observed. All pupils gain a grade from A\*-C at GCSE. The standards achieved by students in the A-Level examinations in 2001 were very high in relation to all schools and similar schools. These results have been rising and consistently high over recent years. The progress analysis undertaken by the school shows good value added for all students. Only a very small minority of students do not continue after AS Level. The entry requirements for A Level are high, students are expected to have gained an A\* or A at GCSE level although in some circumstances a student with a grade B is allowed to start the course. One mark of the success of mathematics is the high number of students who opt for the course in the sixth form.
235. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' workbooks is in line with these results. The overall quality of students work is very good. They display a range of secure knowledge throughout the mathematics syllabus and can relate and apply the work of one area of the syllabus to another. Their algebraic skills are effectively used in calculus and students can differentiate and integrate a wide range of functions efficiently. They can use trigonometric identities to solve equations giving answers in either radians or degrees depending on the demands of the question. Their statistical skills are well developed and students can analyse complex data, drawing relevant conclusions. Their mechanics knowledge is very evident and students resolve forces using trigonometry.
236. There is a wide curriculum on offer and students are guided through the many options available. The main teaching style encourages logical thought and discussion. Often students are only given

part of a solution and they have to think for themselves to reach the end point. This develops a thorough understanding of the topics being covered. The pace of work is good and students work well together discussing their work and giving reasons for their answers.

237. Overall, the teaching is very good. Students value and respect the mature approach that teachers adopt. Teachers have a relaxed style that does not lack rigour or pace. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; they use this to ensure that the lessons are well planned and presented in a challenging but accessible manner for all students. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students and their assessments indicate that expectations are high but the students realise that these are reasonable and achievable. The students recognise that all teachers of mathematics will encourage them to get the best out of the course and are prepared to work hard in response.
238. The management of the department is excellent. The head of department has a thorough knowledge of the syllabus and uses this to ensure that every student follows the best course for his needs and interests. There are ample resources for teaching the subject, although the lack of computer facilities in the classrooms restricts the range of teaching strategies that are used.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

### Design and technology

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

#### Strengths

- Good and supportive teaching.
- Involvement in an engineering challenge initiative.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students have less developed knowledge and skills in design and ICT particularly in the use of computer-aided design.
- The lack of clear and staged assessment does not give enough support to the less well organised students.
- Accommodation and resources limit more ambitious design and make work.

239. In the GCE Advanced level, results have steadily improved over recent years and are above national average for all schools though below those for similar schools. The recent results in AS level were below average for similar schools though three of the four students achieved at least as well as expected.
240. In work and lessons seen the standards are a little above national average, with all Year 13 students likely to be successful. Year 13 students understand product design and demonstrate interest in adapting existing products in, for example, redesigning car dashboard storage and modifying a child transporter for a bike. Less developed are students' research skills and design work makes little, or no use, of computer aided design. There are greater strengths in constructional skills and in the use of equipment. Year 12 students are now beginning to make use of the improved ICT facilities and so are developing stronger skills in the use of the Internet for research as well as using text and pictures for well presented and annotated design work. Overall student progress is satisfactory given the limits in some of the facilities though some Year 13 students are less advanced than expected in the completion of their major project.
241. Students enjoy the planning and practical activities and are absorbed in developing their own design ideas. A number of the students are further involved in an engineering design challenge run jointly with one of the universities and a local firm. This provides opportunities to address design problems in an industrial context.
242. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students respond well to the good classroom management based on mutual respect and occasional humour. They are able to develop their knowledge and skills through well informed support and effective use of exemplar material. This was well illustrated in Year 12 lesson on 'flat pack' furniture where the teacher explained and illustrated different fixings. This helped students reflect on different design ideas. The teachers and technician are also helpful

in providing constructive help that enables students develop practical skills in using the metal lathe and other equipment. Marking and assessment is sound though not documented extensively and the lack of clear and staged deadlines result in the less well organised students falling behind in coursework.

243. Management of the GCE Advanced level and Advanced Subsidiary courses is satisfactory with students' learning organised appropriately given the limited resources. Long-term priorities are less well identified. Accommodation and resources are limited with the sixth form students competing with main school pupils for the one purpose built workshop and with much of the teaching taking place in a science laboratory. Despite the updating of the limited school ICT facilities, access to higher level computer-aided design software is still limited.
244. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection with a steady improvement in results as a consequence of generally effective and positive teaching. Assessment documentation and resource development are areas for further development.

## Economics

Overall, the quality of provision in economics is **very good**. In the sixth form, pupils take AS-level economics and pupils continue on the A-level course. A successful GCSE course provides a very good foundation, but is being discontinued.

### Strengths

- Standards at AS and A-level are well above the national average and above the average for selected schools.
- Teaching and learning are very good, leading to very good achievement.
- Effective course management has led to higher standards.
- Students' learning is enriched by interesting educational visits.

### Areas for improvement

- There is little use made of ICT in lessons because computers are not available easily.
- The quality of students' coursework is not as high as their examination performance.

245. Overall standards in lessons and work seen at AS and A-level are high, and well above the national average. Students' performance builds on good standards at GCSE. A-Level results in 2001 for the 10 pupils entered were well above the national average, and above the average for selective schools. Nearly three-quarters gained the top grades of A and B and all but two students obtained a pass grade. Although results were slightly below the school's average for the top grades of A and B, the proportion of top grades was considerably higher than in 2000, maintaining a strong upward trend. Results in the new AS-level examination were very encouraging, with the percentage of grades A and B well above national expectations and the school average grade.
246. Students' achievement in lessons seen of current Year 12 students is well above average. The oral skills of over a third of pupils are well above average. Coursework essays and notes are above average in quality, but not as good as the final examination results would indicate. In a very good AS-level economics lesson students made good progress in learning about the costs and benefits of inflation to the economy. Through well-focused group discussions students developed good critical judgement of the impact of various ways of measuring inflation, and consolidated very well their knowledge and understanding of key concepts such as competitive advantage and hyper-inflation. Work folders show a good range of clear notes, demonstrating a good understanding of supply and demand, mostly supported by well-drawn graphs. Most students described and illustrated aggregate supply particularly well, and diagrams showing causes of externalities were clear. Students ably calculated costs and profit at varying levels of output and the marginal costs and revenue of production at each level. Weaker pupils did not always show how profit-maximising levels of output change when marginal revenue increases. They sometimes do not complete tasks or assess and correct their own work sufficiently. There was good evidence of research on the Internet to obtain both economic reports and statistics.
247. Students in Year 13 make very good progress in lessons. In a very good Year 13 lesson seen students showed very good critical understanding of unemployment, and were able to apply a variety of perspectives when interpreting international unemployment statistics in their group feedbacks. Samples of marked essays showed good knowledge and understanding of the

economic effects of the depletion of the ozone layer. Most students could show negative externalities graphically but did not always evaluate the most significant external factors in markets which are not perfectly competitive. Course work seen was generally above average except for the use of ICT to model economic problems or manipulate statistical data in lessons. ICT was not used sufficiently to set up spreadsheet models of costs and profits or to undertake investment appraisal. However, the students used ICT well in their final coursework projects to draw clear graphs and tables and carry out their research at home using the Internet. More sustained background reading and use of ICT to draft replies to data response questions and present these orally would improve coursework performance.

248. The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in lessons seen. Teachers' excellent, secure subject knowledge underpinned enthusiastic class discussions, and lessons had a clear focus and good pace. In all lessons seen, the teacher asked well-focused questions to consolidate previous learning, and introduced new topics by asking students who had taken GCSE to recall and develop key concepts. Students' intelligent responses helped them to develop a good critical understanding of the consequences of unemployment and inflation and the teacher provided very apt illustrations of theory with topical examples from his experience working abroad. Lessons contained a good mix of activities combining individual and paired work and some use of computers in Year 13 projects. Teachers organise well planned visits to Paris and other business centres and support students to perform well in regional and national economics competitions.
249. Assessment procedures meet fully examination requirements. Marking is thorough, constructive and regular, and written comments help students to improve. Termly work reports help students to evaluate their own efforts quite well. They would benefit by being given more regular detailed targets in lessons, so that individuals can improve particular aspects of knowledge or skill where they are weak.
250. Students work well together both individually and in pairs to complete their tasks, and pupils show mature attitudes in discussion. Only a limited number of lessons were seen, but in these pupils showed a very good capacity to work independently, bringing in relevant research, including economic statistics, from websites. They support each other well during discussions. However, they have few opportunities to evaluate their own or each others' work in detail. Overall, pupils' response is very good.
251. Management of economics courses is very good, with a clear sense of direction. Schemes of work fully meet examination requirements, and the department's progress in meeting school improvement targets is good, particularly as teaching was affected adversely last year by several staff changes. This affected both GCSE and A-level results, which could have been even higher. Students' progress is monitored effectively although their performance is not measured sufficiently against their previous grades. Strategies for 'value-added' analysis are being developed currently. The department's overall improvement since the last inspection has been very good, with much higher A-level standards resulting. The department is well placed to improve further.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### Art and design

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**. The inspection covered the A-level and AS-level courses offered by the school. Students study for the drawing and painting option of the examination. The numbers studying vary from year to year. In 2001 none took the A-level and only two students took the AS-level.

#### Strengths

- The number of students opting for art and design is much higher than previously.
- Students are developing good critical awareness and drawing skills during their AS-level course.
- Teaching is good; the staff use their experience as practising artists well to inform and motivate students in their studies.

#### Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for the sixth form students is inadequate, the increasing numbers in Year 12 have no dedicated space to study or store their work.
- The students rely too heavily on second hand sources, such as copying from photographs.

252. The overall standards in art and design have varied over the past three years, the small numbers taking the subject make statistical comparisons unsound. This year the students studying for A-level are progressing slowly and have not yet extended their work or raised their standards much above their AS-level performance last year. Some work on mechanical forms is developing well with research in three dimensions and accurate observation from life informing students' drawing and painting. Their self confidence is not high, and they still rely on the teacher to supply references and suggestions for their work, even to the point of finding telephone numbers and websites for them. The pace is therefore slow and the amount of research work completed for the personal study is low. Much of what was criticised in the previous inspection report is still the case with Year 13, but the larger group of Year 12 students studying for the AS-level is progressing better. There are more opportunities for debate and discussion about their work in the evaluations that have been introduced and they explain their work well to their peers. Their work is starting to move away from the copying of photographs and second hand sources that is still a feature of the Year 13 students' work. Their work in sketchbooks is good, showing a commitment and application to art and design and evidence of a developing personal engagement in the processes of drawing and painting. They are sustaining the pace and challenge from their GCSE courses, where all achieved highly. They can talk about their intentions and the way their work has developed with confidence, and they all listen to the comments of others and contribute well to group criticisms of work. Their knowledge of the work of other artists is satisfactory, but not extensive, and they rely on the teacher a lot for direction and guidance on how to extend their research.

253. Teaching is good overall, the new staff use their experience as exhibiting artists well, and expectations are now higher, especially for the Year 12 students. Teaching methods are good, with clear demonstrations of techniques and perceptive comments and questions during the reviews of work in progress which are aimed at increasing the students' capacity for independent study. The use of sketchbooks has been encouraged and the basic skills reinforced to ensure a firm foundation for future development. Activities are planned well to address the needs of the students, although assessment to provide clear information to students about their progress towards specific grades is weak. In the new syllabus it is important to identify what students have completed to an appropriate standard, and what needs to be worked on to improve. Time limits are tight for both AS and A level, and students need to keep their work up to date. The planned visits to galleries and museums, and the links with artists are extending the students' knowledge and understanding of the subject. The links with the girls' grammar school art and design department are overdue, and joint classes and activities will give the students an appreciation of their work and progress in a wider context. The students are responding positively to this new impetus, numbers have increased and students come in to the art studio to work and continue with projects in their own time. The accommodation for these increased numbers opting for art and design is inadequate. The sixth form studio is small, even for the two students in Year 13, and several Year 12 lessons take place in a physics laboratory. This is limiting the range of work that they can attempt, and the scale on which they can realise it. The art and design department is developing the use of displays and exhibitions of students' work around the school and in town to raise the awareness of the subject in the school, and linked well with drama and dance in a recent production. This is starting to meet the new head of department's stated target of raising the status of art and design within the school, with students, staff and parents.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- Learning resources.
- Fieldwork provision.
- Leadership and management.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- Planning and pacing of some lessons.
- Teaching of independent study skills.

254. Standards of attainment are well above average overall. In 2001 A-level results were below the national average and below the average for similar schools. However, because only a small number of students were entered for the examination, this poor result was not representative. Results in previous years were in line with the average for similar schools, well above the national average, and showed a rising average points score. In 2001, 75 per cent of students gained A and B grades in AS level and all gained a pass grade. Inspection evidence indicates that standards achieved are in line with national expectation. Students have detailed knowledge and understanding of the human and physical topics of the course, partly due to their hard work and partly due to the teachers' high level of knowledge and enthusiasm. However, many students still rely heavily on the direction of their teachers and have not yet become independent learners.
255. The present Year 12 students achieved high standards in their geography GCSE examination and these high standards are being maintained. Students' skills have developed so that they can write good, well-reasoned essays on complex topics such as economic development and earth science, generally well-supported by relevant maps, graphs and diagrams.
256. Attitudes to the subject are positive. Relationships with teachers and other students are good, providing a fruitful atmosphere for learning. Discussion with the students indicated very high levels of satisfaction both with their choice of geography as a subject to study, and of their experience on the course so far.
257. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The best lessons were well-planned and well-paced with the teacher guiding students through a developing sequence of activities that ensured good learning. For example, in a Year 12 lesson about the erosion of Holderness, students followed up last term's fieldwork by studying maps and photographs, reading news articles and then devising their own erosion management plans. Planning was weaker in some lessons where the activities were not thought through carefully. Too much of the time in these lessons was spent on teacher talk and not enough on student activity such as framing hypotheses or carrying out independent research. For example in a Year 12 lesson about the relationship between resources and population growth, students were required to listen and take notes for almost the whole lesson. Students' literacy skills are developed through their background reading and written work and they bring a high standard of numerical understanding to the statistical analyses required at this level. The interactive whiteboard is well used in lessons but students' own use of ICT is not in evidence. Homework is used well to extend the work in lessons.
258. Students with special needs are planned for in relevant lessons but needed no additional help. Though some extension activities were planned for gifted and talented students these were used infrequently. Those with English as an additional language and ethnic minority students are well integrated and progressing as well as their peers.

## History

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching has good features which help the students to make satisfactory progress.

#### Areas for improvement

- Examination results have fluctuated and students have done less well than expected.

259. Over the last three years, the proportion of A/B grades at A level have fluctuated. In 2000, results were in line with similar schools, but in 2001 they were below the national figure, though the points score was close to average. A/B results in the A/S examination in 2001 follow a similar pattern. Almost invariably all students obtain an A – E grade.

260. Students entering the sixth form have GCSE points scores that indicate good A-level potential. However, they do not always have a B grade in history, and so some essential skills will be less well developed. In lessons and work seen, standards are broadly in line with national expectations in Year 12 but are rather higher in Year 13, and closer to those expected in similar schools. When students' achievement is analysed it is in line with prior attainment.
261. In Year 12, students could select relevant points and write them in note form in their own words, but they left out necessary detail. Knowledge of the material is sound. In a lesson on William the Silent and the Dutch Revolt, they knew the background of alliances and enemies in Western Europe. In essays they identify various strands of the topic, but they have more difficulty in weaving accounts together to reach a well supported conclusion. Though pupils in Years 7 – 11 have an extensive vocabulary, the demands of the general vocabulary used in history texts and documents challenge the students. For example, in one lesson, some students had difficulty with 'gregarious', 'tacit' and 'intestate'. Not all students undertake sufficient background reading and some students are still reluctant to engage in discussion at any length.
262. In Year 13, students understand the demands of the course more clearly. They understand technical terms such as 'arquebus' and use them in context. They argue more confidently. One student postulated that the Russian retreat had some strategic aspects: the 'scorched earth' policy would defeat the pursuing army. Students are capable of working independently, even to the extent of working by themselves on coursework. Thus one student more interested in economic history had chosen economic factors in the Dutch struggle for independence, and was working steadily through the relevant textbooks.
263. Students' attitudes to their work are good, though stronger in Year 13. They work steadily in lessons but in Year 12 do not show any real urgency. In Year 13 lessons the sense of purpose is stronger. Students are enthusiastic and enjoy their lessons.
264. Teaching is always satisfactory and has some good features. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that supplements the textbooks and guides students through various interpretations. Examination preparation is very thorough. In one lesson, unsatisfactory notes were re-drafted with the teacher checking through questions that the material was understood. The whiteboard was then used to show a possible framework for notes. In order to make students imagine the impact of war more clearly, the teacher used *Mother Courage* by Brecht to highlight the plight of women. Oral participation is encouraged through discussion sessions that in Year 12 became rather brief 'question and answer' exchanges. No other methods involving oral work were seen in the inspection week. Students are set substantial pieces of written work which is always marked carefully. Suggestions for improvements are clearly explained.
265. The curriculum is broad and challenging. Students who have studied history from Year 7 to Year 13 have very good opportunities to acquire a good overview of English and European history. The department is aware of the need to incorporate more ICT into the schemes of work. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## Religious education

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is always good and mostly very good.
- Departmental management is excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- Setting of detailed targets.
- The assessment of attitudes, values and the spiritual dimension.

266. Attainment in Year 12 cannot be determined against national levels as this is the first time AS-level has been taught. In lessons and work seen, students demonstrated a very good understanding of the work of Jeremy Bentham. They have a highly developed critical approach to ethical issues and use these skills to produce balanced arguments. They were able to use the Utilitarian theory to develop informed opinions about genetic engineering. Very good links were made between Christian

principles and notions of pain and pleasure. The teacher's very good use of discussion, and high expectations, contributed very well to students' ability to think independently. Overall, learning is very good.

267. Students' attitudes to learning are excellent. They behave extremely well, are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and students is excellent, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Students' behaviour makes an excellent contribution to their achievement and progress.
268. Teaching is always good and, in many cases, very good and has a significant impact on students' achievement. Planning is very good and assists students to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. Lesson aims were shared with students in all lessons seen. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that enable students to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. This assists students to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are very well used, especially worksheets and the use of computer technology. Teachers manage students' behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing students to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of students and challenge them to succeed and this is very effective in contributing to students' achievement. Assessment of students' work is generally good and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what students know and understand. Assessment informs the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department does not set targets that are related to levels of attainment. Consequently, students are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised as an area for development.
269. The curriculum in Year 12 follows the Edexcel AS-level course. It is a wholly appropriate course and naturally continue into the A-level course. There are opportunities for all sixth form students to participate in religious activities. In Year 13, through a general studies course, students examine a range of ethical issues such as our responsibilities towards the planet. This enables students to explore issues in religious education in a wider context.
270. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, so providing opportunities for students to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages students to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues, and work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, so preparing students for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.
271. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Students are provided with a rich diet of religious education. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. Planning is very good. The departmental development plan does address appropriate priorities. It will form a good basis for future action. Policy documents are closely linked with the school's mission statement.
272. Accommodation is very good. The quality of display that celebrates students' achievement is very high. Curriculum resources are generally good, but, as the department grows, these will require updating. The department makes very good use of computers to enable all students to learn appropriately, to conduct research and to assist with presentation of material. The development of the departmental website, through the enthusiasm of the head of department, is a very good facility that enables students to have access to revision material.
273. Since the last inspection, the AS-level examination has been successfully introduced. Thirteen students currently are taking this course. Student achievement is very good.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

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

Strengths

- High results achieved in the A-level course over a period of time.
- Quality of teaching was very good.
- Extra-curricular activities.
- Assessment is used well and students receive helpful feedback and support.
- Excellent leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient textbooks to support students' studies.

274. The GCE A-level examination results in 2001 were very high in English literature. Over half of those entered gained the highest grades, A or B. The results were in line with similar schools. This represents good achievement for students. The point scores gained by students since the last inspection have exceeded consistently the national average. Since the last inspection, there has been a consistent pattern of over 50 per cent of students obtaining the high A-level grades. Excellent results were achieved in 1999 when 80 per cent achieved the highest grades whilst in 2000, 59 per cent obtained similar grades. The department does well for all students taking literature at advanced level.
275. The advanced literature course is a very popular option and 50 per cent or more of the entire cohort choose to study the subject. The English department as a centre of academic excellence helps students to develop high standards in literary criticism. With the exception of the 2001 AS-level results, Year 13 students have always achieved the higher grades or grade C. The 2001 AS-level examination results were good but are provisional at this stage as the school is awaiting the outcomes of the appeal.
276. In lessons and the work seen in students' folders and notebooks in the current Year 12 and 13, attainment was above average and sometimes very high in all areas of work, particularly in speaking and listening and interpreting literary texts. Students reach very high standards in articulating and exploring their ideas. They give sustained and original contributions, which their peers publicly acknowledge as demonstrated in the lesson where they discussed Croen's *Heathrow Tales* as an introduction to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. They listen to one another critically and responsively and use subject specific vocabulary confidently when taking part in oral work.
277. Students are well read and before entering the sixth form, independent critical reading is further encouraged as part of the induction process. They build well on the earlier practice of reading widely and critically lower down the school. Year 12 students are of the opinion that they are able to make the transition to the sixth form easily because of the very high expectations and emphasis teachers placed on in-depth analysis of texts in early years. By Year 13, students' autonomy as readers is well established as they give conceptualised response to literary texts. They use literary terms skilfully and offer insight when discussing the dense language and confidently explore ideas as seen in their work on Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapaur*. They read a range of texts with very good understanding showing appreciation of the different styles, language and ideas in the works of writers such as Chaucer, Donne, Shakespeare, Swift, Faulks, Austen, Hartley, Reilly, Joyce and McEwan. Students summarise their reading succinctly, make copious notes when analysing and discussing texts and use ICT for research and word processing their work.
278. Students' experience of reading texts aloud is valuable, particularly as this helps them to engage with the way in which writers use language to express meanings. For instance in reading McEwan's *A Child in Time* and Chaucer's *Prologue*, students analyses of the texts showed a clear understanding of the contexts in which they were written. Students' achievement in reading is very good. Writing skills are very good and essays are well structured. They develop a clear line of argument and sustain their ideas with well-embedded references.
279. The quality of teaching in English is consistently very good with excellent features. The teaching of literature is a major strength in the department and contributes to students achieving exceptionally well in lessons and examinations. There is a high level of interaction and intellectual challenge as teachers inspire students to think critically when grappling with difficult parts of texts. As such,

intensive teaching dominates lessons in which students are required to work at full stretch. As a result, they develop a very good grasp of literary texts. For example, teachers adopt a scholarly approach with clear exposition and well-selected resources to ensure that students have an increasing understanding of literary traditions. Good examples were seen in lessons on McEwan's *A Child in Time* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Teachers use talk as a central activity, through discussions, intensive questioning and comments to ensure that students can develop a critical approach when analysing texts. The skills of critical thinking are well taught as teachers increase student's technical vocabulary and maintain a sharp focus on the writers' use of language through the relentless use of open-ended questions, which give students the opportunity to give original interpretations.

280. Students work intensively in lessons, maintaining a high level of interest and participation. They rise to the challenges set as they apply themselves with tenacity and commitment to their work. They are focused and interact very well with each other during discussions. They use debate to extend their learning on as they listen intently to each other's contributions as well as to their teacher's. They respect each other and relations with staff are notable for the high level of rapport and respect. Gifted and talented students have the opportunity to take the S-level examinations and in previous years, the department has helped successfully most students to gain an extra qualification in English. These students also have the opportunity to pursue further their literary interests by becoming involved in drama productions, creative writing or contributing to the Internet projects on Shakespeare or Chaucer.
281. Leadership in the sixth form is exceptionally good. Teachers liaise very well and moderation exercises are used effectively to monitor students' progress. Marking of students' work provides them with clear comments on how to improve their work. Teachers know their students very well and use assessment records and personal knowledge to give support and guidance in all areas of their work. The curriculum is carefully selected to ensure that students can use their knowledge of literary texts in higher education; however, the department now needs to complete the sixth form handbook. The department has adjusted its approach to teaching the AS-examinations and now places greater emphasis on students knowing and using the assessment objectives when writing critical evaluations. As such, teachers provide guidance for students to interpret and apply these in their written responses. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good but with the increasing pressure of the new AS-examinations, the department has had to curtail the normally expected literary trail of visits, to places such as the Lake District. Nevertheless, students participate in visits to the theatre, lectures and take full control of drama productions.

## French

Provision for French in the sixth form is **good**. The inspection focus was on French but German and Spanish were also sampled.

### Strengths

- Teaching enables students to make very good progress in lessons.
- Students' positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.

### Areas for development

- Standards achieved in A/S and A-level examinations
- Increase opportunities for students to use the language independently of the teacher.

282. Standards achieved in A/S and A-level examinations for 2001 are in line with national averages but below average compared with similar schools. This represents underachievement in relation to prior attainment. Students have a good range of vocabulary and a good understanding of grammar and are able to read and understand a variety of texts including literature and articles from the press. Their writing is of a high standard but their speaking and listening skills are less secure. In lessons they are able to respond appropriately to questioning by the teacher but are less confident when left to work independently. This is largely a result of recent staffing difficulties and the lack of opportunities offered to students whilst in the main school to practise speaking and listening skills.
283. In the sixth form students in French and German write accurately using a very good range of vocabulary and structures. They discuss abstract ideas and contemporary issues and develop their

understanding and knowledge of the languages. They increase in independence in using the languages both in writing and in speech. They identify the main points and detail from a variety of texts and in French and German they are able to analyse and explain the use of the language for different purposes. Speaking and listening are well developed. In Spanish students find difficulty in using the language independently. Their range of vocabulary and structures are limited and they are heavily dependent upon guidance from the teacher and on written prompts to express their ideas. Reading is more secure; they are able to identify and translate a variety of texts.

284. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and lessons are conducted entirely in French; this is very effective in developing students' listening skills and increasing and reinforcing their knowledge of the language. Lessons are very well planned with well sequenced and imaginative activities which provide appropriate challenge and maintain students' interest. They are given opportunities to work independently and use the language creatively but there is still scope to develop these opportunities further in order to increase students' confidence and independence in the language. During the inspection it was evident that although one of the teachers has only very recently joined the school, she has already established a very good rapport with these students and they are working effectively together to redress this situation. The students appreciate the efforts made by their teachers and are optimistic for the future.
285. Teaching is characterised by very good planning where students are able to make rapid gains in knowledge and skills because of well chosen resources and activities. For example a Year 13 class developed their understanding of the use of tenses by comparing and analysing extracts from Zola's *Germinal* and Camus' *L'Etranger* and increased their vocabulary and speaking skills significantly in doing so. Teachers set a high level of challenge in their lessons which require high levels of concentration and intellectual effort from their students. In a Year 12 lesson students enjoyed the challenge of writing creatively to ask for the impossible and produced some entertaining and well written letters as a result, only to be challenged again to respond to each other's letters. Enjoyment and pride in their achievement were the result of this. Teachers use very skilful questioning to assess how well students are learning and to challenge their thinking as well as develop their linguistic skills. Students are given the opportunity to debate and exchange their views on a variety of contemporary issues. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students were able to express their views about advertising because of the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and the guidance they were given in analysing a text about images used in advertising and the very good use of the board to categorise the main points emerging from the discussion. Students increased in confidence in using the key language both because of this support and because of the teacher's skilful questioning and the effective use of praise and encouragement.
286. Students make the best progress and increase in confidence when they are given the opportunities to try out the language themselves in pairs or small groups. For example in a Year 13 French lesson students were asked to communicate the meaning of newly learned vocabulary to one another so that their partner could guess the word they were describing and as a result they rapidly became more confident in manipulating the language for themselves. In a Year 12 German lesson students discussed the language and images used by advertisers to sell products enthusiastically because of the imaginative use of resources and the challenging questioning of the teacher.
287. Students are disappointed by the experience they have had in the past in the main school which has resulted in their lack of confidence in speaking skills. However, they are rightly optimistic about the future. They recognise that the school has moved quickly to try to improve the situation for them. The subject is well led. They are appreciative of the increased range and variety of activities now being made available to them including the use of video and IT which are effective in increasing their exposure to the language and in helping them to increase in competence and confidence in using the language themselves.