

INSPECTION REPORT

THE JOHN BENTLEY SCHOOL

Calne, Wiltshire, SN11 8YH

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126501

Headteacher: Anne Burrell

Reporting inspector: Stuart Farmer
1968

Dates of inspection: 11th – 15th March 2002

Inspection number: 194361

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Calne Wiltshire
Postcode:	SN11 8YH
Telephone number:	01249 818100
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Alan Carter
Date of previous inspection:	11 th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1968	Stuart Farmer	Registered Inspector		The school's results and achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11418	Donya Urwin	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23393	Brian Dower	Team Inspector	English as an Additional Language, English	
14776	Phil Waite	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
27585	Ken Hounslow	Team Inspector	Science, Chemistry	
10288	John Richards	Team Inspector	Design and Technology	
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team Inspector	Information Technology	
8185	Peter Kendall	Team Inspector	Art	
17732	Dave Martin	Team Inspector	Geography	
4727	Jeff Hale	Team Inspector	History	How well does the school care for its pupils?
15924	Anne Barrett	Team Inspector	Religious Education	
1950	Brian Ley	Team Inspector	Music	
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team Inspector	Physical Education	
2172	David Saunders	Team Inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	
19096	Brian Bartlett	Team Inspector	Equal Opportunities, Special Educational Needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15277	Chris Vidler	Team Inspector	Business Education	
17318	Jan Greenhalgh	Team Inspector	Health and Social Care	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full time students	1209	larger than average
Students with English as an additional language	0.4%	below the national average (7.8%)
Ethnicity	more than 99%	describe themselves as white
Students entitled to free school meals	8.7%	below the national average (15.3%)
Students with special educational needs (SEN)	23.2%	above the national average (19.5%)
Students with statements of SEN	4.8%	above the national average (2.5%)

The school serves the town of Calne and the surrounding villages. Some 40% of the students are transported to and from school by buses and taxis. It is a truly comprehensive 11-18 school and specialist language college, with Foundation status. It has a designated dyslexia unit with nine places. The school has been steadily growing but is expected to grow rapidly over the next few years as vast new housing schemes swell the population of Calne. The school is a crucial part of these changing communities' infrastructure and a major employer. Though student mobility is low there is a significant influx of students from new housing. The school is popular. The community served by the school is one of extremes, Calne South is now the most affluent ward in Wiltshire, but three other wards are amongst the poorest in the county. Students' attainment on entry is now about average, higher than in the recent past, but a significant number of students arrive with a history of poor attendance, difficult behaviour and lower than average national curriculum test scores. The school is almost fully staffed with specialist teachers, and has no unfilled vacancies from September 2002. The school is a leading member of a local partnership of schools within the town and surrounding villages. Its work with primary schools is impressive, it was proactive in helping establish a new primary school in 2000 and is working closely with others, including one currently subject to special measures.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an exceedingly good school that is justly proud of its inclusive philosophy and practice. It achieves at good standards overall, better in some areas than others, and these are improving steadily. The school has been led exceptionally well for a number of years during which substantial change has been exceptionally well managed. The headteacher's commitment to improvement and excellence is outstanding, and she has the full support of her highly professional staff. Teaching is consistently good and frequently very good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and governors have provided an inclusive vision and direction that has won widespread commitment to improvement from the school and local community.
- The leadership provided by the headteacher, senior staff and governors is of very high quality.
- Change is managed with flair and creativity because there is a shared commitment and capacity to succeed and a commitment to improve the school and raise standards.
- The school is steadily raising the standards achieved by all students and valuing them all equally.
- The school has very good relationships with partner primary schools and ensures that many students build on their prior attainment, make good progress and achieve more than is expected of them.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is high. Teaching is consistently good and teaching of the highest quality can be found in all subject areas.
- Students' work and achievement is extremely well monitored and supported through a very effective system which ensures that students are tracked carefully and have suitably challenging targets for improvement.
- The relationships and enthusiasm of students, staff, governors, parents and the many other partners who share 'ownership' of the school.
- The school's very real commitment to equality of access, opportunity and inclusion ... and actually

doing what it says it will.

- The excellent range and quality of extra-curricular and other enrichment activity.
- Its success in ensuring the students' care, welfare, safety and security.
- The way it cultivates and uses its good links with parents to raise standards.

What could be improved

There are no major areas for improvement, but there are a number of areas in which the school should consider further action:

- establish equal rigour at every stage of the school improvement cycle;
- continue to address the issue of under performance of boys in order to reduce the gender achievement differential, and build on the 'over performance' / success of girls;
- ensure more effective delegation to, and contribution from, middle managers to obtain further whole school improvement particularly in the areas of quality assurance and making certain the implementation of plans impacts on standards;
- address any points of detail raised in the subject reports.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The John Bentley School was inspected during the 1996/1997 academic year to the Framework for Inspection introduced in April 1996. Improvements since the last inspection have been good overall and, very good in the sixth form. The school's many strengths have been maintained or developed over a period of tremendous change. With the school now on a single site, potential for further improvement is assured and there is a clear vision for the school's future. The current inspection was welcomed with confidence knowing that it would almost certainly confirm the school's own self-evaluations and to help fine tune future improvement activity. The key issues raised in the last inspection have all been thoroughly addressed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	A	N/A		

Students' attainment when they arrive at the John Bentley School from their primary schools is now broadly in line with the national average, though it varies significantly from school to school. Overall data indicates the general academic performance of the school has been on a rising trend over a period of several years.

In 2001 the national tests at age 14 students' results were well above the national average and that for similar schools in English, above the national average and close to that for similar schools in mathematics and close to the national average and that for similar schools in science.

In 2001, results at GCSE matched national figures for the first time. The overall five or more A* -C grades figure of 48% in 2001 was the best ever achieved by John Bentley School, much higher than the target set for this year group in 1999 of only 36%. Girls achieved particularly well and a substantial gender gap was revealed. The 2001 PANDA indicates that, based on prior attainment at the age of 14, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE/GNVQ A*-C was above the average achieved by comparison with similar schools. It also indicates that pupils' progress through Key Stage 4 is well above average when compared to similar schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The school creates an environment where the progress of students, in every setting, is a priority. The students recognise this and consequently enthusiasm for the school is very high.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. There are only occasional instances of unsatisfactory behaviour and lack of attention to the teacher and the task. There was no evidence of bullying or oppression during the inspection and students are very enthusiastic about the friendliness of John Bentley School.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students respect one another and interactions with school staff and visitors are lively, confident and mature. Personal development and self-esteem is a consistent consideration. Students have good opportunities to take responsibility and demonstrate personal initiative through community visits and helping each other.
Attendance	Satisfactory. It is broadly in line with the national average and there is a slightly lower than usual incidence of unauthorised absence. The number of pupils excluded permanently is very low and the school prefers to use fixed-term exclusions to provide a 'breathing space' as well as a focus for agreeing readmission strategies with students and carers to ensure that they keep even the most disruptive students at school.

Three of these areas are strengths of the school; they impact positively on the ethos, which consistently promotes high standards. There is a dedicated focus throughout the school to create a 'climate for learning' for all students. This is based not only on an explicit ethos of motivation, target setting and measurement but also seeks to respond to the complexity of individual students and their unique needs. The school continues to address attendance issues with vigour and has recently been successful in a bid for Government funding to install an electronic attendance system.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	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.

The proportion, overall, of good or better teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teaching is good or better in seven out of every ten lessons and nearly half of these were very good or excellent. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching remains low at less than five out of every one hundred lessons. No poor or very poor teaching was observed. In English lessons, the overall quality of teaching was good; the work was well adapted to suit students' different needs. All lessons were

carefully planned and structured. In mathematics, weaker lessons were more than outweighed by some exceptional teaching, and overall, through both Key Stage 3 and 4, teaching averaged out at good. In science, the overall quality of teaching is good. When teaching is less than good it is because the teacher spends too much time trying to get the students' full attention. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers make good use of resources such as video, demonstrations, and experiments, all of which enable students to learn well. In information and communication technology teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good and is often good. Students are set work, which builds confidence in the least able, while providing extended opportunities for the more able. Excellent and very good lessons were seen in art, design and technology, English, drama, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education, science and in learning support. In only a very small minority of lessons is unsatisfactory teaching limiting students' learning, encouraging unsatisfactory behaviour and cultivating negative attitudes. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively in the core subjects of English and mathematics, and increasingly well across the curriculum. The school is very effective at meeting the needs of all pupils and works hard to be a truly inclusive institution.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is very good. The school provides the full National Curriculum plus personal, social and health education (PSHE) and drama. At Key Stage 4 it is good. The core curriculum consists of English, mathematics, single science, modern foreign language, religious studies, physical education, PSHE and information technology (IT). Students select four optional subjects. All statutory requirements are met in both key stages. The school's cross-curricular approach to the teaching of IT is very effective. The enrichment of the curriculum provided by extra-curricular activities is very good. Religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Provision for pupils with statements of SEN is very good. In-class support by learning support assistants is very good. The school has a very good system for identifying the difficulties and needs of pupils with SEN but that information is not always well used. Whilst the involvement of parents whose children have statements of SEN is very good it is only satisfactory for the rest of the pupils with SEN. The SEN department makes very good use of information technology.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Teachers take pains to ensure that students with English as an additional language are involved in the lessons and make progress in line with their peers. This was done through modifying the work to take account of their individual needs and targeting support on them in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Whilst the provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good overall, it is provision for their spiritual that could be improved. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. Careers and vocational education are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school's systems for ensuring that its students are properly cared for are very good. Its arrangements for monitoring students' attainment and for linking such monitoring to systems that promote their personal development are both innovative and impressive.

	The range of initiatives used by the school to support students is imaginative and comprehensive, and successfully addresses the needs of students of all abilities.
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The school's links with parents are very good and it is uncompromising about parent involvement during its attempts to resolve difficult issues. This works well with the result that parents, students and tutors collaboratively agree how they must work together to make progress. Parents make a very good contribution to students' education through comments and issues highlighted in school planners and by offering practical support during school clubs, trips, and teaching programmes. The school's curriculum makes a good contribution to its ethos and standards. It is rich, varied and carefully fine-tuned, so that students of all abilities can achieve their full potential. Students are offered a curriculum that provides excellent opportunities for personal development as well as for achievement in many fields. Language College status is beginning to impact positively on many aspects of students' work across the curriculum. The very good extra-curricular activities and enhancement programme allows the students to develop their interests and talents still further and clearly benefits their overall achievement. Provision of religious education in the Sixth Form does not meet with the statutory requirements. The school responds readily and effectively to initiatives, such as the roll out of the national Key Stage 3 strategy and recent post-16 changes: its response is always considered, ensuring that changes are well planned and thoroughly implemented with the support of staff. Tutors focus on students' achievement and welfare through 'Pupil-Tracking' and the newly implemented academic mentoring programme is both challenging and supportive.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. This is an increasingly successful school because the leadership provided by its governors and senior managers, especially the headteacher, is outstandingly good. The very good management of the school by the headteacher and her key staff is characterised by effective strategic thinking and good plans that embrace change management over the short, medium and longer term.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. The governors fulfil their statutory duties exceedingly well and play a key role in shaping the direction of the school. They are efficient and have a well-informed and effective committee structure. The governing body has a very good grasp of where the school's strengths lie, and where there are areas for improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is a real commitment to continuous school improvement. Structured systems for monitoring the performance of the school and its implementation of plans are impressive, but delivering the desired impact is not yet universally achieved through its middle managers. Evaluation processes require some further development, as does the shift from knowing about what needs to be done, to being certain that it will be done. The school's 'Pupil-Track' assessment system provides potent information for staff about pupils' performance against potential and leads to the identification of specific student level targets.
The strategic use of resources	Good. This inclusive school has built up, and is continuing to build, its capacity to improve for the benefit of all its pupils. Accommodation, facilities and resources have been improved dramatically since the last inspection. Appropriate priorities have been identified to ensure that the school is working towards high standards and quality.

The school's increasing success is due in the main to consistency and clarity of purpose in recent years. There has been an uncompromising commitment to inclusion, to improving standards for all students, and to continuous school improvement, led by the headteacher and shared and understood by governors, staff, partner schools, the Calne community and by the students and parents. The school's systems are focused, and re-focused, on achieving the key purposes through a staged development based on best value and equality of opportunity for all students. Overall, the adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is good, and improving. The support provided by the administrative, technical, catering and site staff is of the highest quality. Financial management is good and resources are deployed effectively in accordance with the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is a good school that has improved significantly in recent years and is very well led by the headteacher; • children of all abilities attain well and make good progress, and the good links with primary schools help ensure this; • the school sets and expects high standards of work, behaviour and attitudes to others; • teachers expect their students to be successful and students have equally high expectations of themselves; • much of the teaching is good and teachers care about the students; • behaviour is good, but progress can sometimes be affected by a minority of difficult students; • students enjoy school and parents feel that it is helping to make their children become mature and responsible citizens; • the school is approachable and listens to them; • the school is well managed and tries hard to keep them well-informed; • extra-curricular and other enhancement activities are good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework, although views and criticisms are very mixed (too little, too much, inconsistent in quality and quantity, unplanned, unprogrammed across the curriculum etc.); • the impact of staffing problems (long term absence, supply staff, marking, continuity etc.); • behaviour, poor in pockets and affecting students' progress; • options at Key Stage 4 and courses available in the sixth form; • contacting staff/the school (access to the right person, manning of school phone-line).

The inspectors are in full agreement with the parents' very positive views and pride in their improving school. Inspectors could find no significant evidence to support parents' concerns about homework, options or communicating with the school by telephone at appropriate times. However, pockets of poor behaviour and problems relating to staffing, though not of great significance overall, do clearly impact on the school lives of particular pupils. The school has done its best to manage these issues. The school will be fully staffed by trained professionals from September, and it continues to address inappropriate behaviour vigorously.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this popular comprehensive school has 159 students, which is line with the average size nationally of 166 students. There are equal numbers of male and female students. About 50 % of the students from Year 11 in the John Bentley School join the sixth form and make up the majority of its population, with only very small numbers joining from other schools. Students opt for both one and two year courses, with most completing the latter. The comprehensive sixth form prospectus states that all students are welcome to apply to join the sixth form and providing that:

- they are genuinely committed to further study and are making a positive choice;
- they are likely to benefit from and succeed in their chosen courses;
- they are willing to accept the responsibilities of sixth form life.

The sixth form is steadily growing in size and currently offers a wide range of courses including GCE Advanced Levels as AS or A-levels, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education, GNVQ Intermediate and GCSE courses. All students are formally interviewed before being offered a place.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a good sixth form that provides very good value for money. There is a steady increase in numbers, the teaching is very good and examination achievement is rising, with most students attaining at least results that reflect their potential based on prior performance. Its continued success reflects the very good leadership and management. This clearly focuses on enabling students to achieve their potential academically but also seeks to enrich their sixth form experience in many other ways.

Strengths

- The standards achieved in the A/AS level and vocational examinations.
- The good relationships between students and staff who work together in order to maximise learning.
- Teaching which is consistently very good, and which elicits equally good learning.
- The quality of the curriculum offered and the extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities for students.
- The monitoring, guidance and support provided for the students from induction to departure.
- The leadership provided by the headteacher, school leadership team, head of sixth form and governors is of high quality.

What could be improved

- Statutory provision for religious education.
- There are no other major areas for improvement; there are points of detail for consideration in the sixth form subject reports.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Results have always been around the national average, but have occasionally been exceptionally good due to the very good teaching.
Chemistry	Good. Students achieve above national standards at both AS and A-level because the teaching by experienced A-level staff is very good. Students show exceptionally high levels of interest and great confidence in their teachers.
Business Education	Good. The good teaching enables students to learn well in realistic business contexts. A new AVCE course introduced in September 2000 replaced an Advanced GNVQ in which standards were broadly in line with national expectations. Unmoderated results for the new course indicate that standards are improving.
Health and Social Care	Good. Results at GNVQ and AVCE have been good. Good teaching by an experienced team, good relationships and good individual support enable students to learn well and develop their own interests in the subject.
Art and Design	Very good. There has been above average exam success over the past three years and this reflects the expert subject leadership and good teaching. Students are very positive about the quality of provision and so learn and achieve very well.
Geography	Very good. Teaching is very good and the subject very well managed. Results have improved over the past four years, although in 2001 they dipped below the national average. Success in relation to ability and prior attainment is good.
English	Good. The most recent English literature A-level results are above average and AS results represent a satisfactory outcome for the students. Teaching is good and helps students learn because their individual needs are well met.
French	Good. Results at A-level have been satisfactory and numbers opting for the subject are increasing. Teaching is always good and very good relationships ensure that there is a good learning atmosphere.
German	Good and improving. Teaching is good. It makes serious demands on the students and they respond well. Results have been close to national averages even though the numbers of candidates are small.

In physics and biology very good teaching enables the students to achieve standards that are above the national average. The quality of provision in drama is very good and high standards of performance are achieved in the sixth form. The students learn well because the very good teaching stimulates and excites them. Extensive opportunities to perform to live audiences challenges students to improve the standards of their work. In design and technology achievement and progress on the A/AS-level courses is very good because students are well taught. Students on the new GNVQ hospitality and catering course benefit from good teaching, which ensures good learning. There are some very good examples of continued use of information and communication technology by sixth form students, particularly in the projects scrutinised. Teachers insist on good use of ICT, wherever appropriate, across the curriculum. In physical education at GCE A-level the results in recent years have been mixed, in 2001 they were below the national average, and students tend to do less well in this than their other subjects. Weaknesses in teaching and unsatisfactory responses from students limit attainment. The school is failing to meet the

statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form, as was also the case at the last inspection.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The support offered to sixth form students is good and the very good guidance provided prior to entry informs post-16 choice in the very widest sense. Students' progress is well monitored and any issues are picked up by tutors in one-to-one interviews. Support in several of the subjects inspected is very effective, but the assessment of attainment and progress is uniformly good across the sixth form. Guidance on progression routes into higher education and employment is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The school does not treat the sixth form as additional, rather as importantly integral to the success of the whole. Like the main school it is inclusive and actively promotes equal opportunity. The governing body, school leadership team and middle managers have a clear rationale for provision in the sixth form. The head of sixth form has a clear agenda for action and has the full support of the governing body. Monitoring, review and improvement activity is effective.

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"> • students are very positive about course provision and quality of teaching; • good relationships with teachers – independence when you need it, support when you don't; • excellent facilities, which enable good progress e.g. art; • very good subject knowledge of most teachers; • good support during transition times, lots of help to settle in; • high expectations with demanding standards in most subjects – sixth form at JBS is not a soft option; • friendly atmosphere created by staff who aren't afraid to have fun when they teach. 	<p>Students did not feel that there were any significant aspects of the sixth form that could be improved. Suggestions for minor improvement included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • noting and responding to sixth formers views; • choice of courses, combinations and timetabling; • advice on options post 16; • advice about what is possible after leaving school; • range of opportunities beyond main subjects studied.

The inspectors are in full agreement with the positive views held by the sixth form students. It was not possible to reach a view as to what extent the views of sixth formers were taken into account in decision making, and it would be appropriate for staff and students to talk further about this issue. Choice of courses in the sixth form, combinations and timetabling issues are considered important by the school and the sixth form prospectus makes it clear that some things are not possible. The inspectors recognise that the school operates within finite parameters and is sensitive to the needs of individuals whenever possible. The inspectors consider the advice provided prior to entering post 16 education and what is possible after the sixth form is good, and so do not agree that this requires significant improvement. The school makes available a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities.

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. Students' attainment when they arrive at The John Bentley School from their primary schools is now broadly in line with the national average. At the time of the last inspection students entered the school with below average attainment in the core subjects of the national curriculum. Data from Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) and Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) indicate that the prior attainment of the students is improving; however significant numbers still bring with them problems that have the potential to limit their progress. Excellent work with partner primary schools minimises the disruption caused by the move into secondary school and maximises progress in Year 7.

2. Overall data indicates the general academic performance of the school has been on a rising trend over a period of several years. In 2001, results at Key Stage 4 for the first time matched national figures, and at Key Stage 3 go beyond that in almost all areas. The last inspection report states that 'girls outperform boys generally ... but that many departments are working hard to improve boys' attainments'. Though this is still the case, the 'over-performance' of girls has recently dramatically emphasised the 'underachievement' of the boys. In previous years there has been far narrower gap (1998: 1.1 %, 1999: 11.8 %, 2000: 9.5 %).

3. In 2001 the national tests at age 14 students' results show improvement in English, mathematics and science, over the past three years. In these tests, core subjects performed well against national figures for students achieving the national expectation and the higher levels. Performance in English, notably that of both boys and girls, exceeded the national average. In comparison with the national benchmarks for all schools/similar schools the students' performance in terms of the average points scores achieved were:

- well above the national average and that for similar schools in English;
- above the national average and close to that for similar schools in mathematics;
- close to the national average and that for similar schools in science.

4. The five-year improvement trend in the school's average points score for all core subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national trend.

5. In terms of teacher assessment, core subjects are, again, broadly comparable with national figures, except in English where they are slightly lower. The school attributes this to over-cautiousness in assessing student performance. Foundation subjects also achieved results broadly similar to national trends as evidenced in the Autumn Package from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). There were marked improvements in design and technology, information and communications technology and modern foreign languages, although there appear to be some assessment problems in history and geography. In these subjects the lower than national figures are thought to be due, as in English, to excessive caution by teachers in determining the levels achieved by students. Figures for physical education, art and music are somewhat erratic and the school feels that these do not reflect the reality of students' performances. These departments have very limited experience in using national curriculum levels and so this may explain marked differences from national figures. All three departments have identified Key Stage 3 assessment as an area for development during 2001/02. At the time of the last inspection attainment was at about the national expectation in the core subjects, and few students were achieving the higher levels,

and so attainment at this level is much improved. There is also good evidence that students are achieving at least what could be expected of them at age 14, based on their achievement at age 11 (value-added), and many achieve better than would have been predicted at that time.

6. At GCSE the overall five or more A* -C grades figure of 48% in 2001 was the best ever achieved by The John Bentley School, much higher than the target set for this year group in 1999 of only 36%. This year's Autumn Package from the DfES shows that the performance of the school was broadly comparable with national trends overall (i.e. in the core subjects), although the gender differential was far more marked:

- Boys: A* -C 34.5% (national 44.6%) : Average points score 33.25 (national 36.4)
- Girls: A* -C 64.4% (national 55.2%) : Average points score 46.6 (national 41.9)

7. There were significantly more boys in the year group, and they under-performed by proportionately more than the girls. The girls 'over performance' contributed to the very high gender differential (in 2000, the gender differential was below the national average). Since autumn 2001 departments have been involved in the process of analysing these results and both targets and a range of strategies have been identified to try to reduce the differential for this year. These plans are currently being implemented, more obviously in some departments than others.

8. The DfES Autumn Package benchmark information indicated that compared with other schools in the same prior attainment (Key Stage 3) band, The John Bentley School was in the top 40% of schools for all performance measures other than for five or more A* -G grades and one or more A* -G grades. This is not typical of the trend in the school's results over the past few years. It is thought that one main cause of this was the number of students in the 2001 cohort who were long term absentees or were following alternative programmes not attracting 'points values' which would have improved the school's performance in the lower performing measures

9. Results in the core subjects in 2001 were all broadly in line with expectations and design and technology, art (with 23 A* grades); physical education (pass rate at A* -C of 81.8% with 55 students) and modern foreign languages achieved well in value added terms. Language College status appears to have an impact on standards in modern foreign languages where 50.2% of the cohort achieved A* -C, including 12 different students gaining A* in one language. Only 18 female students of the entry did not gain at least one 'C' grade in modern foreign languages (MFL). Performance in the humanities subjects was reasonable (A* -C ranged from 48.6% in business studies to 50.7% in geography) although the high level of U grades and non-entries in these subjects are a cause for concern. Music results were poor (23.8% A* -C) and the school considers that many students significantly under-performed. This is a priority area for improvement in 2002/03, and has been for 2001-2002.

10. The five-year improvement trend in the school's average total GCSE/GNVQ point score is broadly in line with the national trend. The 2001 PANDA indicates that, based on prior attainment at the age of 14, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE/GNVQ A*-C was above the national average in comparison with similar schools. It also indicates that pupils' progress through Key Stage 4 is well above average when compared to similar schools.

11. In English the proportion of students attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2001 English Language examinations was close to the national average. The girls' results were better than those of the boys in the school and also better than those of girls nationally. Boys did less well than their counterparts nationally. The girls have consistently improved their

results over the last three years but the improvement in boys' standards has been inconsistent. No boys and very few of the girls attained at the highest A* grade. Overall, achievement in relation to what was attained at the end of Year 9 was satisfactory. There has been no significant improvement since the last inspection when standards were also average. In mathematics, standards at GCSE have improved since the last inspection at around the national rate and are now at the national average. In 2001 there was a larger than normal gender difference in C grades, with girls doing considerably better than boys. Improvement through Key Stage 3 has been better with a slightly below average intake now reaching standards that are just above national average. Gender differences are not significant through Key Stage 3. Relative to similar schools this year's results are slightly above average. Science standards at GCSE are in line with the national average when compared with both all and similar schools. The school has offered a Double Award GCSE science for all its students for a considerable period of time and results have risen in line with the national average over the last three years. Students' achievement is very good. GCSE results in 2001 were well above what might be expected for those students based on their attainment at the end of Year 9. Until last year there had been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In 2001 girls did much better than boys. Girls obtained about ten per cent above and boys obtained about ten per cent below their respective national averages. Girls' achievement was very high and that of the boys was in line with what may be expected from their attainment at the end of Year 9.

12. The standards of literacy are good for all students throughout the school. They have opportunities across the curriculum to read a range of texts which make increasing demands as they progress. They read these with understanding and are able to appreciate their distinctive forms. The majority of students are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum and they write with reasonable standards of accuracy. In mathematics lessons standards of reading and writing are satisfactory but habits of speaking and listening are variable. They use an extensive vocabulary in all curriculum areas and write in a range of styles suited to the subjects being studied. The one area of weakness is in students' extended writing. Many students have difficulty with structure and do not sustain and support an argument or theme with sufficient detail. Students take account of context and audience when speaking and are confident and fluent in expression. They listen well and can concentrate for extended periods of time.

13. Within mathematics lessons standards of numeracy are improving, particularly with regard to pupils mental fluency and awareness of efficient calculating strategies. However, some inappropriate use of calculators was also noticed. Pupils' performances in algebra are a bit weak and their powers of graphical visualisation are underdeveloped. Standards in shape, space and measurement are satisfactory whilst data handling is relatively strong. Little evidence of extended tasks involving using and applying mathematics was seen during this inspection, but there was clear evidence of pupils being encouraged to hypothesise and extend their mathematical thinking toward the idea of a proof in some excellent teaching. Able pupils in Years 7 and 8 were starting to respond enthusiastically and with some rigour to the challenge of demonstrating truths about the behaviours of tessellated or transformed two-dimensional shapes. The presentation of work is satisfactory but insufficiently supported in some classes.

14. Evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' coursework during the inspection shows that standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above the national average. The highest attaining students are able to make excellent use of the software packages available, integrating scanned and Internet images and presenting documents in a highly organised way. Students are able to evaluate their own work by looking in depth at the techniques they have used and improvements they have made. The

cross-curricular approach to ICT allows its use to be put into subject context; for example, in web page design in art and during food nutrition analysis in technology.

15. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above the national average. Across the key stages, in most subjects and in the specific learning difficulty (SpLD) Unit pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good and sometimes very good progress. The performance of the most able pupils is generally good and they too make good progress.

16. During Key Stage 3 most pupils who receive additional support improve their reading and spelling ages by at least 12 months, and sometimes considerably more, in a year. During Years 7-9 most pupils improve their attainment in the core subjects by at least one National Curriculum level and, most notably in English, many improve by two levels. Many pupils with special educational needs achieve at least six GCSEs and in some subjects, for example, art, drama and design and technology, several reach the higher grades. In the sixth form pupils with special educational needs achieve well particularly in the hospitality and catering course. In art, information technology and swimming pupils with special educational needs often achieve as well as the rest of the class.

17. Achievement in lessons is good overall. Pupils use their prior knowledge of phonics and vowel digraphs to read unfamiliar words. They make very good use of the strategies they have been taught to improve their spelling. They hold 'mock' telephone conversations in German; can use and explain spreadsheets in information technology; make thoughtful contributions to a discussion about slavery in history; and improve their agility and flight on and off apparatus in gymnastics.

Sixth form

18. In 2001 students' performance AS Level was broadly in line with expectations, apart from in mathematics, where the proportion of students who were ungraded reflected the national trend. Subject teachers felt that despite the unhelpful national 'bad publicity', the new examination system had largely been successfully implemented. Whilst not as high as in recent years (1999 97%, 2000 96%), in 2001 the A Level/Advanced GNVQ pass rate (91.4%) and average points score per student (15.1) represented substantial achievement for most students, evidence which is supported by 2001 performance and assessment report (PANDA). The figures also reflect to some extent the school's 'open sixth form' policy that commits it to giving students every opportunity to achieve some success even if their overall chances of doing so are not high. The school's analysis of performance against prior attainment indicates that the majority of students in 2001 either achieved more than would have been expected from prior attainment (Value-added) or achieved what was expected of them.

19. At the time of the last inspection achievement in A-levels for students entered for two or more subjects was below the national average and GNVQ results were described as creditable, with some students gaining distinctions. Currently the school's 2001 performance and assessment report indicates that compared with all other maintained schools, students entered for two or more A levels, or the AS equivalent, achieve an average points score well above the national average. Students entered for less than two A levels achieve an average points score that is very high (in the top 25%) when compared with the national average. The school compares equally well when compared to all post-16 providers.

20. Sixth form students have many opportunities to demonstrate achievement at The John Bentley School. There is a thriving Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and a number of students are involved in the Young People's Town Council. The school has strengths in the

sporting and performance arts and is developing a new tradition in competitive debating. There are many other extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities available.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. The previous inspection report describes an atmosphere in lessons of enjoyment, concentration and application. Despite a number of significant challenges during the intervening six years the school has worked hard to sustain and develop these characteristics and the standard of attitudes, relationships and behaviour at The John Bentley School is good.

22. There is a dedicated focus throughout the school to create a 'climate for learning' for all students. This is based not only on an explicit ethos of motivation, target setting and measurement but also seeks to respond to the complexity of individual students and their unique needs. As a result the school creates an environment where the progress of students, in every setting, is a priority. The students do realise this and consequently enthusiasm for the school is very high. Relationships are good. Students respect one another and interactions with school staff and visitors are lively, confident and mature. Property is well looked after, there is open access to many areas and students do not abuse this privilege. Personal development and self-esteem is a consistent consideration and pupils are encouraged by all staff to consider the impact of their actions on others. The school has a very good system of 'peer support' where selected students are partnered with those who are struggling to reach the standards required. The students involved report that their role model partners are very useful because *'they're like me and the teacher isn't, so it's easier to understand when they explain it'*. Particularly impressive is that this doesn't create an 'underclass' of students whose behaviour is publicly highlighted as inappropriate but rather it provides a realistic and relevant method for improvement where it is difficult to single out those requiring guidance from those providing it.

23. There was no evidence of bullying or oppression during the inspection and students are very enthusiastic about the friendliness of The John Bentley School. Where incidents do occur the school has well rehearsed procedures to respond and issues are resolved quickly and efficiently. In the best lessons, particularly at Key Stage 4, students are focused on their tasks, working enthusiastically and keenly to improve. The number of pupils excluded permanently is very low and the school prefers to use fixed-term exclusions to provide a 'breathing space' as well as a focus for agreeing readmission strategies with students and carers to ensure that they keep even the most disruptive students at school. The school works hard to solve its problems rather than export them and consequently the number of fixed term exclusions is significantly higher than average. However, levels of re-offending are relatively low indicating a successful strategy on which to build future progress. Students do have opportunities to take responsibility and demonstrate personal initiative through community visits and helping other students e.g. monitor system and those pupils involved are interested and enthusiastic although more could be done to drive this aspect further.

24. Attendance is satisfactory, despite some classification issues regarding work experience and college attendance. It is broadly in line with the national average and there is a slightly lower than usual incidence of unauthorised absence.

25. The attitudes of pupils with SEN are very good. In most lessons pupils behave well. The generally good quality of teaching motivates and enthuses the pupils who respond by being interested and attentive participants. Relationships between teacher and pupils are very good. In small groups the pupils co-operate very well; they are very supportive of and helpful to one another.

26. There are occasional instances of unsatisfactory behaviour and lack of attention to the teacher and the task. These usually occur because the teaching methodology is inappropriate, the task is too difficult or the level of challenge is too low and does not capture the interest of the pupils.

Sixth form

27. Attitudes and values in the sixth form are very good. The students are enthusiastic about learning and they have a conscientious acceptance of the responsibilities they hold for their own achievement and progress. With a high degree of personal insight they set themselves challenging targets and are keen to fulfil the school's expectations even in the face of challenging circumstances. Encouragement and support from school staff is a key component in this drive for results whether the target is academic or vocational. The aim to include all students in a 'climate for learning' travels throughout the school.

28. During the majority of lessons interest is sustained and students appreciate the range of subjects offered and the teaching provided. There is evidence of keen, personal involvement in a number of subjects e.g. art where the majority are immersed in their studies, producing work, which is adventurous and purposeful. Unfortunately students are not always committed, and attitudes in physical education are disappointing. Student views about the school are strong and there is a very high level of appreciation about the sixth form and its contribution to the development of the local community. However their involvement in the life of the lower school is limited and whilst some opportunities for encouraging and supporting younger pupils have been explored and introduced in Legge House, more could be done.

29. Attitudes to the development of personal and learning skills are very good and students in the sixth form have developed reliable study skills and habits when working both independently and in groups. Talking with sixth form students during the inspection provided a live endorsement of the school's aim to turn values into practice. Their desire to provide support for one another is noticeable, relationships are very good and an atmosphere of respect and appreciation exists throughout the sixth form.

30. Although lesson attendance is very good, overall attendance levels in the sixth form are difficult to establish due to the absence of a central recording system. The school is currently addressing this issue.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. The proportion, overall, of good or better teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teaching is good or better in seven out of every ten lessons and nearly half of these were very good or excellent. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching remains low at less than five out of every one hundred lessons. No poor or very poor teaching was observed. Excellent and very good lessons were seen in design and technology, English, drama, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education, science and in learning support. In a very small minority of lessons unsatisfactory teaching is limiting students' learning, encouraging unsatisfactory behaviour and cultivating negative attitudes. The school knows where there are problems currently and is working to remedy them. The impact of long term illness and staff absence has also had a negative impact on the quality of teaching in some areas of the curriculum. The school has tried to manage these situations in a difficult national context of recruitment and retention. The school is fully staffed for September 2002 and so most of these problems will cease to be issues that cause concern.

32. Two thirds of the teaching across Years 7 to 11, spread evenly across the two key stages, is good or better. The highest level of unsatisfactory teaching was found in Year 7 where it occurred in four out of 25 lessons. A significant proportion of the unsatisfactory teaching overall was in music; other lessons were isolated events in subjects where the quality of teaching was not a general cause for concern.

33. Where teaching is good or better the students are consistently given work that has been modified by the teacher to meet their varied needs, this enables all students to make progress gaining new knowledge and understanding while developing their skills as learners. For example in a Year 11 language lesson there was a very lively start with the teacher using a ball to focus the group during a question and answer session revising oral questions for the coming GCSE. The teacher's very good relationship with the class was jocular, but challenging. Three tenses were used in questioning, forcing the students to do likewise. A foreign language assistant took students out one by one to address individual learning issues. As the lesson moved to 'question words' with another brilliant exercise the extent of learning became clear, with most students showing that they could do what was asked of them. All the students were highly motivated by this excellent teaching.

34. In English lessons the overall quality of teaching was good. Here, too, the work was well adapted to suit students' different needs. All lessons were carefully planned and structured. There were always clear explanations of how to approach the work. Teachers' expectations were high and they evaluated the progress of individuals and gave clear guidance for improvement. The teachers' good working relationships with students underpinned the learning process. This was done through modifying the work to take account of their individual needs and targeting support on them in lessons. Care has been taken to make the classrooms attractive learning environments and good use is made of a wide range of resources. In English lessons teachers took pains to ensure that students with special educational needs and the few with English as an additional language were involved in the lessons and made progress in line with their peers. In a Year 11 English lesson, during which students were revising poems from other cultures, an excellent working atmosphere prevailed and many of the above factors ensured that quality of learning was impressive.

35. In mathematics weaker lessons were more than outweighed by some exceptional teaching, and overall, through both Key Stage 3 and 4, teaching averaged out at good. The best lessons in Key Stage 3 used practical activities and supported these with strong visual models of what was happening. Other reflective aspects were frequent challenges to pupils to explain their thinking and the effective use of the information and communication technology suite, with suitable software, to provide situations to explore and synthesise. A Year 7 lesson on tessellations was very well taught using computer software, where a tight instructional start moved effectively into an open exploratory learning phase during which students made very good progress in knowledge, understanding and skills. Very good Key Stage 4 lessons, at this time of the year, contained well-organised revision programmes that combined active re-teaching of topics causing concern with more individual support and guidance. These sessions were strongly led and briskly run.

36. In information and communication technology teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good and was often good. Students were set work which built confidence in the least able while providing extended opportunities for the more able. Many non-specialist teachers were being used to deliver ICT across the curriculum and it was taught very effectively. In all lessons observed, these teachers showed good knowledge of the subject and confidence when teaching. In the best lessons, students' worked with purpose and enthusiasm and teachers were aware immediately if students needed support. Lessons were very well

planned with a good range of activities and a brisk pace. Opportunities for learning were enhanced by the excellent range of software and hardware available.

37. In science the overall quality of teaching is good. When teaching is less than good it is because the teacher spends too much time trying to get the students' full attention. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers make good use of resources such as video, demonstrations, and experiments, all of which enable students to learn well. Teachers generally manage the students well in the classroom so that most have every opportunity to learn. Clear objectives are set for every lesson. Teachers match the work to the needs of the group as a whole but do not provide sufficiently for the needs of different students in the same group. Sometimes teachers, when marking students' work indicate how improvements can be made but then fail to insist that students respond to these comments.

38. There are instances of good practice being used at departmental level where members of staff take account of students' literacy needs in their approach to their teaching. In history, for example, teachers are improving students' extended writing through the use of writing frames and through the quality of their marking which gives clear guidance on how to improve. In physical education younger students are using the correct technical vocabulary when evaluating each other's work and this was seen at its best in a swimming lesson. Students speak with confidence, enjoy discussion and can explain their ideas clearly in their geography lessons. There are good opportunities in design and technology for students to write in different ways through research, design briefs, and annotation of specifications and through written evaluations.

39. There is still work to be done, however, to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of literacy skills across all curriculum areas. In some subjects there is no focus on literacy skills in teachers' marking and only rarely do they comment on the literacy aspects of their subject during the course of a lesson. The school is well placed, however, to secure these improvements because of the work already undertaken by the literacy co-ordinator and the commitment of many other colleagues. A school literacy policy is in place and members of staff have received literacy training. The summer literacy school has been running for three years and for the students who attend follow up work will be undertaken in an after school club. The aim now must be on ensuring that provision is consistent throughout the school.

40. Numeracy teaching across the curriculum is reasonably extensive with good examples of applications in design and technology, information and communication technology, geography, art and personal, social and health education.

41. The quality of teaching in the unit for pupils with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) is very good. In other areas of the special educational needs (SEN) department it ranges from good to unsatisfactory. In the main school the teaching of pupils with SEN has improved since the last inspection. It is satisfactory in most lessons and good or better in many. There are examples of very good and excellent teaching in religious education, German, mathematics, swimming, information technology and history.

42. In the best lessons the teachers use their very good knowledge of their subject and the pupils' needs to provide very clear explanations which means that the pupils know what they have to and how to produce good work. The objectives for those lessons are precise and the level of challenge is high. Teachers use methods that enable pupils to access the learning such as providing them with key words to structure their writing, strategies to improve their reading and spelling, and modified materials and response sheets. A particular feature of the best lessons is the very skilful use of questions to probe the pupils' knowledge

and prompt and guide them towards a more detailed understanding of the issues. As a result of the above pupils in the SpLD Unit developed detailed knowledge of the imagery and symbolism in 'Flight' by Doris Lessing. In religious education the pupils made particularly good progress in their understanding of the meanings of prejudice, racism, sexism and stereotyping. In an excellent mathematics lesson about probability pupils understood the concepts of greater, lesser, certainty and impossibility.

43. Where there are weaknesses in the teaching the objectives for the lesson are vague, the instructions lack clarity and therefore the pupils do not understand the purpose of the activity. On occasions insufficient attention is paid to the needs and abilities of the pupils in the planning stage. This means that the work is pitched at too high a level and is presented in a way that is too complicated for the pupils to understand. The quality and amount of marking is very variable. Where there is little or no marking, over time, the standards achieved and the quality of presentation decline. The use of worksheets could be improved. The best teaching uses a variety of formats to enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. However, some teachers repeatedly produce worksheets that require only single word responses. This approach does not enable the pupils to develop their literacy skills.

44. The school leadership team and other senior managers set clear quality standards for teaching. They use performance management and the departmental review cycle well to ensure that teaching quality is consistently high across the curriculum and throughout the school. This is a school where there are strengths in all aspects of teaching and one key challenge for them is to ensure that existing best practice is effectively celebrated and shared. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent because they work hard together in an atmosphere where learning is expected to be both challenging and enjoyable.

Sixth form

45. The quality of teaching in the nine subjects inspected and overall in the sixth form is very good, with some impressive strengths. The quality of teaching has a significant and positive impact on the students' learning and the good standards that many achieve.

46. Teachers' knowledge and understanding promotes very high standards and quality learning because they plan and teach lessons which encourage students to make the intellectual, creative or physical effort needed to make good progress. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson on free radical reactions, all students were 'buzzing' with questions towards the end of the period. In this excellent lesson the teacher met the needs of individuals by setting different work and encouraged further independent study through appropriate homework tasks. The lesson prepared students' well to take the next steps in learning for themselves and with confidence.

47. Teachers' planning and choice of teaching methods is a strength. For example, in a very well taught Year 12 English lesson where students were looking at the context of comedy. The pace and challenge of the work and the teacher's use of a wide range of varied techniques, starting the lesson with a Tony Hancock video extract, stimulated and consolidated the students' learning well.

48. The very good working relationships between teachers and their students have a very positive impact on the quality of learning and the standards achieved in lessons. In a Year 12 mathematics lesson on random variables and normal distributions there was a fine 'mathematicians together' feel to the activity. In this lesson the brilliant teaching ensured that all students made very good progress in a supportive learning environment, contributed their ideas well and had time to reflect. The teacher's skill in making this lesson relaxed and fun was a very neat 'trick', because it was serious too.

49. In only one sixth form subject, not one of the nine inspected in detail, was there some concern about the quality of teaching, learning and the students' response. In a physical education lesson there was a lack of the rigour expected for work at AS level from both the teacher and the students. Expectations were not clearly expressed to students, who took every opportunity to disrupt and limit learning through much of the lesson. Only in the very last part of the lesson were the students challenged, motivated and working towards their potential. Whilst this was only one of many lessons in the sixth form, it emphasises the need to use existing performance management and departmental review procedures to identify and target areas for improvement.

50. Students receive good guidance about what needs to be done to improve the quality of their work. Marking and assessments carried out by teachers are very helpful with a clear focus on course requirements and the standards expected. As a result students have a very good knowledge of where they are in their learning, value the quality of the teaching they receive and are confident of success in their examinations.

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

51. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is very good. The school provides the full National Curriculum plus personal, social and health education (PSHE) and drama. The curriculum is very well balanced in terms of time allocated to each subject. All pupils study at least one language and three-quarters start a second language mid-way through Year 7. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is good. The core curriculum consists of English, mathematics, single science, modern foreign language, religious studies, physical education, personal social and health education (PSHE) and information technology (IT). Pupils then select four other subjects from the options available. The school's cross-curricular approach to the teaching of information technology is very effective.

52. However, there are ways in which the breadth and balance of the curriculum could be improved further. The school needs to attend to the provision in music which, currently, is no more than satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 the school could offer a wider range of science courses. Physical education does not include dance or offer a vocational course. In the sixth form the GCSE course for mathematics could be improved. Physical education staff need to further develop their expertise in respect of the sixth form curriculum. Art is currently taught in single periods which restricts the opportunities for extended practical activities.

53. The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good overall. In the specific learning difficulty (SpLD) unit for pupils with specific learning difficulties and for those supported in-class by the learning support assistants it is very good. For other pupils in the SEN department, including the reading groups, the provision is satisfactory and the quality of teaching more variable.

54. The school seeks to minimise the negative effects of withdrawing pupils from other subjects and is sensitive to when pupils need to be in the main school lesson. However, pupils who have one withdrawal session a week sometimes 'forget' to attend.

55. Provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is very good. The very effective Inclusion Programme involves both in-class support and an excellent six week social skills programme for disruptive pupils, school refusers, long term absentees, pupils returning from fixed-term exclusions and others experiencing any of a range of traumas in their lives. These pupils make very significant gains from the programme through better

understanding of their own difficulties and knowledge of how they might best resolve the problems they encounter. They were also placed in the position of being able to provide other pupils with advice and appropriate strategies for dealing with their own problems. The school provides pupils who have behaviour difficulties with an individualised programme to set targets and one to one support. The Pastoral Support Plan process is very detailed and involves a very wide range of external agencies depending upon the pupil's individual circumstances.

56. The quality of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) has improved since the last inspection but many of the targets are still not specific or precise enough, which means that it is difficult to assess the pupils' progress with a sufficient degree of accuracy. Equally, the current approach does not promote the involvement of all teachers. The school needs to consider developing subject specific targets, related to SEN difficulties, if it is to achieve a prime aim of the new Code of Practice that "all teachers are teachers of pupils with SEN". Some subjects already do this, notably geography. The IEPs also need to be amended to include success criteria and the dates and outcomes of reviews.

57. The SEN department currently uses an American reading scheme. Whilst this is proving successful in terms of raising achievement it does cause some difficulties. Whilst pupils could read the words 'hot rod' and 'plant' they were uncertain about the meaning of the former and thought that the latter meant a flower when in the context of the passage it meant factory. The school should review either its teaching or the use of this scheme to minimise the problems caused.

58. The enrichment of the curriculum provided by extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a very wide range of activities available including music, drama, visits, residential experiences, subject support clubs and sports. Other opportunities include the very successful Duke of Edinburgh Award, the Young People's Town Council, Young Enterprise, Talent Shows, poetry competitions and debating.

59. John Bentley is a very inclusive school. It has made considerable efforts to improve its curricular provision, particularly at Key Stage 4, to ensure that it offers opportunities that are relevant to pupils of all abilities. The school has worked extremely hard to provide the flexibility allowed by Curriculum 2000. Whilst it does have a core and options system there are currently some 50 pupils who, through negotiation, are receiving a curriculum that is tailor-made to meet their needs, abilities and interests. The school has plans to individualise yet further its Key Stage 4 curriculum to address the issue of disaffected, but not necessarily low ability, boys.

60. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. A comprehensive programme that includes sex education, drug misuse and careers education has been devised and is being taught by tutors. The school also has three PSHE days per year to focus in detail upon specific aspects pertinent to different year groups. Pupils are also involved in the delivery of the programme. For example some Year 11 and 12 pupils have been trained to provide a drug awareness session to parents and pupils. Year 13 pupils have 'taught' Year 12 pupils to produce a drama concerning teenage pregnancy that has been presented to the Year 9 pupils.

61. Careers and vocational education are good. In Years 7 and 8 the focus is upon developing personal and social skills that will be of use in the world of work. In Year 9 the emphasis is upon making choices regarding options for Key Stage 4. In Year 10 pupils undertake two weeks of work experience. They are involved fully in determining the type of placement, contacting the provider, engaging in an 'interview' and documenting their experiences. Linked to the latter is the school's version of the Progress File that is in its first

year of operation. Year 12 pupils also undertake work experience. They take considerable responsibility for organising this aspect of their curriculum, which is based around the development of key skills.

62. Both the PSHE and careers programmes are delivered by form tutors. The effectiveness of this is very dependent upon the attitude, skill, expertise and knowledge of each individual tutor. The current approach to the organisation of the tutor groups means that not only every year but every lesson tutors have to acquaint themselves with new material. It is acknowledged by the school that there are aspects of the programmes with which individual tutors feel more or less comfortable or skilled. Given that the role of the tutor is pivotal in the success of the PSHE and careers programmes, the school should consider the benefits and disadvantages of developing year group or key stage teams in order that tutors can become more specialised in their knowledge and thus improve the consistency and quality of the provision.

63. The school's links with the community to promote pupils' learning are good. The physical education department has many links with local sports clubs. Local employers are very well involved in the provision of work experience placements.

64. There are very constructive links with partner institutions. Primary school pupils receive a comprehensive induction programme of visits in Year 6 and the current Year 7 pupils speak very highly of their value. Primary school headteachers are very appreciative of the support they receive from the school. There are also very good links with a special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The SEN cluster is effective. Through its Language College status the school is developing strong links with Bath University and Wiltshire College.

65. The provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, whilst good overall, could be improved. Few subjects address pupils' spiritual awareness in any depth and many make no provision within their schemes of work or teaching. This was a criticism in the previous inspection report. It is best in English and art. In the former pupils become aware of the majesty of Antarctica and the sense of awe inspired by the witches in 'Macbeth'. In the latter Year 12 pupils analyse the spiritual symbolism and meanings in the works of Bosch and Breughel.

66. Moral development is good. In geography pupils explore the issues concerning the Brazilian rainforest. In mathematics the best teaching reinforces the values and habits of effective learning. English and drama provide the opportunities to investigate a range of issues including drug abuse, lost innocence and relationships. Physical education emphasises the importance of respect for rules and umpires' decisions as well as promoting the values of good sportsmanship.

67. Social development is good. There are school and year councils. In geography there are opportunities to study a range of settlements and services. The health and social care course encourages pupils to undertake research into issues such as the effects of smoking upon others. Through its provision of clubs, teams and visits the physical education department provides many opportunities to develop this aspect.

68. The pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures are good and improving. The modern foreign languages department is leading the way by making links with schools in other countries such as Sweden, Estonia and The Netherlands. In English pupils study the poetry of other cultures. Both history and geography offer a good range of opportunities to learn about other cultures. In art pupils learn about the influences of the work of artists and designers from a variety of cultures. However, in a number of subjects including

mathematics, physical education, music, science, leisure and tourism and vocational studies there is little or no evidence of this aspect being addressed.

Sixth form

69. The sixth form offers a good range of courses including A and AS levels, intermediate and advanced level GNVQs and GCSEs in English, mathematics, Spanish and Italian. However, the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education in the sixth form. There is good provision for enrichment through the school's very comprehensive Lifelong Learning Package that provides a coherent and pragmatic programme of activities, including Key Skills, for all its sixth form students. There is an expectation that all sixth formers will continue to study a modern foreign language, reflecting the school's Language College status and commitment to lifelong language learning. The school's response to local circumstances is good, careers and college guidance is effective and past students often secure full-time permanent posts with local employers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

70. The school's systems for ensuring that its students are properly cared for are very good. Its arrangements for monitoring students' attainment and for linking such monitoring to systems that promote their personal development are both innovative and impressive. The use of data to track academic progress, for example, is well advanced and is further enhanced by the excellent arrangements to identify and support students who need to improve. These students are not merely challenged to do better; the school goes out of its way to ensure they get the help they need to do so. Communication between departments, year heads and tutors is very effectively managed and procedures for ensuring links continue to work well are clearly understood by both teachers and students.

71. The range of initiatives used by the school to support students is imaginative and comprehensive, and successfully addresses the needs of students of all abilities. Health and safety procedures are generally monitored appropriately by governors, although risk assessments have not yet been undertaken in science. Systems to maintain and improve attendance are good; any issues arising are quickly resolved. Students experiencing difficulties have confidential access to a school counsellor who works assiduously on their behalf although, with the notable exception of the education welfare officer, the school receives insufficient support from other external agencies. Child protection arrangements are secure and compliant with statutory requirements and the school's behaviour management systems, and particularly its 'Climate for Learning' approach are very good. The use of off-site arrangements and links with Chippenham College to ensure opportunities to succeed remain open, even to students whose behaviour is very challenging, is heartening testimony to the school's determination to be 'inclusive'.

72. Students in the main school know exactly what is expected of them and the overwhelming majority respond well. One Year 9 student asserted that the school had successfully eliminated oppressive behaviour, making it friendly and welcoming, saying. *"The teachers here are brilliant. The reason our school is a very good place to come to is because teachers have respect for us. If you misbehave, you have to build up that respect again for yourself"*. Provision for personal, health and social education (PHSE) has recently been revised in anticipation of the requirement to teach citizenship and the new scheme is very good. The school operates a 'peer mentoring system' to support work in drugs education and is extending this approach to other areas of school life. PHSE provision has been cleverly integrated with other support systems, such as 'Academic Monitoring' to ensure that both initiatives operate within a coherent and complementary framework. The scheme is,

however, slightly uneven in its implementation by individual staff. Given the central importance of personal development to the school's aims, there is a need for additional professional development of teaching staff and of tutors, as well as enhanced monitoring of their impact, to ensure the effectiveness of this excellent initiative is sustained.

73. In the main school, systems for assessing and improving students' academic achievements are very good. The school has recently introduced 'Pupil Track' to monitor student progress across Years 7 -10 and to identify those students, particularly those on the C/D boundary at GCSE who will need support. This system, much like the approach operating in Year 11, works very well. Students are given minimum expectation grades, based on the prior performance, and respond readily to the challenge they offer. Most are keen to see how far they have improved and appreciate the school's openness in sharing these grades and predictions with them. The system also allows the school to place its management of the options available in Year 10 on a more secure footing, by allocating students to their preferences in ways that better reflect their known progress and allows tutors to be more effective when counselling or advising their parents.

74. The use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning and to identify improvement priorities for departments is satisfactory; systems are in place but their impact is unclear. The school operates a system of performance reviews in which the 'value-added' by different classes can be tracked, overall trends in standards monitored and targets agreed with senior managers. Formal, detailed records of these meetings are maintained to allow progress to be monitored; not all departments, however, have responded equally purposefully and their value as mechanisms for change is consequently less than it should be. There are several examples of the very good use of assessment to refine teaching programmes so that they are more responsive to student need, for example in modern foreign languages, physical education in Key Stage 3, design and technology and information technology. Too few departments, however, use assessment sufficiently to evaluate and refine their own planning, curriculum or quality of teaching and, in some subjects, not all the concerns raised in the previous review have been successfully addressed.

75. The school's compliance with the new SEN Code of Practice is good although certain aspects require further development to ensure a whole school approach to SEN. This will include reviewing the role of subjects, class teachers and form teachers in the IEP process. For pupils with statements of SEN the provision is very good. The annual reviews, including Transition Reviews, are very well organised and parents are able to participate in full. However, the contribution of individual subjects to those reviews could be improved. Both the liaison with and involvement of a wide range of external agencies are very good.

76. Whilst the school has a very good system for identifying the difficulties and needs of pupils with SEN that information is not always well used. There are occasions when all pupils with SEN are given the same work despite being at different levels. For example, in a withdrawal session the pupils undertook an exercise involving multiplying by four. One pupil found that comparatively easy whilst, at the other extreme, another pupil struggled to get just over half the questions correct.

77. The school's records and reviews of progress for pupils with SEN need to be improved – currently these are best for those with statements of SEN. The new SEN Code of Practice recommends at least two and ideally three reviews each year for pupils at School Action and School Action Plus. The school is aware that it is not meeting those recommendations and has plans to improve this aspect. Similarly the SEN department needs to continue to develop its use of the assessment data to enable it to track the progress of pupils, identify the strengths and areas for development of both the department and the school, and set targets to raise further the achievement of the pupils.

Sixth form

78. As in the main school, the support offered to sixth form students is good. Documentation setting out sixth form provision is very clear and the school makes every effort to ensure students receive detailed information on the range of courses it offers and on their content. The school operates a rota of sixth form tutors so that the necessary levels of expertise are maintained and remain available to new students entering the sixth form. Year 11 students are offered appropriate guidance by their own year head and tutors, by the head of sixth form and by the relevant deputy headteacher so that their transition to post-16 courses can be completed without difficulty. Option blocks of AS and A level subjects are constructed around students' first preferences as far as possible to allow them the widest possible choice and there is good provision for students considering vocational options. Students are encouraged to make formal applications to enter the sixth form, attaching curriculum vitae wherever possible, so that they understand the significance of the courses they are embarking upon. The careers department hosts workshops in Year 11, on employment, FE provision and the sixth form experience, so that students can make informed choices about the post-16 routes that are most relevant to them.

79. Once sixth form courses have begun, students' progress is monitored by tutors in ways that are very similar to those operating in the main school and any difficulties are picked up by tutors in one-to-one interviews. Progression routes to higher education and employment, particularly for students in health and social care courses are very good. At the start of Year 13, students intending to apply for higher education places are given appropriate support; the school arranges for them to attend 'course fair' evenings at Bath University so that they can become acquainted with the details of courses that interest them as well as making course information publications readily available in the library. Evening meetings, open to students and their parents, dealing with issues such as managing personal finance, are also provided and well supported.

80. The school's systems for assessing students' progress are good, both at advanced level and in vocational subjects, and departments generally use the information from these assessments to refine course provision very well. The support offered in several of the subjects inspected, including health and social care, science, geography and art are particularly effective, but the assessment of student attainment and progress is uniformly good across the sixth form. Students are made fully aware of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Most respond in an adult and confident fashion, although the rather immature behaviour of a minority of Year 12 students observed in one lesson in physical education was disappointing and reaffirmed the importance of the school continuing to establish clear boundaries and high expectations for all its students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

81. The quality of school links with parents continues to be very good. A wide range of information is provided through school publications, newsletters, consultation evenings, home visits and annual reports. Many parents have positive views about what the school does to help pupils make good progress. School staff maintain a proactive and very flexible response to parent concerns and complaints are taken seriously. The school is passionate about parent involvement during its attempts to resolve difficult issues and this works well with the result that parents, students and tutors collaboratively agree how they must work together to make progress. There is high praise for Special Events, which are well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by parents.

82. Annual subject reports are provided in the summer term to inform parents about potential progress towards learning targets. These include expected academic grades and a behaviour commentary and are supported throughout the year by rigorous academic monitoring and a wide range of consultation evenings where attainment, progress and behaviour is discussed with students and parents. In a number of curriculum areas expectations and targets are explicitly included in subject reports and clear guidance is offered about future direction and action required but this detail is not consistent. The quality of some reporting in science, English, design and technology and physical education, where comments do not always match the grade given, is unsatisfactory.

83. Parents make a very good contribution to students' education through comments and issues highlighted in school planners and by offering practical support during school clubs, trips, and teaching programmes. Family homework projects also provide a creative opportunity for parents to have a sustained involvement in student learning and some excellent examples of artwork have been produced in Year 7 as a result. A minority of parents are critical of several areas of the school's work, especially homework, information about pupils' progress and the closeness of their relationship with the school. This is disappointing, given the efforts made by the school to involve parents and develop constructive relationships. The school presents the Home-School Agreement during the induction for new students; therefore providing a reliable introduction to the expectations the school has of the partnership commitments it requires from parents.

84. Whilst the involvement of parents whose children have statements of SEN is very good it is only satisfactory for the rest of the pupils with SEN. The revised Code of Practice places significant emphasis upon the partnership with parents. For those whose children have SEN but do not require statements (School Action and School Action Plus) the school needs to improve their involvement in the target setting and review processes in particular. The SEN co-ordinator is well aware that this aspect is a priority for development.

Students' Views – Sixth Form

85. Students are very positive about course provision and quality of teaching. They recognise that their teachers have very good subject knowledge. They feel that relationships with teachers are good, in that there is independence when you need it, and support when you don't. Students appreciate the excellent facilities, which promote good progress in subjects such as art and drama. Students are grateful for the good support at transition times and value all that is done to help them settle in. They say that the expectations of them are high, with demanding standards in most subjects. They confirm that The John Bentley School is not a soft option at sixth form level. Many speak about the friendly atmosphere created by staff who aren't afraid to have fun when they teach.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

86. The John Bentley School is what it says, 'fully and proudly comprehensive'. Its aims and values are clearly reflected in its work with all individuals being valued equally, each encouraged to make significant progress, fulfil their potential at school and to prepare to do the same throughout life. This is an increasingly successful school because the leadership provided by its governors and senior managers, especially the headteacher, is outstandingly good. Together they have created a vision to which pupils, staff, parents and the community have committed fully. They have secured that vision by establishing a high quality single site school that has recently gained Language College status. Their bold change management strategies, effective decision making and creativity have wrought substantial improvements in the school since the OfSTED inspection in 1996. In successfully conquering the many

challenges created by their multi-million pound rebuilding of the school, they have firmly established a clear direction that is both educational and innovative. These key people form a high-performing team that inspires, motivates and energises the staff. As a result teachers, and non-teaching staff share the school's vision and values, know that they are part of a winning team and so they too willingly accept the improvement challenge. The headteacher and her key staff are confident and assured as they lead by example. Each is willing to take personal responsibility for high standards in the classroom and be accountable for the high level decisions they make as the school leadership team.

87. The very good management of the school by the headteacher and her key staff is characterised by effective strategic thinking and good plans that embrace change management over the short, medium and longer term. The leadership team firmly believes that the school should be 'challenging its students to achieve their best and to take pride in greater success than they thought possible'. Together they are an impressive group, clear about their individual roles and responsibilities and are equally clear that they achieve more by working together than as individuals. The clever, well understood, division of responsibility; collegiality and mutual support promotes very good day-to-day management and thus generates great confidence within the school and the community. The management of the school has people at its heart, students, staff and the community. This 'human' focus encourages staff to give of their best and to secure personal development as they pursue the school's aims and promote its values. Intelligent management and creative financing have fundamentally improved many aspects of resourcing in recent years. Quality communication is a feature within the school, and a strength externally, which has been built up very significantly since the last inspection.

88. The well-above average leadership and management promotes high standards, good teaching and good learning. As the balance of the school's priorities continues to shift towards a clearer focus on standards and attainment, and away from more structural matters, its impact is becoming more influential in driving the upward trend in the standards achieved by its students. This inclusive school has built up, and is continuing to build, its capacity to improve for the benefit of all its pupils.

89. The school's active governing body plays a key role in shaping the direction of the school that in recent years became 'Grant Maintained' and subsequently gained 'Foundation' status. Increased responsibility and accountability gave governors the opportunity, working with senior staff, to drive the 'one site' project through to a very successful completion. Their support, challenge and involvement is recognised as influential by both the staff and students, many of whom have been part of the massive change programme since the last inspection. They are an efficient governing body with a well-informed and effective committee structure benefiting from close working relationships between committee chairs and the nominated school leadership team members. Governors receive good briefing papers prior to meetings, there are informative presentations to relevant committees (e.g. by department heads, the inclusion team and the bursar) and a termly 'School Report to Governors' containing thorough review and planning information. In addition, the outcomes of the school's monitoring and evaluation processes are routinely presented to them, for example, staff feedback on performance management, the PANDA/other performance data and departmental reviews. As a consequence the governing body has a very good grasp of where the school's strengths lie, and where there are areas for improvement.

90. The governors fulfil their statutory duties exceedingly well, and have a much better understanding than is usual of their role, and how it compliments that of the professionals in the school leadership team. They hold the school accountable, they receive information and scrutinise it, challenge and check assumptions, question best value, highlight any errors ... so ensuring that what the school sets about doing is robust, realistic and likely to make a

difference. This governing body have the confidence to ask for more information if they feel they need it and know that it will be willingly provided. In parallel with the school's senior managers, the governors are reflective and self-evaluative. They have recognised that the impact of governor workload has empowered their committees to develop the necessary professionalism and expertise, but have begun the structured review of full governing body meetings in order to increase their effectiveness. The school is fortunate to have a governing body with a commanding range of experience both inside and outside education, in the community and as parents.

91. At departmental level leadership and management are generally good, though they are very good and outstanding in geography and modern foreign languages respectively. Only in music is leadership and management unsatisfactory, and although the quality of instrumental tuition and provision for extra-curricular activity are strengths, there is much else that needs improving in the subject. The good management of subjects and aspects is critical to the success of any school, and clearly middle managers already play an important part in making The John Bentley School successful. However, more effective delegation to, and contribution from, middle managers could further lever whole school improvement significantly. There is already much consistency in the quality of management, and of the managers, but they do not apply the school's policies, procedures and practices with equally rigorous consistency at subject level. The school's high expectations of its staff are not always matched by clarity about how they are best met. As a consequence strengths in one subject or department may be areas for improvement in another. The school leadership team recognises the need to provide subject and year teams with opportunity to learn from each other, but have more to do in promoting best operational practice at this level.

92. The leadership and management of the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) are very good. In the two years since her appointment the improvement in the provision for SEN has been good. The SENCO is very clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the department and is already taking action to improve the latter. There is a programme for monitoring the quality of teaching within the department. This needs to extend to the main school in order that the existing best practice can be shared amongst all subjects and teachers. The department's improvement plan, whilst identifying some important priorities, should be more focused upon raising both standards and the quality of teaching. The SEN policy requires revision to bring it into line with the requirements of the new Code of Practice. Financial management is very good and ensures pupils with SEN receive the provision to which they are entitled. The SENCO is well qualified and experienced but other teachers in the department require further professional development. This issue is being addressed. The training for and deployment of learning support assistants are very good. Because they are attached to subjects they are able to develop specialised knowledge that enables them to provide support of very high quality. Given the number of both the pupils with statements and other pupils with SEN the SENCO has a very large workload. To improve the overall quality of SEN provision and meet the recommendations of the new Code of Practice the school needs to review the roles and responsibilities of the SENCO, Heads of Year and Department, subject teachers and form tutors in respect of the SEN process.

93. There is a real commitment to consistent and continuous school improvement. The structured systems for monitoring the performance of the school and its implementation of plans are impressive, evaluation is thorough but delivering results and the desired impact is not yet universally achieved through its middle managers. These systems operate within appropriate time frames; an evidence based termly report is produced for the governors, which identifies general developments, curriculum issues and the progress made towards the targets identified in the school improvement plan. Members of the school leadership team 'link' with and line-manage heads of department, meeting them formally four times each term to discuss progress towards targets, performance targets and other relevant matters.

Additionally, the school's effective 'Performance Management' process has strengthened improvement at individual teacher, class and departmental levels.

94. The annual cycle is thorough, with departmental work being reviewed in a number of ways. In the autumn each head of department produces a detailed report of the previous year's public examination and test results, the 'annual department performance review'. This is a powerful tool that after scrutiny and dialogue highlights areas for improvement and celebration. The process compares the department's performance with target projections and a range of benchmarks including, the Wiltshire Value-Added Analysis, the DfES Autumn Package and the school's PANDA. During this process the performance of each Year 11 and Year 13 student is scrutinised in the context of prior performance and potential. Every department is subject to a 'full' or 'interim' review every year that always involves the collection of wide ranging qualitative and quantitative data, including that from structured lesson observations.

95. Over the last year 'light-touch' reviews of all departments were undertaken prior to the roll-out of the Government's Key Stage 3 strategy in September 2001, these were appropriately Key Stage 3 focused and forward looking. The schools' newly introduced 'Pupil-Track' assessment system is providing potent information for all staff about pupils' performance against potential using Key Stage 2/3 and other predictive data such as CAT tests. In January 2002 the school held its first academic mentoring days, timetable was suspended and tutors met with tutees and their parents to analyse performance grades and identify specific student level targets. Teachers too are seeking improvement through innovative approaches, and a small group is piloting the Hay McBer 'Transforming Learning' self-evaluation system which uses student feedback to raise issues about the 'classroom climate' in order to enhance the quality of the learning environment. Scrutiny of students work, homework checks, student pursuits and an annual homework questionnaire are amongst other strategies the school employs in order to monitor and evaluate its work.

96. This school recognises that it is well advanced in the development of its procedures for monitoring, and this is so. Appropriate priorities have been identified to ensure that the school is working towards high standards and quality. The main thrust of the school improvement plan is to raise standards by:

- improving performance in public examinations;
- improving key skills;
- improving the quality of teaching and learning; and
- improving students' opportunities to learn in community and global contexts.

97. However, they concede that their evaluation processes require some further development, as does the shift from knowing about what needs to be done, to being certain that it will be done within an appropriate timeframe. In addressing these issues the school improvement plan, and planning at other levels has been undergoing an evolutionary development to sharpen focus and bring more rigour to implementation and evaluation.

98. Accommodation has been improved dramatically since the last inspection. The present comprehensive school was created in 1974 as a split-site school. In 1995, working with the DfEE, FAS and a building contractor, the north wing site was sold off to a developer and this, together with basic need money, funded the construction of the present single-site school. The impact of this has been very significant in that the school now has very good accommodation and facilities. Staff effectiveness has been much enhanced by this change, including provision for their continuing professional development, which is good. The induction of new staff and the school's involvement in the training of teachers is excellent. Some of the many other changes for the better include:

- the removal of student and staff commuting;
- vastly enhanced communications;
- the review and improvement of all systems and procedures;
- good provision of learning resources;
- significantly better time-tabling and curriculum planning;
- much greater consistency and coherence in all the school does;
- improvements in attitudes, behaviour and achievement.

99. Financial management is good and resources are deployed effectively in accordance with the principles of best value. The school's finances are healthy in spite of relatively low levels of funding from its Local Education Authority (LEA). This has been achieved in a number of ways:

- the governing body is confident in its financial decision making and has a very effective finance committee;
- present and past bursars have provided vision and entrepreneurial flair, as well as excellent financial management;
- Grant Maintained Status provided new opportunities and enabled the school's Leadership Team to develop its financial skills;
- confidence in the school's leadership has allowed the governors to trust them to make good spending decisions and allow some well-judged risk taking;
- governors have high expectations but are always ready to ask the school to account for its spending;
- creating very good accommodation on a single site has brought much new building and refurbishment so premises cost are currently very low;
- judicious management of increases in funding due to the growth of the school;
- thorough scrutiny of the curriculum and staffing models to achieve a balance between provision and value for money;
- gaining additional funding through Specialist Language College status and other initiatives;
- the effective use of specific grant funding;
- very good use of new technology to inform management and enhance administration.

100. The recent auditor's report reinforces the judgement that the school's financial management is good; it raised a few minor points for action, all of which have been addressed. Since it manages its resources well, provides good teaching, a broad and balanced curriculum, with rich enhancement through links with the community, and achieves at least satisfactory standards the school provides good value for money for its students and the wider community it serves.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

101. Leadership and management in the sixth form is very good. The school does not treat the sixth form as additional, rather as integral to the success of the school as a whole. The benefits derived from this close relationship by both the main school and the sixth form are well understood, with mutually beneficial developments featuring prominently in the school's plans, though not particularly sixth form focused in the current school improvement plan. Therefore all that has been said about the school generally applies to the sixth form also. The governing body, school leadership team and middle managers have a clear rationale for provision in the sixth form. They addressed the recent AS/A2 curriculum changes carefully and with a good understanding of the implications. The induction process for sixth form tutors is well developed and recognises the great importance of the role. The school's expectations of the sixth form, particularly at subject level, provide challenging targets for achievement, progression, attendance and retention.

102. Quality assurance through monitoring, evaluation and targeted improvement is very effective at departmental level, for instance, in ensuring that students receive good teaching, but these processes are only just beginning to impact across all aspects of sixth form activity. An excellent mini-review, based on guidance from the Wiltshire Local Education Authority, was carried out in spring 2002 and this clearly highlights areas for further development. The relatively new head of sixth form has a clear agenda for action and has the full support of the governing body. They regularly receive information, discuss the sixth form and so help to shape its future development. However, the statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form are not being met, as was also the case at last inspection. Opportunities for partnership and collaboration with other institutions are being explored as a means to enhance opportunity and meet demands in minority subject areas. Video conferencing is being seen as having significant potential now that the school has broadband Internet capability through the South West Grid for Learning.

Resources

103. Sixth form finance is very well managed. The finance committee of the governing body is very effective in its application of best value principles and scrutiny of decision making. Accommodation for sixth formers is very good. The quality staffing and other resources that are so important for effective learning are at least good. Although there are some concerns about access to ICT, the inspectors did not consider this to be a significant factor inhibiting the students' progress. Sixth form students had good access to, and used well, computers in the library and at other locations throughout the inspection period.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

There are no major areas for improvement sufficient to be brought forward as key issues, but there are a number of areas in which the school should consider further action:

1. establish equal rigour in every stage the school improvement cycle (paragraphs 96, 97);
2. continue to address the issue of under performance of boys in order to reduce the gender achievement differential, and build on the 'over performance' / success of girls (paragraphs 2, 6, 7, 11, 59, 104, 105, 106, 119, 127, 135, 144, 147, 151, 152, 153, 158, 163, 191, 197, 261);
3. ensure more effective delegation to, and contribution from, middle managers to obtain further whole school improvement (paragraphs 91, 93);
4. address any points of detail raised in the subject reports.

Sixth form

This also applies in the sixth form:

1. statutory provision for religious education (paragraphs 69, 102);
2. involvement in the life and work of the school (paragraph 28);
3. there are no other major areas for improvement however, there are points of detail for consideration in the sixth form subject reports.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	141
	Sixth form	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		96

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	12	41	53	39	8	0	0
Percentage	9	29	38	28	6	0	0

Sixth form

Number	1	15	22	9	1	0	0
Percentage	2	31	46	19	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1050	159
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	98	7

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	51	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	271	10

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	99	103	202

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	70	67	63
	Girls	95	77	70
	Total	165	144	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	82 (71)	71 (67)	66 (59)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	54 (32)	44 (44)	32 (27)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	54	61	74
	Girls	71	74	74
	Total	125	135	74
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (62)	67 (67)	73 (47)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (36)	42 (41)	33 (22)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	116	101

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	40	98	109
	Girls	65	91	95
	Total	105	189	204
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (43)	87 (95)	94 (95)
	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	39.4 (39.6)
	National	39.0 (39.1)

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)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	23	24	47
	Average point score per candidate	12.6	15.5	14.1
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	17	18	35	6	6	12
	Average point score per candidate	14	17	15.5	8.2	9.4	8.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1202
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	80	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	65.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	266

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	n/a
Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	24.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	3,260,591
Total expenditure	3,197,474
Expenditure per pupil	2,768
Balance brought forward from previous year	43,500
Balance carried forward to next year	106,576

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	30
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	2433
Number of questionnaires returned	218

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	59	8	2	
My child is making good progress in school.	36	57	5		2
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	57	13	5	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	57	22	9	
The teaching is good.	21	64	7	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	55	13	3	
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	49	4	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	43			
The school works closely with parents.	21	57	15	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	34	51	6	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	63	7	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	54	11	1	9

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The test results at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average.
- In English Literature boys and girls attain higher GCSE standards than their counterparts nationally.
- The very good planning of lessons enables students to learn well because it sustains their interest and is generally well matched to their needs. As a result they concentrate well.
- Students gain in confidence and achieve well because of the good relationships in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient students are attaining the highest GCSE grades in English and English Literature.
- The GCSE standards attained by the boys in English are well below the national average.

104. The proportion of students attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2001 English Language examinations was close to the national average. The girls' results were better than those of the boys in the school and also better than those of girls nationally. Boys did less well than their counterparts nationally. The girls have consistently improved their results over the last three years but the improvement in boys' standards has been inconsistent. No boys and very few of the girls attained the highest A* grade. Overall, achievement in relation to what was attained at the end of Year 9 was satisfactory. There has been no significant improvement since the last inspection though standards match the rising national average.

105. The A* to C grade results in the English Literature examinations were above the national average for boys and girls, significantly so for the latter. The boys' results were an improvement on what they had attained in 2000. Examination standards overall in the subject are better than at the time of the last inspection when results were in line with national figures. Achievement is therefore good. Results in both English and English Literature were in line with national expectations in terms of the proportion of students obtaining a grade in the A* to G range.

106. Attainment in the 2001 tests for students of 14 years of age was well above the national and similar schools' averages in terms of the proportion of boys and girls obtaining a Level 5 or above or a Level 6 or above. The proportion of students attaining at Level 7 or above was also greater than the national average. These results were better than those obtained in mathematics and science and represent a significant improvement on what has been achieved in recent years. They are also better than the subject's results at the time of the last inspection which were then in line with national expectations. These results represent very good achievement compared to the levels of prior attainment on entry to the school.

107. Standards of work seen in the current Year 9 are above average and reflect the picture given by the school's test results. The department's inclusive approach to its work ensures that students achieve well in relation to their levels of prior attainment, including those with special educational needs and the few students who have English as an additional language. The work of the current Year 11 meets national expectations although those of lesser competence and those of high attainment are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. For example, students of low prior attainment understood and explained the pride of place of origin in poetry from other cultures and showed insight into the conflicts which might arise when the children of immigrants are torn between different traditions. They displayed maturity in their responses and an understanding of the cultural diversity of our society.

108. Students' written work reaches average standards across all years. They can communicate in writing with reasonable levels of accuracy and this is an improvement on the last inspection when many students found spelling and punctuation difficult. Students' extended, independent writing is an area in need of improvement. Often the work is not structured well and an argument or theme is not sustained and supported with sufficient detail. The department is aware of this and is developing strategies to address the problem. Overall, an appropriately wide range of writing for different purposes is attempted. Reading standards are very good throughout the school. Students cover a wide range of increasingly demanding texts and can respond critically to the poetry, prose and drama they have read. They are able to demonstrate their understanding orally and in writing.

109. Standards of speaking and listening are good across all years. Students are confident and articulate and show respect for each other's contributions in oral work. They can explain, describe and argue well and this was evident in small group work and in whole class discussion. Year 9 students spoke with clarity and insight when describing the sense of foreboding in a key scene in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. They chose their words well when talking about the nature of Lady Macbeth and the change that occurs in her relationship with her husband. All were eager to contribute to the discussion and because they enjoyed the interchange of ideas they improved their understanding of the play.

110. Students respond well in lessons and display good attitudes to the subject. They are attentive and concentrate for sustained periods on the task in hand. They are able to work independently, in pairs and small groups, are supportive of each other and are tolerant of those who struggle. Texts and exercise books are cared for and students respect the range of quality display work. Good relationships were seen in all lessons and the very few instances witnessed of poor behaviour were dealt with quickly and effectively and the students readily accepted the teacher's authority.

111. The curriculum strikes an appropriate balance between speaking and listening and reading and writing and conforms to the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is a mixture of withdrawal and in-class support for students with special educational needs with targets being used to inform the teaching. Such students make good progress. Written work is marked and assessed regularly and guidance given to students on how to improve the standard of the work. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11 is assessed against past performance and the department also compares the performance of teaching groups.

112. Overall, the standard of teaching seen during the course of the inspection was good. Outstanding teaching was also seen, together with a little that was satisfactory. The challenge facing the department is to disseminate the very best practice to ensure that all lessons are sufficiently demanding intellectually. There has been an improvement in teaching standards since the time of the last inspection when not all teaching was judged to

be satisfactory. In this inspection all lessons were carefully planned and structured and they started with outlines of the learning objectives. This was always followed by clear explanations of how to approach the work. Teachers' expectations were high and they evaluated the progress of individuals and gave clear guidance for improvement. This was seen in the department's effective assessment procedures and the quality of the marking. In lessons the teachers' good working relationships with students underpinned the learning process. Teachers took pains to ensure that students with special educational needs and the few with English as an additional language are involved in the lessons and make progress in line with their peers. This was done through modifying the work to take account of their individual needs and targeting support on them in lessons. Care has been taken to make the classrooms attractive learning environments and good use is made of a wide range of resources.

113. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department provides clear direction for the work of his colleagues with the focus on raising standards through improving teaching and learning. A significant start has been made in this work with the successful adoption of new initiatives in structuring lessons for the younger students. He is well supported by committed and able colleagues and there is a sense of unity and common purpose about their work. The improvements since the last inspection have already been recorded, apart from the work now done on using National Curriculum levels to inform and guide students. Another significant factor contributing to the effectiveness of the department's work is the good provision of extension classes outside of taught time for students to receive additional tuition and support in areas of weakness. Teachers also provide a range of extra-curricular activities which extend students' understanding and enjoyment of the subject. The department is now in a strong position to secure further improvements and continue to raise standards.

Drama

The quality of provision in main school drama is **very good**, but was only sampled at sixth form level.

Strengths

- The very good relationships in lessons create a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Students are well motivated and are keen to learn.
- The excellent accommodation and the high quality of resources have a significant impact on how well students achieve.
- Students sustain concentration and learn well because of the very good planning of lessons.
- The very good range of extra-curricular provision enables students to extend their understanding and enjoyment of drama.
- The strong leadership provides clear educational direction to the work of the department.

114. By the end of Year 11 the standards of work seen are above average. Students create and develop their own ideas for performance and communicate them clearly. They collaborate effectively and because they show sensitivity to the needs of other performers they achieve well in group work. This was seen in a rehearsal lesson where students developed characterization through the use of movement, positioning and facial expression. A particular strength in the work seen was the ability of students to evaluate their own and

each other's work and this was because the learning objectives had been so clearly communicated.

115. The standard of work seen in Year 9 was also above average. Students were able to work in role and their building of characters was good. They performed assertively, making good use of dramatic gesture and voice projection. In one lesson seen, the students were looking at the causes of conflict and exploring ways to resolve it. Their skill in developing role-play was impressive and they were enthusiastic and involved throughout the lesson. The one area for improvement was their inability to use language that was appropriate to the situation being explored.

116. Students achieve well in drama because the teaching stimulates and excites them. Relationships are strong. The quality of the specialist teaching seen was very good and accounts for the high standards in the work seen. Teachers are not only knowledgeable and skilled in teaching; they also bring an enthusiasm for the subject, which sparks interest and motivates the students. The work is demanding but delivered in such a way that all students make significant learning gains.

117. The curriculum provision has been well thought through and the range of opportunities available to students outside the taught time is impressive. They take part in performance work and the major annual production, they undertake a range of theatre visits and attend workshops, and they are closely involved in working with local schools. All students have a very positive attitude to the subject and are well motivated and keen to learn. The subject makes a significant contribution to their personal and social development and develops confidence and the ability to communicate fluently.

118. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department provides clear educational direction and is well supported by two experienced, committed and able colleagues. As a team they are committed to raising standards further through the improvement of teaching and learning styles. The accommodation provided for the teaching of drama is excellent, as is the range and quality of resources. The department is well placed to secure further improvements in the quality of provision.

MATHEMATICS

Overall the quality of provision is **good**

Strengths

- The department reaches National Average GCSE and Key Stage 3 results from an intake that is a little below average.
- The quality of most teaching is high.
- There is effective tracking of pupils' learning and good use of individual target setting.
- Staff are encouraged to learn and develop.
- The department works well with other local schools.
- Staff form a strong mutually supportive team.

Areas for improvement

- Documentation, specifically the department handbook and schemes of work are insufficiently detailed to fully support continuity in pupils' learning.
- Action planning lacks sufficient detail for full impact.
- More use can be made of lesson observations to target weaker teaching.

- Assessment is under-used to improve the curriculum.

119. Standards at GCSE have improved since the last inspection at around the national rate and are now at the national average. In 2001 there was a larger than normal gender difference in C grades, with girls doing considerably better than boys. Improvement through Key Stage 3 has been better with a slightly below average intake now reaching standards that are just above national average. Gender differences are not significant through Key Stage 3. Relative to similar schools this year's results are slightly above average.

120. The standard of work seen in lessons was appropriate for pupils' abilities. Most topics and tasks were well chosen and pupils worked conscientiously. Pupils of all abilities are achieving satisfactorily. Work sampling did show some very good work from particular low, middle and high ability pupils, all responding to high expectations and making good progress.

121. At the moment the mathematics department has some temporary staffing difficulties, which are being minimised by careful support, and will be solved by September appointments. Accordingly there was rather more variation in teaching quality during this inspection than last time. However weaker lessons were more than outweighed by some exceptional teaching, and overall, through both Key Stage 3 and 4, teaching averaged out at good. The best lessons in Key Stage 3 used practical activities and supported these with strong visual models of what was happening. One example with a low ability set was the use of a roulette wheel and the number hire 0 to 36 to explore probability. Other reflective aspects were frequent challenges to pupils to explain their thinking and the effective use of the ICT suite, with suitable software, to provide situations to explore and synthesise. Very good Key Stage 4 lessons, at this time of the year, contained well organised revision programmes that combined active re-teaching of topics causing concern with more individual support and guidance. These sessions were strongly led and briskly run. They provided clear evidence of pupils gradually becoming more confident and believing that their own targets were attainable.

122. In the poorer lessons, where teaching was unsatisfactory or merely mundane, there tended to be insufficient teacher strategies to optimise pupil participation in the lesson. Often the use made of the board was poor and teachers' tried to talk pupils towards an understanding for too long.

123. The mathematics curriculum continues to meet satisfactory requirements. There have been good initiatives to incorporate effective aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy into Key Stage 3 and pursue improved links with partner primary schools. ICT facilities have been enhanced and the suite is now helpful in teaching some particular ideas. Its potential to support graphical understanding, together with more use of graphical calculators, should be further explored. Scheme of work development has taken place particularly in Year 7, but its layout and present content give less experienced teachers insufficient help in planning carefully matched work for their sets and allowing for differentiation within the lesson. Redrafting would allow for the more formal sharing of teaching ideas and the fuller integration of ICT.

124. The department's contribution to the school's initiatives in the improving tracking of pupils' learning and using this information to set individual targets has been impressive. The early impact of this can be seen in pupils' enthusiasm for the extensive revision opportunities provided, and improving results. At the moment, to the response to identified areas of mathematical difficulty, is some form of extra support or re-teaching. The other deduction, that the original method of teaching might benefit from a re-think, is less evident. Assessment results should also link more effectively into curriculum improvements.

125. Since the last inspection leadership has been successful in steadily raising the performance of the department and implementing a series of successful initiatives. The team contains some very talented teachers and works well collaboratively with a belief in developing both teachers and pupils.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Very good assessment procedures.
- Good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- More rigorous management and monitoring to eliminate inconsistencies.
- Common format for lesson plans for both key stages.
- Written risk assessments.

126. When students enter the school they come with standards at the national average for all schools. Standards at the end of Year 9 remain at the national average when compared both with all schools and similar schools. In 2000 results were below the national average at the higher levels but there was an improvement in 2001 so that results at both Levels 6+ and 5+ exactly matched the national averages. Results in 2001 for science were slightly below those in mathematics and significantly lower than those for English. Students achieve results in science that are slightly above what might be expected based on their attainment at age 11. Over time there is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys. Results for the last five years are almost identical to the national trend.

127. Standards at GCSE are in line with the national average when compared with both all and similar schools. The school has offered a Double Award GCSE science for all its students for a considerable period of time. This year a small group of the lowest attaining students in Year 10 are following a Single Award course so that they can devote more time to vocational studies. Results from the Double Award course have risen in line with the national average over the last three years. Students' achievement is very good. GCSE results in 2001 were well above what might be expected for those students based on their attainment at the end of Year 9. Achievement, based on results, in science for students at the end of Year 11 is similar to that in English and mathematics. Until last year there had been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. In 2001 girls did much better than boys. Girls obtained about ten per cent above and boys obtained about ten per cent below their respective national averages. Girls' achievement was very high and that of the boys was in line with what may expected from their attainment at the end of Year 9. This difference can be explained in terms of a significant proportion of disaffected boys in the particular year group. The department has considered carefully whether any specific strategy was necessary to address this difference in the performance of boys and girls. It was decided that this was an exception, which is unlikely to be repeated by the current students and therefore existing strategies will be maintained.

128. Inspection evidence indicates that most students have sound literacy and numeracy skills, which enable them to gain benefit from all parts of the science curriculum. Most

students can cope with calculations, which are required for both their terminal examination and their coursework. Overall students have expected levels of recall and understanding of previous work. Year 7 students can satisfactorily identify factors, which contribute to environmental pollution and how these factors interact. Students in Year 8 have expected understanding of how to plan scientific investigations. These students can use a thermometer properly and can take accurate readings. By Year 9 students' knowledge and understanding of fair testing is in line with expectations. The most able students in Year 9 can explain well everyday examples by using the equation for pressure. Students in Year 10 are able to apply their understanding of acceleration satisfactorily when investigating factors, which alter how an object accelerates under various conditions. The most able students in Year 11 have very good knowledge and understanding of the forces involved when an object is falling freely through the air. Teachers do not make special provision for gifted and talented students. They support these students through the school's whole school policy but more could be done. Teachers rely too heavily on the accuracy of the teaching groups and fail to provide sufficient extension work for the most able students. Students' standards in ICT are satisfactory and it will be important for these to improve when the recently provided computer room is fully equipped.

129. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Within this judgment there is variation in the quality of teaching in the department as might be expected with a large group of teachers. Nevertheless in over half the lessons the teaching was good or better and in the rest of the lessons teaching was satisfactory. When teaching is less than good it is because the teacher spends too much time trying to get the students' full attention. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching for students of different ages. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers give students some opportunities to improve their literacy skills through the good use of the technical language but more could be done through the use of key words and role-playing exercises. Teachers make good use of resources such as video, demonstrations, and experiments all of which enable students to learn well. Teachers generally manage the students well in the classroom so that most have every opportunity to learn. Clear objectives are set for every lesson. The teaching groups are accurately arranged in terms of students' attainment. Teachers match the work to the needs of the group as a whole but do not provide sufficiently for the needs of different students in the same group. Extension questions and work matched to the needs of the less able are available in the department but teachers do not use these resources sufficiently. Teachers mark students' work regularly, although the quality of marking is variable particularly in respect of the use of scientifically supportive comments. Sometimes teachers when marking students' work indicate how improvements can be made but then fail to insist that students respond to these comments. Some science reports to parents are unsatisfactory because they do not identify sufficiently what students can and cannot do in science. Teachers give students accurate information about the current level/grade they are working at. The next move will be to tell students more precisely what they need to do to improve.

130. Overall students learn well. Year 7 students made satisfactory progress learning electric circuits. A key feature of this lesson was the way the teacher broke the lesson up into small achievable tasks, which helped to motivate the students. When investigating the best type of material to use to keep soup warm Year 8 students learnt satisfactorily. The clear guidance about the planning of investigations by the teacher led to all students completing the practical work successfully. However because the teacher had to spend too much time during the introduction to gain students' full attention too little time was left for students to finish the write-up of their experimental work. The most able Year 9 students learnt very well how forces are transmitted in hydraulic systems. The teacher's high expectations for this very able group were well justified. By asking students challenging questions the teacher enabled students to apply their understanding of pressure to several every day examples. Importantly students were able to explain these examples in terms of the arrangement of

particles in solids, liquids, and gases. Another teacher used a very good range of resources including light gates linked to computers to allow students to investigate how different conditions can alter how objects accelerate. The Year 10 students in this lesson learnt well how forces, masses, and acceleration are connected. Students were therefore well prepared to develop further their understanding of motion in their next lessons. Year 11 students learnt very well when considering the forces on objects as they fall to the ground and when they travel in circular motion. During this lesson the teacher skillfully used a video and a demonstration to get across the key ideas to the students. Students with special educational needs make good progress. A key feature for the good progress of these students is because the teacher and support assistant work well together. One of the main reasons for the good learning is the way teachers use such a wide range of methods and resources to capture the students' interest. This hard working team of teachers can be proud of the work they do to improve students' learning and their experience of science.

131. The quality of students' written work indicates that their attitudes are good. Students work well together carrying out experiments and move responsibly around the laboratory to collect materials and equipment. Behaviour is mostly good. Students generally have respect for others, which they demonstrate by putting up their hands to answer questions. Sometimes students spoil otherwise worthwhile answers by calling out. They have good relationships with their teachers and each other. When talking to each other and their teacher they are courteous and polite.

132. The department has very good assessment procedures. Teachers use these procedures very well to keep students informed about their level/grade. The department offers only one type of GCSE course. For the number of students in the school it is unrealistic to expect one course to match the needs of all. Insufficient consideration has been given to the possibility of offering more than one GCSE course, which would then enable the needs of the lower and highest attaining students to be more closely met. During the inspection the head of department and his deputy were on long-term absence. The day to day running of the department has been divided between three teachers who are doing an excellent job under very difficult circumstances. Overall the management of the department is satisfactory. A conscious decision has been taken not to have a department handbook. Not having a handbook is not necessarily a problem since communication in this close working team is good. However the department lacks clear policies, which could be used to monitor and overcome inconsistencies. Recent staff difficulties have forced the department to put any development on numeracy on hold until these difficulties have been resolved. Last year the moderator reduced the department's coursework marks. This year internal moderation will take place using the guidelines from the examination board more carefully. It is important for the head of department to get the balance right between not wanting to be too prescriptive and ensuring sufficient rigour.

133. The head of department should monitor the work of the teachers more closely. There are schemes of work but no detailed lesson plans. The department should develop lesson plans to a common format, which also identifies opportunities for literacy, numeracy, ICT, social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC), and written risk assessments. The technician team is efficient, supportive, and makes an important contribution to the work of the department. Presently the school provides insufficient time for technician support given the number of laboratories and courses, which have to be serviced. The department will be in a better position to deliver the ICT requirements of the science curriculum when the computer room is fully equipped. Teachers will need to be trained in the use of the data logging equipment. The accommodation is excellent. No serious problems with resources exist. There is quite a good balance in the qualifications and experience of the teachers. The department gives due attention to health and safety but it must have written risk assessments for all experiments/demonstrations, which pose a risk to both teacher and

students. It is necessary for the department to carry out an audit of the chemicals, which are stored. Any chemicals, which are not now used, and any chemicals, which should not now be in schools, should be safely disposed of.

134. Overall the department has made good improvement since the last inspection. There are two main areas still to be improved. Teachers must make more use of teaching materials matched to the needs of different attaining students in the same group. Partly because of changes to courses, at both key stages, the department has still to fully complete its schemes of work.

ART

Provision for art is **good**.

Strengths

- Good quality teaching with particularly good individual attention, enables students to develop their own expressive responses, especially in Key Stage 4.
- Teachers' good subject expertise provide students with confidence to try new techniques.
- A high percentage of students gain the top GCSE grades.
- Students' good attitudes to art are reflected in the percentage of students who continue art in Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement

- Students' art historical knowledge, including some gallery experience for all students.
- Developments in the scheme of work, especially in Key Stage 3, to pinpoint areas of learning and assessment more clearly, and increase the challenge for the most able students.
- The development of better systems to enable the department to target and carry out improvements more effectively.

135. In the 2001 GCSE art examination 79.5 % of students gained A* to C grades, compared with 63.9 % in similar schools nationally. These very good results were achieved with more than the average percentage of the year group entered for art. The 2001 GCSE results continue a good rising trend of examination success over the last three years. Other good features of the 2001 results is that both boys and girls results were higher than in similar schools nationally, and the percentage of A* and A grades achieved by both boys and girls was well above national levels for boys and girls. Many students' art grades were either their highest or among the highest of their grades.

136. Overall attainment near the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with expectations for the ages of the students, while overall attainment in Key Stage 4 is above expectations for the GCSE course. In both key stages current levels of attainment vary quite widely, with examples of attainment above and below these overall judgements.

137. In Key Stage 3 students develop their visual knowledge and expressive ideas, and explore practical skills in a range of materials and processes. For example, Year 7 students have used many kinds of three-dimensional materials and methods to make successful sculptures of cats as a homework exercise, while Year 9 students have used pastels and other graphic media as well as clay to make two and three-dimensional portrait studies based on the style of Modigliani. Students use colour, line, tone and texture confidently and

effectively in their work. Good use is made of computers to research art historical information and to generate and manipulate images successfully. Year 8 students can design and build their own web pages, with good understandings about visual and graphic communication. In addition to the Year 9 work inspired by Modigliani, there are many more good examples of students being inspired by the work of other artists, with good visual references made to a wide variety of European and world cultures and traditions. This reflects the increasingly international influence in the school generated by Language College status, in part because the art department has been able to use some of the extra funding to widen its range of critical and historical reference resources.

138. In both key stages observational drawing is less frequent than drawing copied from secondary sources, with the consequence that the key visual skills gained through observational drawing are not generally well developed. While students' visual references to other artists and styles is a strength, their underlying historical knowledge and understanding is insecure in Key Stage 3. This aspect of art attainment improves in Key Stage 4, although many students in both key stages have never had first hand experience of art by visiting an art gallery, an experience that is of great benefit to students' appreciation. In both key stages students with special educational needs mainly achieve well in art, frequently producing work indistinguishable from the work of mainstream students.

139. A strength of Key Stage 4 art attainment is the extended stages of researching and experimenting that students undertake to develop their own ideas and responses to the set themes. This process results in many examples of individually expressive and creative artworks. For example, some of the best Key Stage 4 painting shows refined and subtle colour handling skills used in conjunction with robust pictorial ideas to create some complex designs. Students can explain and describe their work using specialist vocabulary, and this good quality work is supported by many preparatory stages including good written studies about other artists and styles. In contrast to this, there are a few examples of poorly executed and presented coursework with little evidence of developed practical or visual skills.

140. The overall quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good. Lessons are well organised, with materials and equipment readily available to support practical activities, so that time is used productively. Teachers provide their students with plenty of individual attention, which enables students of all abilities to achieve well. In the best lessons, aims and methods are explained and demonstrated clearly so that students understand the tasks and expectations and how to accomplish them. They all get detailed and constructively evaluative help to realise their own individual ideas, or to research topics specific to their own responses to the set themes. Teachers' concern for students as individuals is a strength of art teaching. Homework is a well planned part of the teaching programme. Teachers' expert subject leadership provides students with confidence to try new techniques and explore novel ideas. This helps them to become independent learners during the Key Stage 4 course. In a few cases, the work set provides insufficient challenge for the most able students, and some of the topics and activities set provide fewer opportunities to develop higher level skills.

141. In both key stages students' response to art is good. They come to lessons with enthusiasm, and are keen to produce successful work. Behaviour is good, students work co-operatively together and relationships with teachers are good.

142. The art department is well led and managed. Specialist art teachers work as an effective team, informed by a clear vision of the value of art education. In recent years they have worked together to establish the subject in new studios that provide very good surroundings for creative work. Improvements since the last inspection have been good, with the strengths found last time maintained or improved, and weaknesses, for example use of

ICT, substantially improved. To further enhance the work of the department and to continue the good rising attainment trend, the scheme of work needs some re-structuring to make sequences of work provide progressively more challenge so that the most able students are stretched. Assessment of work needs to be sharpened to provide more informative data for planning, and monitoring systems need to be clearer so that the department's development can be more accurately assessed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good overall, and there is some very good teaching in food technology and graphics, and excellent teaching in child development.
- The attitudes, interest, and involvement of students in all aspects of the subject are very good.
- Good leadership, management, and team work focus on raising standards at all levels and stages.
- Well organised accommodation and resources, and high standards of display, provide an effective and stimulating learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- Further develop strategies to raise standards, through matching objectives more closely to individual needs, with more detailed tracking and recording of students' progress.
- The greater use of basic design principles and corporate identity to improve the quality of graphics in design sheets across the department.
- The further development of resources and access to information and communication technology (ICT), computer aided design (CAD), and computer aided manufacture (CAM), to more fully meet national curriculum requirements at both key stages, and improve the quality of research.

143. All students in Years 7 to 9 have design and technology lessons. A rich range of experiences is offered, including work in food technology, textiles, resistant materials, and graphics. In Years 10 and 11, some 27 % of the cohort have official disapplication from the design and technology National Curriculum in order to study modern languages, the remainder choose from GCSE graphic products, textiles, food technology or child development, or ICAA certificate resistant materials.

144. Some Year 7 students come to the school with very limited experience of working with materials and components that could help their understanding of design and technology. Current work in the first three years shows good achievement and progress from entry to the school. The 2001 teachers' assessments for the end of Year 9 showed attainment to be well above average. Present Year 9 work, confirms these standards. As nationally, girls achieve higher standards than boys, in all aspects of the subject

145. Overall, GCSE results in 2001 were just above the national average, and slightly better than the previous year, with less difference between the various aspects. The graphics option provided the best grades, and represented a significant increase in standards in this

area of the subject from last year. Overall results show a rising trend. Targets for improvement are realistic and based on regular assessment, and the tracking of attainment and progress through the school. Weaker areas are identified and steps taken to improve provision. For example, poor results in the resistant materials option led to it being replaced by an ICAA certificated course that is more appropriate to the needs of students who find the GCSE design and technology courses difficult for various reasons. Students with special educational needs, in all areas, enjoy the visual and practical aspect of the subject and make good progress, although additional learning support staff are provided in lessons.

146. Students in Years 7 to 9 develop a good understanding of the design process. They research and evaluate ideas for a wide range of products, develop design briefs and specifications considering function and fitness for purpose. For example, Year 7 students design a poster to show the places of interest in the local area, they research nine areas of interest and develop illustrations to go into irregular shapes in the poster. The best work shows good understanding and use of colour and tonal contrast, and an ability to create shapes that respond to the shapes of the buildings they have sketched. Year 8 students show initiative and originality in design ideas using a stick figure or animal, to make a metal balancing toy. They understand the concept of using weights below a pivot point to achieve balance. They can use hand and power tools efficiently and safely to accurately cut and shape metal, and are developing a good understanding of the properties of metals and a range of joining methods, including brazing and lathe work. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are being successfully developed alongside their designing and making skills. All projects are well documented with carefully annotated charts and diagrams. Occasionally the quality of design sheets is marred by poor graphics and freehand drawing, for example, some diagrams of pressure cookers by Year 9 students show weak understanding of drawing cylindrical shapes in perspective.

147. Standards in Years 10 and 11 show some variation, between the different technology aspects and classes. The work of graphics students for package design, shows a good knowledge of a range of drawing methods, the use of colour, and the importance of balancing light and dark areas. Overall presentation in design sheets is good. Year 10 students for example, make very good direct observational drawings of hands opening boxes, when working on design sheets to show ergonomic and anthropometric data. The work of girls is generally more advanced than that of boys, for example, when designing a box to contain cosmetics or chocolates, girls use isometric drawing more effectively to show a three dimensional view of the completed box, and use colour selectively to create the appropriate mood for the product. However, graphics for design sheets in some food and textile coursework does not reach the same standard of presentation. Students research ideas, evaluate commercial products, and are aware of the shortcomings in their own and others' ideas. The standard of presentation of finished products is generally high, and making is better than designing. Often poor use of colour, and weaker understanding of design principles reduces the overall quality of work. Students are not using the Internet sufficiently to research industrial applications, as there are too few opportunities for this. At both key stages, students' understanding of the use of information communication technology to design systems and control events is underdeveloped because resources for these are limited. Further connections with industry, consideration of the place of technology in society, and project links to design movements such as The Bauhaus, Art Deco, or contemporary architectural design, are needed to further motivate students and raise standards, through an awareness of the importance of technology in today's world.

148. Students are very enthusiastic, the vast majority work hard and behave well in lessons; most have very positive attitudes, and overall good progress is made by all groups of students. Strategies for improving the attitudes of the small number of disaffected students, needs further development.

149. The quality of teaching is good overall, and ranges from satisfactory, to excellent. Most lessons are good, and there is some very good teaching in graphics and food technology and excellent teaching in child development. Lessons are extremely well planned and have clear aims, objectives, and targets. Varied teaching strategies use whole class teaching for introductions and summaries, while individual tuition during practical sessions ensures that learning methods and materials are appropriate for the full range of attainment. Students respond and work at a good pace. In a very effective Year 11 child development revision lesson for example, the teacher used both group work and individual questioning very effectively to develop students' understanding of examination techniques. Question and answer sessions, which reinforce learning and help teachers to assess individual student needs, are used well in most lessons. In all areas, teachers have good subject knowledge, and are clear about the work they need to cover, to meet National Curriculum and examination requirements. Demonstrations of food preparation, and the use of tools are very good, and hold students' attention extremely well. However, there is some variation in the quality of lesson introductions and evaluative summaries across the department, from satisfactory to highly effective. Projects are well structured to include literacy, numeracy, and information communication technology, to aid design and to enhance presentation, although occasionally opportunities are missed to develop further meaningful links.

150. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Teachers' work extremely hard and team work is strong. A stimulating environment has been created through informative displays of students' work. All resources are well organised and maintained, and provision for students' health and safety is well addressed. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection. Teaching quality has improved, and students' attainment, and progress are better following the move to one site, and refurbishment of the department's accommodation.

151. Inspection findings identify needs that concur with the department's development plans. These are to raise standards across the department, working towards strategies that promote a more consistent approach to graphical presentation, and further develop assessment procedures through the sharing of National Curriculum levels, and examination criteria with students. To develop courses that make greater use of information communication technology, computer aided design and manufacture, and to improve learning opportunities for students, through greater use of the Internet. Develop links with industry, making better use of work experience, and increase the motivation and expectations of boys.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall the quality of the provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The shared commitment to improvement of the geography department.
- The students' awareness of how well they are achieving in geography.
- The quality of student work on display.

Areas for improvement

- To raise the attainment of boys at GCSE.
- To improve the quality of written work in student books in Years 7 – 9.

152. Geography is a popular option at GCSE, yearly fluctuations in numbers notwithstanding. In 2001 results were below national averages, but this was part of an improving trend over the past three years. In 2001 51 % of students achieved A*-C grades while 92 % of students achieved A* to G grades which was just below the national average. Girls' attainment was well above the national average but boys' attainment was well below. The gap by which boys' attainment was lower than girls was much wider than the gap nationally. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work in the current Years 10 and 11 confirms that the standards these students are reaching are in line with national expectations. This shows that the trend of improvement is continuing. The achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs is good over the two years of the GCSE course. One key weakness within this picture at GCSE is the lack of depth to students' explanations and the lack of precision in their use of geographical terms. This weakness is recognised by their teachers who work hard to help students to improve. One area of significant strength is the quality of the students' coursework.

153. During the week of the inspection the organisation of the humanities modules in Years 7 to 9 meant that no geography lessons could be observed in Year 9, and only one lesson in Year 8. However, the written work of Year 8 and Year 9 students was scrutinised. The standards achieved by students by the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Bearing in mind the lack of depth of the students' geographical knowledge at the start of Year 7 this represents good achievement in their learning for all, including those students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. Students are developing good skills in handling data and in taking information from geographical sources such as videos and as early as Year 7 they show good skills in devising suitable questions for enquiry. They demonstrate an increasing familiarity with appropriate geographical vocabulary and are developing their ability to communicate their geographical findings. Across Years 7, 8 and 9 the higher attaining students in particular display an increasing ability to describe geographical patterns and processes. The relative weaknesses for all lies in their difficulties in explaining those patterns and processes and in their relatively weak place knowledge. The quality of the students' work for their formal assessments is good but the quality of the work in students' notebooks is often not as good, particularly that of boys.

154. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is good in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE. Strong features of the most effective teaching are the good relationships between teachers and students and the teachers' very good classroom management. Students respond to their teachers by behaving well. They are willing to answer teachers' questions and work hard. The most successful lessons are well planned to draw students actively into their learning and to challenge them. In a lower set Year 7 lesson the teacher interested the students through skilfully questioning which enabled them to draw up a set of questions for their enquiry into flooding. Then, through a mix of a carefully thought out resource booklet and note making, together with the individual help provided by the teacher and the learning support assistant, the students were able to use some very challenging newspaper extracts on the Chichester floods. They were additionally encouraged by the reference to their very good river collages on display in the room and the students clearly enjoyed the challenge. In a Year 11 lesson, this time with a top set, the teacher had provided the students with a good set of photographs from which they had to collect evidence of what National Parks were like. The teachers' very focussed questioning forced students to use precise geographical terms and this developed both their enquiry skills and increased their knowledge in an enjoyable plenary session. The main weakness within the teaching is where teacher exposition is too long and pupils' lose interest. Teachers have made considerable progress in developing the literacy skills of students through work focussing on key geographical vocabulary, including the international origins of many terms. They are also making some good developments in supporting students' note making and extended writing the fruits of which can be seen in for example in Year 7 work on rivers or in the Year 9 essays on plate tectonics.

155. The leadership and management of geography are very good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Students are now much more aware of how well they are doing in geography, and the tracking system across Years 7 to 9 is being used to good effect to monitor teaching and learning. Results at GCSE have steadily improved and the subject is a popular option choice. There have been a number of positive initiatives made by teachers to help improve students' attainment at GCSE, such as support for revision and coursework. The new schemes of work covering Years 7 to 9 give good guidance to all those teaching geography on a range of teaching and learning activities, including opportunities for the use of information and communication technology, and the same now needs to be completed for GCSE. Resources have been improved and, despite the cost difficulties, fieldwork opportunities provided for all by utilising the school site.

HISTORY

156. At the time of the inspection, both the head of history and one other member of staff were absent with long-term illness, and their classes taken by supply teachers. This has implications for the judgements on teaching quality, leadership and overall provision.

157. Sixth form teaching in the department was only sampled. The small amount of teaching observed was consistently good. At A/AS Level, standards are good; students' work is well-constructed and thoughtful. Students are committed and motivated, are discriminatory and perceptive in their comments and able to offer judgements, explanations and insights that reflect an appropriate depth of knowledge and understanding of the periods they are studying.

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

Strengths

- Standards in history are satisfactory with clear evidence that they are improving; there has been a rising trend in attainment at GCSE since 1999.
- Students entered for A Level do well. Overall pass rates and percentages gaining the highest grades both exceed national averages.
- Students' behaviour is consistently very good; their attitudes to learning are almost always very positive.
- The teaching of sixthformers and younger students is good; that of students in GCSE classes is satisfactory.
- Overall leadership is good and is responsible for the many improvements introduced since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Some lessons offer too narrow an approach to learning; they allow too little scope for students to write extensively or to work independently and encourage students to become passive. Support for pupils with special educational needs is uneven.
- Work in exercise books is not always as neat and complete as it could and should be.
- There is currently too great a variation in the quality of marking and assessment across the department.
- There are too many pupils embarking on the GCSE course who are not subsequently entered for the exam.

158. Standards in history are satisfactory and are improving. In the statutory assessments undertaken at age 14 in 2001, the department judged 59 % of students to have reached the

expected standard (as against 64 % nationally) with just 15 % gaining the higher Level 6 in 2001. There was no significant difference in the percentage of boys and girls exceeding the expected levels but the overall profile of attainment for girls was stronger than for boys. GCSE results for 2001 were close to, but below, national averages, as they have been for the last three years, but the gap between the school's results and the rising national average is narrowing. As at Key Stage 3, there is evidence that girls are performing significantly better than boys but that there has been a rising trend in overall attainment since 1999.

159. In lessons, standards are largely satisfactory and there is evidence of some very good work, particularly in top sets in Years 9 and 10 and in the sixth form. Standards are, however, uneven. Evidence in work samples and in classrooms suggests that, on entry to the school, the youngest students make a sound start to history. Most work to a fair standard and able students are developing a good grasp of difficult concepts such as 'civilisation'. In some classes; however, there is too much overlap with work undertaken in the primary school which restricts some pupils' progress. Less able students respond well to challenge and make satisfactory progress, and the source-analysis skills of the most able are developing satisfactorily. Middle range students, although able to distinguish between facts and opinions are insufficiently ambitious; the quality of written work and the structure and organisation of their ideas are not yet sufficiently secure and there were examples of misunderstandings of important concepts. Work in exercise books is not always as neat and complete as it could and should be. Nonetheless, behaviour across the school is consistently very good and attitudes to learning are almost always very positive. Students are courteous and polite, are interested in history and treat their teachers and their subject with respect. In some cases, students are too dependent and passive, and rely too much on teachers to do their thinking for them. However, by age 14 most able students perform well, producing good work on key topics such as the Act of Settlement, slavery, World War I and the rise of Hitler.

160. In the case of older pupils, knowledge and skills are progressing satisfactorily and, in several cases, very well. As with younger students, written work sometimes lacks proper introductions and the ability to incorporate an analysis of sources needs to become more secure. Not all folders are sufficiently well maintained, which reduces their value as revision aids. Students' basic levels of literacy are satisfactory and knowledge levels are secure but the logical development and organisation of their ideas are weaker than their knowledge of fact. Similarly, their skills in balancing and reconciling contradictory evidence need additional work.

161. Judgements of the quality of teaching in history are inevitably affected by the absence through illness of two key staff. Nonetheless, the inspection offered clear evidence that the teaching of younger students is usually good and for older main school students, always at least satisfactory. At its most successful, teaching contains an appropriate balance of challenge and pace that ensures lessons have a clear sense of purpose and depth, ICT is used well to challenge and motivate, lessons are well-organised and students receive clear guidance that shows them how to improve. There is an appropriate balance between 'teacher-talk' and independent student activity. In such lessons the teaching of all students, including those with special educational needs, operates within a secure framework that allows them to see the steps they have to undertake and motivates them sufficiently to want to do so. There were examples of teachers using their own good subject knowledge to frame very precise questions that allowed students to move to a new level. This approach was also used effectively to help pupils grasp the links between the events they were studying, and to make judgements about the relevance and implications of sources. One good lesson in Year 7, for example, helped students to arrive at a deeper understanding of Roman civilisation by taking advantage of their readiness to question and challenge the teacher's presentation in order to refine their own grasp of this topic. This was a very successful example of mature

and confident students being challenged to improve yet further and responding eagerly as a result.

162. Not all lessons achieve these high standards. Some are methodical and well-planned but allow too little scope for students to write extensively or to work independently. In other lessons, teachers tend to tell students answers that they would do better to arrive at for themselves, or so dominate discussion that they become passive. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching but where this occurs students with special educational needs are given insufficient guidance on what they are to do. Samples of work scrutinised in the inspection too frequently contain work that has not been properly marked and this failure has held back students' progress. The department acknowledges this and has already piloted a new approach in selected classes that has successfully motivated students. The improvement in their standards is marked and all classes should have the benefit of this new approach.

163. The head of history's illness means that it is not possible to offer a final judgement on the quality of leadership of this subject. However, history is part of a suite of humanities subjects and judgements are possible in relation to the overall direction given by the head of humanities. This is good. The head of humanities, working in conjunction with the head of history has established a clear vision for the way history should develop. Both have worked strenuously towards its realisation. The department shares their view of the importance of helping students to attain the highest possible standards and works effectively as a team. There is a good quality humanities handbook that offers teachers clear and appropriate guidance on key departmental policies and procedures. The scheme of work is a well-worked document that ensures that the curriculum for history is broad, balanced, designed to promote high standards and supports pupils' cultural development; currently, however, there are insufficient educational visits in history. Day to day management is good as are the maintenance of resource levels, and the quality of departmental documentation and communication. Monitoring techniques are well-established. There have been opportunities for the formal observation of teaching and for informal peer observation and professional development. The department undergoes a searching annual performance review, led by a member of the senior management team, to identify quality and determine future priorities. The latest review rightly concluded that although standards are rising, improving boys' attainment and reducing sharply the level of non-entries in GCSE should continue to be the key priorities for the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**. Examination results are above the national average and teaching is good and often very good. The co-ordination of cross-curricular ICT is well co-ordinated and monitored.

Strengths

Main School

- Key Stage 3 grades have been improving and the 2001 assessments are well above the national average.
- 2001 GCSE results are above the national average - 60 % grades A* - C.
- Many non-specialist teachers are being used to deliver ICT across the curriculum. In all lessons observed, these teachers show good knowledge of the subject and confidence when teaching.
- In the best lessons, students' work with purpose and enthusiasm and teachers are aware immediately if students need support.
- Lower ability students are achieving higher levels than would be expected. This is a reflection of the good teaching and course content.
- A competent manager who has vision and purpose leads the ICT co-ordination.
- Since the last inspection, the school has invested in one full time and one part time technician who have made a significant difference to the maintenance and support of ICT equipment for teachers and students.
- The co-ordination of ICT across the school, particularly for younger students has improved and there is a noticeable increase in the number of subject areas that are using ICT resources consistently.

Sixth form:

- Very good examples of continued use of ICT by sixth formers is to be found in many of the projects scrutinised. Teachers clearly expect good use of ICT within sixth form projects across the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

Main school

- Some teachers fail to check that oral instructions given to students have been understood.
- The school still uses out-dated Acorn Archimedes computers to deliver some core curriculum ICT, particularly in the technology department.
- The ICT co-ordinator, because he is marginal to all departments has insufficient authority to introduce improvements where these are essential; his position therefore does not allow him to co-ordinate ICT as effectively as he could.

Sixth form:

- A structured ICT plan for the whole of the sixth formers is not yet fully evolved; the school is conducting a pilot scheme for ICT key skills this year.

164. Assessment grades of ICT skills for younger students have improved over the last four years and last year's results were well above the national average. GCSE information and communication technology results last year were above the national average.

165. All students can log on confidently and load appropriate software and there are opportunities for lower ability students to achieve higher levels than would be expected. This

is a reflection of the good teaching and course content. However, the skills that students acquire on Acorn Archimedes computers are not necessarily transferable to the computers found in the rest of the school.

166. All older students follow an ICT course - either the GNVQ Thomas Telford Project 40 qualification or the International Curriculum Assessment Authority (ICAA) certificate in ICT skills.

167. In the sixth form, there are very good examples of continued use of ICT to be found in many of the projects scrutinised. Teachers clearly expect good use of ICT within sixth form projects across the curriculum. A structured ICT plan for the whole of the sixth form is not yet fully evolved; the school is conducting a pilot scheme for ICT key skills this year.

168. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good and is often good. Students are set work which builds confidence in the least able while providing extended opportunities for the more able. The teachers' knowledge of ICT enables them to use technical terms with confidence.

169. Lessons are very well planned with a good range of activities and a brisk pace. Opportunities for learning are enhanced by the excellent range of software and hardware available. Students may use supervised ICT areas within the resource centre and technology department to continue their coursework or increase their ICT skills. Homework is well utilised and enables students to use their own initiative to complete their work. There are excellent examples of students' work on display around the school.

170. Teachers are aware and make effective use of the value added targets set for each student and make arrangements for catering for those students with special needs. Parents are well informed of their children's progress and are notified if coursework is a cause for concern. The special educational needs (SEN) department makes very good use of information technology, not merely to develop spelling and reading but to enable students to create mind maps and record notes. SEN students are confident in Excel and Word.

171. Teachers have established a very good relationship with students. This has enabled students to interact positively within lessons and remain highly motivated. Students are keen and enthusiastic to be involved in practical work. In most lessons, a high standard of behaviour is expected and as a result, learning is able to move at a fast pace but, at times, the behaviour of younger students is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

172. Although there are generally high levels of ICT competence amongst the sixth form students, most do not have the opportunity to gain certification to show their competence. Students work well in the ICT key skills lessons, remaining on task and enthusiastic. All sixth form students have the opportunity to use ICT areas within the resource centre to continue their coursework or increasing their computer skills.

173. A competent manager who has vision and purpose leads the ICT department. He has an excellent relationship with his colleagues, particularly the ICT technicians. As a result the school has excellent ICT facilities that are reliable and well maintained.

174. The ICT co-ordinator meets termly with nominated departmental ICT leaders to plan and develop cross-curricular strategies. However, because he is marginal to all departments, he has insufficient authority to introduce improvements where these are essential; his position therefore does not allow him to co-ordinate ICT as effectively as he

could. In-service training has been very effective in raising the levels of ICT competence amongst many of the staff.

175. Since the last inspection, the school has invested in one full time and one part time technician who have made a significant difference to the maintenance and support of ICT equipment for teachers and students. Computer aided design and control technology is improving and there is provision for new computer aided manufacture equipment this year. The co-ordination of ICT across the school, particularly for younger students has improved and there is a noticeable increase in the number of subject areas that consistently use ICT resources.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision for Modern Foreign Languages is **good** and expanding.

Strengths

- The new opportunities brought about by Language College status.
- The dedication and zeal of the teaching staff.
- Increased provision and use of information and communications technology.
- Greater numbers taking a foreign language in the Sixth Form.
- Excellent leadership.

Areas for improvement

- Managing the additional demands incurred by Language College status.
- Limiting the impact of staff turnover – usually for promotion elsewhere.
- Reducing uncertainty over the place of secondary languages in the main school.

176. The Language College Dimension: In September 2000 The John Bentley School was officially designated a Language College. This distinction has brought with it a number of advantages, both financial (a one-off capital grant and a recurrent annual grant), and in terms of the school's standing in the area. In return the school has committed itself to a greatly enhanced role for languages in the curriculum: more languages taught, more time for them, greater numbers of pupils taking languages to GCSE and in the Sixth Form. The importance of languages is to be stressed across the curriculum, with other subjects making connections to languages and to the European and international dimensions. There is an increased role for ICT within languages teaching, and links have been forged with schools abroad and with partner institutions in the UK (schools, colleges and universities) and with local industry and the Calne community.

177. Although this new status has brought some challenges for the teaching and learning of languages in the school, the department has addressed most of them effectively and is seeking to improve further. Certainly, the prestige of Language College status has caused The John Bentley School to be seen as a centre of excellence in language teaching for its own pupils, for the immediate locality and for the training and induction of language teachers. The international dimension is visible, albeit patchily, through the school and the extra financial resources have enhanced provision for language learning, particularly in terms of the use of the new technology. These gains have not been without cost, however. Language College status has made great demands on the time and energies of staff, often taking staff out of their classrooms. The teaching of small time-allocations of additional languages has

not been universally successful and the target for increased participation (more students taking two languages in Years 10 and 11) has yet to be met. The school and the department are, in the light of early experience, taking realistic steps to remedy any problems – steps which are already working their way through the school.

178. Standards in languages are good and rising. By the end of Year 9 abler pupils are competent in the attainment targets of listening, speaking and reading. They can listen successfully and accurately to foreign language speech, can frame and answer short questions in French or German and read material on a limited range of topics. Writing is less strong and poor presentation of work often impairs accuracy. Attitudes towards languages are good. Pupils arrive on time, prepared and equipped to learn. Instances of minor inattentiveness are well handled by staff. For most of a lesson pupils work well and show respect for each other and for staff. On occasion less able pupils lose interest and standards decline as the long 60-minute period wears on.

179. Standards in the GCSE examinations have shown great improvement over the past three years. In 2001 over two-thirds of pupils entered for GCSE exams in French and German gained an A*-C pass grade, well above national levels, and numbers gaining A*- A grades were exceptional. Those of the year-group not entered for the GCSE exam did creditably in the less demanding Certificate of Achievement. The school has great success in targeting linguists of moderate ability who, with less good teaching, might fall short of an A*- C pass. Such pupils are mentored, collectively and individually and constantly encouraged to give of their best. In this way, they become more confident in speech, can answer well, over a limited range of themes and write briefly but accurately.

180. This is a large department with a full-time equivalent of nine members, ably supported by two locally employed foreign language assistants and a clerical worker. Dedicated teaching is a major feature of language work. Teachers are universally well prepared and confident and competent in the languages they teach. The many young and relatively inexperienced teachers in the team bring enthusiasm and zeal to their work, co-operate well and are keen to learn from the experience of the head of department. They have willingly taken on the added workload associated with Language College status. All are well aware of the needs and techniques of language teaching in the modern world and use the foreign language appropriately in the classroom, while not hesitating to use English when explaining a difficult point of grammar. Use of the new technology is highly developed. No substandard teaching was seen and some outstanding lessons were observed. In the best lessons seen good humour and drive, linked with excellent preparation and firm classroom management, brought the best out of pupils and had a major impact on their learning.

181. With the granting of Language College status, the curricular opportunities available to pupils are steadily broadening and a new curriculum structure is already substantially increasing the numbers taking both French and German to GCSE level in Years 10 and 11. Current Years 10 and 11 concentrate on their main language in the core curriculum, with the second language available as an option choice. An enrichment course in Spanish is available to most, although this arrangement is under review as numbers taking both French and German to GCSE rise.

182. The department makes a substantial contribution to the cultural life of the school. As the Language College ethos gradually permeates the school, pupils become increasingly aware of the way other people live, and become increasingly tolerant and appreciative of cultural diversity. A “Japan Day” held recently is a prime example of this effect. Visits abroad and correspondence with schools overseas further broaden pupils’ vision. Links with schools in Sweden and Estonia, and a planned “Comenius Project” with a school in the Netherlands are examples of these expanding horizons.

183. The Modern Languages Department has a pivotal role in the school, and is excellently led by an experienced and charismatic teacher who communicates his skills and enthusiasm to his staff. The last inspection was complimentary to the department and the good features noted then are still present, even though there has been a virtually complete turnover of staff since that time.

MUSIC

The quality of provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of instrumental tuition and of extra-curricular activities in the school.

Areas for improvement

- Improve leadership and management in the subject.
- Raise standards in music, especially at Key Stage 3.
- Implement effective planning at all key stages.
- Implement effective assessment procedures and practice.
- Introduce strategies to provide greater and more appropriate challenge for all students.
- Develop practice in ICT (music technology) at all key stages.

184. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in music are below that expected of students of a similar age. The 2001 teacher assessment results indicate that students are working at levels well above the national expectation; this was not reflected in observations during the inspection. At Key Stage 4, standards are in line with that expected of students of a similar age and from similar schools. GCSE results for 2001 indicate that 23.8 % of students achieved A*- C grades, which is well below the national average. Post-16 students attain standards in line with the national expectation. High standards are achieved in both instrumental lessons and in extra-curricular activities.

185. At Key Stage 3, students are developing a sound knowledge of some aspects of music, notably musical terms, features and styles, but they are unable to apply their knowledge and understanding of these effectively enough through the practical activities they undertake. Most students struggle to read standard musical notation and composing and singing skills are under-developed. There is little inter-relationship of the skills of performing, composing and appraising. As a consequence, students are not achieving as well as they should, a position that is not substantially different from the last inspection. At Key Stage 4, the more musically able students are developing high standards in performing. This was demonstrated well in a Year 11 class, where these students were supported well by visiting instrumental staff. However, the minority who received no additional support achieved lower standards. Composing skills are under-developed across the key stage but students are acquiring good background knowledge of music through listening. Again, though, these three areas of musical experience are not fully inter-related and this leads to some fragmentation of the music curriculum, especially in Year 11. The small group of post-16 students on the AS Level course have a clear understanding of the composing process and of structure in composition through their listening and appraisal of the music of Wagner. They engage in musical analysis, in which they demonstrate their understanding of musical terms and features, including chord structures and instrumentation. Their high level performing skills

were apparent in the quality of their playing in extra-curricular activities. Their composing skills are limited, though, by the little amount of work undertaken so far on the course.

186. The students' attitudes and behaviour vary across the key stages. In some lessons at Key Stage 3, students have positive attitudes and they work productively together when required. Relationships are secure in these lessons. In a number of lessons, however, the disruptive behaviour of a minority of students and unruly behaviour, generally, inhibits learning for the majority. Key Stage 4 and post-16 students display positive attitudes to their work, as do those in instrumental lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Relationships here are constructive; students are able to reflect on what they can do and understand its impact on others. They show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning.

187. Good teaching was observed at post-16, and teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, but a significant amount of teaching at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Teaching has a positive impact on students' learning at post-16 and in some lessons at Key Stage 4, where the teacher displays good subject knowledge and where time and resources are used effectively. Too much teaching at Key Stage 3, however, is characterised by low expectations and lack of pace and challenge. The management of students is weak and they are rarely asked to give their own views and opinions about the music they perform or compose.

188. Whilst there have been improvements in the quality of the instrumental teaching programme and also in the extra-curricular provision, both of which are well organised, weaknesses occur in the leadership and management of the subject. The music co-ordinator receives good support from four members of staff who each teach a few music lessons, but this arrangement does not provide the stability needed within the department. Areas for improvement include the raising of standards, especially at Key Stage 3, through the introduction of effective strategies to provide greater and more appropriate challenges for all students. This can be achieved, across all key stages, through proper planning linked to effective assessment procedures and practice. These issues were raised in the last inspection. Accommodation is very good and it provides a conducive learning environment, but the department is under resourced and musical instruments are in a poor state of repair. There are no computers and the requirement for teaching ICT in the subject is not met. The immediate introduction of music technology equipment is a further area for improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the provision for physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001 were well above the national average for both boys and girls.
- Planning and teaching of the GCSE course are very good.
- The well established code of conduct is readily adhered to by the pupils, creating an effective learning environment.
- A very good extra curricular programme that provides opportunities for pupils to follow their interests and compete at county and national levels.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work require updating to incorporate new national initiatives.
- The monitoring of teaching should be formalised to ensure consistency of marking and in developing pupils' evaluative and literacy skills.
- Balance the curriculum at Key Stage 3 better by including more aesthetics.
- Ensure the department's moderation of standards is more closely linked to national levels.

189. Pupils at the end of Year 9 are average in terms of skill level and their understanding of physical education concepts. They achieve well in lessons relative to their ability. Particular strengths are the pupils' swimming skills. The boys are able to use a variety of strokes with good technique and understand the basic rules of water polo. The girls in Year 7 have above average knowledge of swimming stroke technique. They are able to analyse their own and each others performance making a good contribution to the improvement of their skills. The pupils' evaluative skills vary in quality. Some are able to use simple descriptive words but they are generally not confident in the use of technical vocabulary. They know how to warm up before their activities and understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle. The pupils' gymnastics skills have improved since the last inspection. They are able to perform a variety of different balances in small groups that require trust and careful planning. Their work is imaginative and exciting to watch, but they still lack refinement of movement for a polished performance. The small amount of time in the curriculum dedicated to gymnastics has a direct impact on the depth of quality achieved. The girls' standard in hockey is average but they have good spatial awareness and knowledge of different positions in the game. Many of the girls do not own studded boots, making it difficult to balance or to move at speed on wet pitches. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons with tasks and equipment altered to meet their needs if required. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are mostly well challenged and respond positively to their lessons. They achieve as well as the other pupils.

190. The standard of work of pupils in Year 11 lessons is average. A significant minority is above average. Their depth of knowledge, refinement of skill from Year 9 and levels of independence in their learning contribute to good levels of achievement for all pupils. They apply strategies and tactics with increasing thought and accuracy. In football the boys show good control when passing and are able to use one and two touch effectively. The players off the ball adapt their positions to make themselves more readily available to receive the ball. Their basketball skills are also above average. In netball, the girls plan and apply advanced tactics and they are quick to change from attack to defence. Their speed, agility and general

levels of fitness are above average. Those pupils opting to swim have a satisfactory knowledge of personal survival and lifesaving techniques.

191. GCSE results were well above average in 2001 with a high proportion of A* and A grades. The boys did particularly well and pupils achieved well relative to their other subjects. The standards of work of pupils currently in Year 11 studying physical education GCSE are above average in both practical and theoretical aspects. This represents very good achievement relative to when they began the course in Year 10. They have a good depth of knowledge and are able to make logical links between their practical performance and aspects of theory. For example, they are able to adapt their performance in badminton using their own and each others analysis of skills. The pupils achieving the highest standards use technical language confidently when writing and speaking. They write fluently and have a good recall of facts under examination conditions. Lower attaining pupils have a limited grasp of key points and require additional help to structure their written answers. The pupils' high levels of motivation and independence have a strong impact on the quality of their work and learning.

192. Teaching is good overall, and pupils learn well as a result. There is a significant proportion of very good teaching and this is found particularly in GCSE lessons. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. They set tasks that require them to be independent and take responsibility for their own learning. A good example of this was seen in a badminton lesson. The pupils set up their own equipment and directed warm ups in small groups to include cardio-vascular work, stretches and skill related practices. Teacher demonstration was used effectively to show the importance of accurate feeding for effective practising of the net smash. Assessment and target setting is mostly thorough. Homework and notes are marked regularly but the quality varies. The best practice of constructive criticism and praise is not shared between teachers. A particularly strong feature of the course is the regular testing resulting in consolidation of knowledge. In the best lessons all pupils know that at some stage they will have to answer a question orally. This ensures that they do not rely on the same pupils to do their thinking for them.

193. The teachers' expectations of high standards of work are nearly always consistent and they continually encourage them to strive for better performance appropriately related to their ability. The teachers use a variety of methods that are successful in developing practical, evaluative and planning skills. A good example of this was seen in a Year 10 netball lesson where the pupils had to plan their own centre pass systems and comment on the effectiveness of their performance. This immediately resulted in improved positional play and a greater understanding of attacking tactics. Question and answer sessions are mostly used effectively to assess the pupils' knowledge and to provoke thought, but again this practise is not yet consistent between teachers. Tasks always progress logically and with sufficient time to consolidate skills before transferring onto the next stage. Students who are unable to physically take part in practical lessons are not always sufficiently involved in the learning process. There are lost opportunities to develop their evaluative and coaching skills. The pupils in Years 7 to 9 are aware of the newly introduced national curriculum levels and have a good knowledge of their own individual learning. This is established through the well designed log books where they record their own evaluations of performance in each activity. The pupils are not given a level when they arrive at the school so it is not yet possible to accurately measure their progress across the key stages.

194. The teachers are good role models for their pupils and create a caring, challenging and effective learning environment. As a result the pupils behave well and adhere to the established code of conduct. The mutual respect and shared enthusiasm between the teachers and the pupils makes a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is especially evident in the popular extra-curricular programme where pupils enjoy team and

individual success at local, county and national levels in sports such as basketball, football and netball.

195. Leadership of the department is good. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved resulting in improved standards especially at GCSE. This has been helped by the provision of two classrooms designated for the teaching of theory. The pupils now work in a subject stimulating environment. The greater range of tasks that challenge all levels of ability within a class and the higher expectation of independence in pupils' learning in Years 10 and 11 is having a positive impact on learning. This should now be consistently extended to all lessons in Years 7 to 9. Schemes of work do not currently include links to new assessment criteria or national initiatives such as literacy, numeracy or spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Whilst there is good input into the pupils' moral and social development there are too few opportunities for them to explore the richness of sport and dance from other cultures. Monitoring of teaching tends to be informal. A more formal approach with an agreed agenda would create a sharper focus on areas that require improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The leadership and management of religious education.
- The very good quality of teaching and learning.
- The very good schemes of work at Key Stage 3, which are extremely helpful for non-specialist teachers.
- Excellent relationships between teachers and students.
- The progress made by low attaining students.
- The use of student assessment linked with levelling at Key Stage 3 and individual student tracking at Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of religious education at Sixth Form in order to meet with the statutory requirements.
- Improve examination results, with a particular focus on the underachievement of boys.
- Improving the range of examination courses at GCSE.

196. Overall the standards achieved by the majority of students at the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus. There are no significant differences between boys and girls but attainment for lower attaining pupils is especially good at Key Stage 3.

197. At GCSE, all pupils are expected to follow a short course on 'Thinking about God and Morality'. Attainment at GCSE is below the national average but there has been a rising trend over the last three years, although a number of students (notably boys) are still underachieving. Underachievement for boys is recognised as being a whole school issue. In religious education this applies not only to less able boys but to some more able boys. The latter may be linked to perceptions of the subject as not being of value. These perceptions need to be challenged.

198. In order to improve targets in religious education for 2002, and tackle underachievement, the department has set up an effective system using the minimum expectation graph as a tool for target setting with students. Underachievers have been targeted with catch-up sessions and the resitting of mock exams. In addition, parents and tutors are alerted when students fail to achieve their target grade and effectively work together to tackle the problem of underachievement.

199. The intention to set aside more time within team meetings to work on strategies for targeting underachievement in religious education, improve the percentage gaining A*- C grades and implement the new specifications has not been realised and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. This is especially important given that the majority of teachers are non-specialists. This was an issue highlighted in the last OFSTED report.

200. The low GCSE results may be due to a combination of factors:

- Compulsion for all to study the subject to GCSE, which may militate against the subject.
- Pupils failing to see the worth of the subject due to insufficient promotion of its value.
- The inappropriateness of the course for low attaining pupils. The simpler Certificate of Achievement may be more appropriate and more motivating. The language requirements of the paper two is demanding, requiring students to have an understanding of some difficult philosophical terms.
- Lack of time set aside to assist non-specialists with the teaching of this course because of other departmental pressures.
- The amount of time missed by a small number of students because of extended work experience or a reduced timetable.

201. This, given that the course only has one lesson per week, results in students missing vital elements and experiencing difficulties in catching up.

202. The standards of current work are about average at both key stages. However, attainment, overall, could be significantly enhanced if pupils were provided with more opportunities to engage in extended writing. This is particularly important for higher achievers and needs to be addressed across the key stages. Examination of pupils' work indicates that there is little evidence of extended writing. This impacts negatively upon standards of achievement at GCSE. However, there is clear evidence that this is being addressed by the department, as evidenced by the new system which is being set up as part of the Humanities Progress Record. This is being trailed by the head of department and the RE co-ordinator. It is intended that there will be three in-depth assessments, which will be assessed through comments and levelled with a target linked with the Agreed Syllabus. This is an extremely positive and significant initiative, which should be extended to all teachers as soon as possible.

203. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have a sound understanding of the beliefs and practices of the major faith traditions and are able to reflect critically on wisdom and truth claims belonging to these faith communities. They effectively explore right and wrong, within religion and human experiences, especially in those modules relating to the environment, creation, prejudice and discrimination. By the end of Key Stage 4 they have developed their own sound perspectives, conclusions and responses to the issues raised by religion and human experience.

204. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good at both key stages. In Year 8 effective teacher direction, combined with excellent use of the whiteboard to highlight key points, enabled pupils to make good progress in their understanding of racism and prejudice.

Lessons were characterised by first rate planning and excellent pupil/teacher relationships which engendered high levels of positive response from the pupils, creating a climate where pupils felt confident to ask for help or seek clarification. In these lessons pupils with special educational needs (SEN) were making especially good progress, demonstrating that they had a clear understanding of what they had to do in order to improve. In one lesson the deployment of the Learning Support Assistant (LSA) was exemplary, with the teacher and assistant working collaboratively to meet the needs of the group. This resulted in all pupils acquiring a good understanding of the concepts 'prejudice' and 'discrimination' and the role of Christianity in combating these. In another well planned, appropriately paced lesson, with clear learning intentions, pupils were challenged to think about the Christian response to caring for the environment and made good progress in their understanding of stewardship. Pupils sustained high levels of concentration throughout, showing a real interest and enthusiasm for the subject.

205. In Year 10, there were good examples of effective lesson planning, which combined with good subject knowledge and excellent relationships, enabled pupils to make evident gains in their knowledge and understanding of absolute and relative moral teaching with reference to abortion and sex before marriage.

206. In one lesson, Christian and Islamic teaching were effectively explored and pupils encouraged to develop their own attitudes and values in these areas. Effective use of video and related worksheets enabled pupils to think reflectively about Christian, Muslim and Hindu beliefs on sexual relationships. In addition, the high expectations set by the teacher encouraged pupils to think critically and empathetically. The use of a young Muslim visitor enabled pupils to gain an insight into Muslim teachings on marriage and relationships. All pupils responded with enthusiasm and interest, and were encouraged to ask a variety of questions. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject was evident and elicited high levels of interest on the part of the pupils. In another lesson the effective use of focused questioning, elicited thoughtful and mature responses from pupils. Pupils were given rich opportunities to consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding of religious teaching about relationships, with the teacher setting high expectations and challenging pupils to think critically and empathetically.

207. In a Year 11 lesson on the Christian attitudes to wealth, learning was impaired, in spite of good planning because of the pupils' poor listening skills combined with a lack of interest and enthusiasm for the subject. This needs to be addressed through more proactive marketing of the career value of the subject.

208. Overall pupils' behaviour and attitudes were very good or excellent at Key Stages 3 and 4. In all Year 8 lessons there was evidence that pupils were well motivated. They worked hard throughout, demonstrating a quiet enthusiasm for the subject. They listened well, were well behaved and thoughtful and took an active part in class discussion. Lower attaining pupils are especially well motivated and engaged by very good teaching. In Year 10 lessons, pupils behaved well and showed an empathetic understanding of different viewpoints. There was evidence of real interest and enthusiasm for religious education. Pupils were courteous and respectful to each other. The exception to this was in the Year 11 lesson mentioned above, where concentration and listening skills were poor and at times there was a lack of courtesy and respect for the teacher.

209. Leadership, management and co-ordination of RE is very good and has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The department has clearly articulated aims and values that support those of the whole school. The new schemes of work at Key Stage 3 have been effectively implemented and these offer good breadth and balance. Appropriate amounts of homework are set. Accommodation for the subject is good but there is a paucity

of textbooks throughout, but especially in Years 10 and 11. There are very good opportunities for developing pupils' social, cultural and moral dimension with reference to the different faith traditions. There are some opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually by reflecting on their own beliefs and the beliefs of others but this needs to be developed further.

210. The management of RE is good, encouraging clear direction for the development of the subject. The department has clearly articulated aims and values that support those of the whole school. The new schemes of work have been effectively implemented.

211. The subject has made good progress in a number of areas since the last inspection. The school is now fully meeting the statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 but is still failing to do so in the Sixth Form. Pupils' oral capabilities have significantly improved but the issue relating to limited writing opportunities stills holds. The use of ICT as a teaching aid, other than for personal research, remains underdeveloped but satisfactory progress is being made towards addressing this. Homework no longer lacks specific criteria to assist pupils in recognising achievement and storage space has greatly improved. Greater use is now made of the local religious community, especially in Years 10 and 11. This helps to provide a richness and breadth to the curriculum. The need to set aside time for more subject specific meetings, still needs to be addressed in order to assist non-specialists in the teaching of GCSE in this subject.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies and Leisure and Tourism

The provision of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 is **good** and recent improvements in staff, planning and teaching are raising levels of achievement

Strengths

- Programmes of study have been developed which are well suited to meeting the needs of students which may not have been met in the past.
- The successful recruitment of appropriately trained and experienced staff is raising standards of achievement.
- The development of greater variety and increased expectations are making classes more stimulating.
- Thorough monitoring of standards is helping to improve student learning.

Areas for improvement

- Poor teaching in the past has meant that achievement of students in Year 11 is disappointing.
- A significant minority of students were not entered for examination in 2001.
- In 2001 there was underachievement by both boys and girls in some classes.
- The school should provide a longer term vision and strategy for the development of these vocational courses.

212. Business studies has been a popular choice of subject for students in Years 10 and 11, but results over the last three years have been less good than national expectations. In 2001, 49% of students gained A*-C grades, but if account is taken of those taking courses

but not entered for examination this percentage drops to 35%. Few students gained top grades.

213. These results are partly attributable to difficulties in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified staff. Teachers without business qualifications have taught some classes, and the school's own analysis indicates that results from these classes have been poorer. Similarly students in Year 11 show a disappointing recall of basic business concepts and had difficulty in evaluating the relative merits of franchising for a growing small business. These students were also hesitant in contributing to class based discussions and responding to teacher questioning.

214. The school has, however, made significant progress in addressing these weaknesses. New appointments have been made, new courses introduced, and better planning ensures that classes are more interesting, leading to far better responses. Thus, students in Year 10 shown a good recall of basic business concepts such as the differences between merger and take over, and, basic business concepts such as costs, revenues and profit are well taught even to those students with poor numerical skills.

215. Foundation studies in leisure and tourism has been introduced and this is a good course for low achieving students. Information Technology is used well to help develop confidence and competence in basic skill development. Teachers offer good support to students and learning assistants make a valuable contribution to ensuring that the pace of classes is brisk and purposeful. These changes have led to a significant improvement in standards of achievement over a relatively short period of time.

216. The leadership and management of these courses are good. When the current leisure and tourism course is discontinued it will be replaced by appropriate new GCSE and certificate courses. A newly appointed member of staff is being given steadily increasing management responsibility supported through clear links to senior managers.

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

217. 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.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	13	100	96	77	46	8.46	6.57
Biology	3	100	88	100	34	8.00	5.25
Chemistry	10	100	90	30	43	5.40	5.90
Economics	3	100	89	33	36	4.67	5.52
English Literature	10	100	95	40	37	6.60	5.91
French	5	80	89	40	38	4.80	5.59
Geography	9	78	92	11	38	3.78	5.74
German	6	100	91	67	40	7.33	5.81
History	9	100	88	44	35	6.00	5.45
Mathematics	15	93	87	20	43	4.93	5.80
Physics	5	80	88	0	40	3.60	5.67
Sociology	12	83	86	17	35	4.17	5.32
Sports/PE Studies	5	60	92	0	25	2.00	5.09
Business (Post-16 VQ)	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.00	10.45

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

218. In this curriculum area, the school provides courses to AS/A-level in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics. The AS/A-level courses in mathematics and chemistry were inspected in detail, other courses were sampled.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The teaching is very good.
- Standards from a group of students actively and appropriately encouraged to pursue the subject are good.
- A level teaching experiences are shared locally.
- The progress of students is carefully monitored and fully supported.
- A level group sizes fluctuate but popularity is high.

Areas for improvement

- The powers of graphical visualisation shown by A level students should be developed.
- The targets set by the AS entries this year were not entirely helpful to A level candidates.
- The timetabling for GCSE retakes is not ideal.

219. Standards at A level in 2001 were around the national average from a group of students doing well at GCSE but including a few who had been entered at the intermediate level. In recent years results and group sizes have fluctuated, but results have always been satisfactory and occasionally exceptionally good. The high minimum is a result of good teaching, the peaks are caused by clusters of talented pupils. Gender mix has generally been good.

220. Results at AS level last year were disappointing but not out of line with the national unhappiness about the difficulty of this syllabus and its assessment. As the majority of last year's Year 12 students were taking AS on the way to A level, then this experience has depleted numbers now in Year 13. The present Year 12 contains about 30 students, taught in two groups, to match option systems. Both these groups show work of an appropriate standard for A level success. The work standards shown by the remaining Year 13 A level group suggest they will serve a normal range of grades in 2002.

221. GCSE retakes have a history of success. Good proportions of students achieve the elusive C grade and nearly all improve their exam grades. Teaching is a well prepared mixture of direct topic teaching and more individual or small group teaching of selected areas of difficulty. Timetabling difficulties mitigate against all the group being present at any one lesson.

222. Teaching is invariably at least good and often very good. In the best-taught lessons enthusiastic mathematicians displayed confidence in their own mathematical knowledge together with an appreciation of where the learning difficulties lay for the group and individuals they were teaching. Where possible practical demonstrations were used to fix concepts of

issues in students' minds. Repeated use of open questions encouraged participation and good board modelling using pictures, sketches and diagrams helped internalise methods and steps towards solutions. Checking strategies were also promoted consistently and effectively.

223. There was no weak teaching seen in the sixth form, but one less secure area of knowledge was exposed in a Year 13 lesson on curve sketching. The intention was to move rapidly through Cartesian examples onto parametric forms. The latter did not feature in this lesson as students needed considerable support to pull together all they were supposed to know about Cartesian sketching techniques. Slow progress was made but more experiences with graphical calculators or with graph plotting ICT software would strengthen students ability to forecast more curve forms from their equations.

224. Students are guided and supported in developing good study habits, for example in selecting appropriate problems to attempt and making useful notes for revision. Many students organise their written work and learning revision material well. Though some students do not readily volunteer contributions to lessons, they are all confident enough to respond when asked to. Both teachers and their classes offer a good supportive environment where, as one student said "They laugh nicely" if you say something stupid.

225. Students interviewed about their A level course were all happy with the subject and had realistic views about their own progress. They were analytical about the different course modules and had quite detailed self knowledge about where their own strengths and weaknesses lay.

226. Mathematics in the sixth form is well managed with specific responsibilities effectively devolved within the department. Courses are kept under review and the school is part of a local cluster that support each other and occasionally offer experiences to mixed groups of students.

Sciences

227. The main focus for this inspection was on chemistry. However two other lessons were observed – Year 12 in physics and Year 13 in biology. There are nine students in the Year 12 physics group. Standards in this group are just above the national average. Good skills in mathematics enable students to cope well with demands of the whole curriculum in physics. The very good physics teacher uses a wide range of resources to support the learning in the subject. There are 13 students in the Year 13 biology group. Standards in this group are above the national average. Students have well developed independent learning skills. The very good biology teacher uses her questioning techniques skilfully to challenge the students fully. A key feature of the biology teaching is the excellent relationships that exist between the teacher and the students.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Above national standards at both AS and A level.
- Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of chemistry.
- Very good teaching leading to very good learning.
- Experienced A-Level teachers who have adapted well to the new courses.
- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in chemistry.

228. GCE A-Level examination entries vary from year to year but are around ten students each year. Students' average points score have fallen from above the national average for the last three years to around the national average in 2001. The number of entries is too small for a rigorous analysis of this trend. Variation of standards can be explained in terms of variation in the quality of the students rather than any significant difference in provision. Nearly all students gained a pass grade over the last four years. Importantly the proportion of students, which achieved the highest grades, A and B, was close to the average. In 2001 100 % of students obtained a pass grade. Thirty per cent of students obtained the highest grades compared with 43 % nationally. The ratio of male to female students who study chemistry is broadly similar. Male and female students have performed equally well. Very few students have failed to complete the course. Students' achievement is above that which might be expected based on their performance at GCSE.

229. In summer 2001, last year's Year 12 took the new A/S course. The proportion of students who gained a pass grade was well above the national average. The proportion of students who obtained the highest grades was about the national average. Chemistry is an increasingly popular subject. There is one group in Year 12 (15 students) and one group in Year 13 (9 students). Chemistry is a cost effective subject in the sixth form. The number of students who have opted not to study chemistry in Year 13 is relatively low. The main reason why the students chose not to study chemistry was because they found the course too difficult. These students rightly took advantage of the new examination system to concentrate on those subjects where they are more likely to find success.

230. The standard of work seen is above average. Some students have difficulty with the level of mathematics required, which would enable them to cope well with the calculations in chemistry. Students would benefit from an extra lesson to overcome these problems with calculations. By Year 13 students have well-developed independent learning skills. Students are articulate and able to explain their thoughts clearly. They used these skills successfully when applying their knowledge of chemistry to the variety of competing chemical reactions, which occur during combustion in a car's engine. Students learn very well because the teachers use very effective and challenging questioning techniques. For example in a Year 12 lesson students learnt very well how the formation of free radicals can be used to explain how bromine reacts with alkanes, and the addition polymerisation of ethene. A key feature of this lesson was the way the teacher elicited information from the students by careful questioning and prompting. It is a testimony to the high quality of the teaching and calibre of the students that organic reaction mechanisms of this type can be understood so early in their course. Students mostly have a satisfactory set of notes from which to revise. These notes show how the students have been encouraged to improve their own learning techniques. The quality of these notes is variable and requires more intervention by the teacher.

231. Teaching is very good overall, and students learn very well. The principal features of teaching are excellent knowledge and understanding of chemistry, very good planning, and a very wide range of methods and resources used to aid learning. Teachers provide students with many opportunities to develop their basic skills of communication, numeracy, and ICT. The department makes good provision for the gifted and talented pupils through the provision of extension material. Students also have opportunity to extend themselves through the open-ended nature of the coursework investigations. In other years chemistry students have been entered for national competitions. These tests are very challenging and students have done well in them. The students value the frequent end of topic tests, which the chemistry teachers use to support their learning.

232. Students show exceptionally high levels of interest. Excellent relationships with each other and their teachers lead to a very purposeful working atmosphere in the classroom. In an excellent lesson about organic reaction mechanisms the students' response to this tutorial style of learning was excellent. Students are confident to take part in high-level discussions, which enable all students understanding to be raised to the highest possible level. Students had no difficulties in deciding whether to study chemistry in this school. They have great confidence in the school and the science teaching in particular.

233. The teacher responsible for chemistry has very good leadership and management skills. Both teachers work closely so that the transition to the new courses has been smooth. Teachers have more closely followed the Examination Board's recommendations with regard to coursework this year, after having the marks reduced last year. Teachers make good use of Hazcards but do not have sufficient written risk assessments for the experiments or demonstrations, which are carried out.

234. Since the last inspection the department have made the following improvements: the number of students opting for chemistry has increased, which is testimony to the confidence the students have with their teachers; standards have been maintained in spite of increased numbers.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

235. Design and technology product design is studied at AS and A-level, and covers elements of engineering and manufacture. The department also offers a GNVQ hospitality and catering course, (at Intermediate level), which covers some elements of manufacture. These courses were sampled only.

Design and Technology

236. Achievement and progress in the AS/A-level courses is very good. All students who took the AS examination in 2001 passed, with a good proportion of the higher A and B grades. The courses are well structured, productivity is good, and the quality of finished products, and work seen in students' portfolios is very high. Year 13 students presented their work, spoke fluently about their ideas, and gave clear concise evaluations of their product designs. These included extremely well designed and made domestic lighting products, using a range of modern materials in original and exciting ways. All students show great enthusiasm for the subject and talk with confidence about the properties of new 'smart' materials and trends in fashion and style. One Year 12 product design lesson was observed, in which teaching and learning were very good. The teachers' extensive knowledge of the subject enabled students to learn rapidly, using experimental techniques and a wide range of materials and processes. Design sheets and finished products show above average standards for this stage of the course.

237. The GNVQ hospitality and catering course is a new option, designed to meet the needs of students requiring a more practically orientated and subject specific course. One lesson was observed, together with a planned catering event. Satisfactory standards were achieved in both. Teaching and learning were good. The teacher presented the topic well, placing emphasis on the importance of health and safety and guiding students to recognise and anticipate problems for themselves. The catering event and subsequent evaluation provided good quality experiences and enlightenment. Future learning needs were successfully highlighted, for both students and teacher.

BUSINESS

238. The focus was on AVCE business courses but economics AS and A level were also sampled, showing high standards of achievement particularly in Year 13 where students are working at times at undergraduate level.

Business Education

The provision of business education in the sixth form is **good** and students are well supported in developing both personal and vocational skills

Strengths

- Teachers create realistic business contexts which help students develop valuable personal and vocational skills.
- The tracking and monitoring of student progress is highly effective.
- Good support is given to meeting the needs of individual learners.
- Teachers use teaching styles which provide students with good models to develop their own skills.
- ICT is well used to enhance learning of business skills.

Areas for improvement

- Longer term strategic objectives for the development for this section should be clearer.
- There is a lack of collaboration between teachers on different vocational courses.

239. Advanced GNVQ business was a well-established course in the school and although in 2001 there were no “distinctions” results over the last three years have been broadly in line with national expectations. AVCE business was introduced in September 2000 and unmoderated results indicate that standards are improving.

240. Students in Year 13 are able to take responsibility for planning and organising their final course work, which involves the development of a business, plan. They are confident in incorporating learning from earlier units, for example finance and human resource management, and make good use of their sound knowledge of the socio-economic changes which have recently occurred in Calne and surrounding areas. Students in Year 12 show similar confidence in using IT applications to improve the standard of the work in questionnaire design and data handling. They make good use of parental involvement in business and their own experiences of part time work. Students find it harder to develop the skills necessary to gain top grades in this subject.

241. Teaching is good. Two members of staff with very different approaches to teaching combine to bring out the best in their students, who are encouraged to be reflective and self critical but at the same time appreciate the discipline and tight deadlines often encountered in the business world. Planning of study to meet the demands of the new course is thorough and good use is made of local businesses and those in Europe to further develop students' business skills. The tracking and monitoring of individual students are used to set effective targets, and students know what they have to do if they want to achieve higher grades.

242. Resources to support learning are reasonable but students sometimes find it difficult to gain access to computers and the rooms used for teaching could provide a more realistic business environment as well as accommodating flexible ways of learning associated with vocational courses.

243. Longer-term strategic objectives and planning for this and other vocational courses are unclear. More could be done to raise the profile and contribution of vocational courses to the sixth form curriculum, and greater prominence could be given to the achievements of students on this course. Similarly, links with other elements of vocational provision are unclear and opportunities to benefit from common approaches, for example to induction and the development of links with the local business community.

244. The school has recently been successful in recruiting a well qualified member of staff with relevant commercial experience. However, the impact of the promotion of another member of staff, formerly responsible for business courses, will require careful management in order to ensure maintained improvement.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

245. In this curriculum area, the school provides courses to AS/A-level in physical education, an AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) in health and social care and hospitality and catering to GNVQ Intermediate Level. Health and social care was inspected in detail and the others only sampled.

Health and Social Care

The overall provision for advanced Health and Social Care is **good**. Examination results are above average and the majority of teaching is good.

Strengths

- Results and achievements in the GNVQ are good.
- Students' current standard of portfolio work is good.
- There is a strong teaching team with a wide variety of expertise.
- The course provision enables students to develop their own interests.
- The support provided for individual students is excellent.
- Relationships between students and teachers are good.
- The department has good outside links.

Areas for improvement

- Overall leadership and management of the subject area.
- The induction and management of new staff.
- Resources to support the delivery of health and social care courses.

246. Results at GNVQ and AVCE have been good. Although small numbers of entries make statistical comparisons unreliable, the 2000 average point score was above the national average. In 2001 all four students entered gained merits in GNVQ advanced level. Given the GCSE results of the pupils, these results represent good progress.

247. In work seen standards of the current cohort are at least average, with some portfolio work well above average. Year 12 students on the AVCE have made a good start to the course, a comparison of their coursework with their GCSE grades shows they are making sound progress. Year 13 students managed their learning well and understand the fundamental concepts of health and social care. Their coursework is thorough and well

presented. The majority use ICT effectively to produce good quality assignments, which meet grading criteria. All students are able to carry out investigations using a variety of sources.

248. Students have very positive views about the subject, and particularly appreciate the excellent feedback they get on their attainment and progress. The course offered meets the needs of students. Progression routes are good and students' value being able to pursue their own interests through a wide variety of optional units.

249. Teaching is good and there is a strong delivery team with good subject knowledge. Teachers know students well and are supportive of their personal needs. Theory and practice of health and social care are well related, enabling good learning. Lessons include a varied range of activities and benefit from strong outside links. Teachers encourage the use of ICT and statistics and graphs are used to good effect. Year 13 students are able to develop their own research topics. They can use and explain health measurements, interpret data and draw conclusions. They clearly recognise the links between units and build on them. Students receive excellent detailed feedback about the progress of their work so that they clearly recognise what they need to do to improve. Teachers are flexible, enthusiastic and hard working. They produce very well written assignments, though there is a shortage of stimulating and modern resources such as audio-visual aids.

250. The management of health and social care is weak. The teaching expertise is drawn from two subject areas with neither area taking overall responsibility. As a result there is no long-term development plan and no overall monitoring of the quality of course delivery. The day-to-day organisation of health and social care is carried out effectively by the teacher in charge without additional time, resources or status. The current delivery team is supportive and dedicated; this has ensured students have not been significantly disadvantaged by the lack of strategic direction.

251. At the last inspection, attainment and progress in all aspects of GNVQ health and social care were good; this is still the case.

252. There is no specialist base for health and social care containing resources for research, and no evidence of any visual material celebrating the work of the students. This, together with its location between two departments means it is difficult for prospective students to be aware of the opportunities presented by following the course.

SIXTH FORM PHYSICAL EDUCATION

253. In 2001, results in GCE: A-level were below average. In the past three years they have been mixed but tend to be low, with pupils achieving lower grades than in their other subjects. This represents disappointing achievement for these pupils. Only two sixth form lessons were observed and in both teaching and learning had unsatisfactory elements. Whilst the teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory, they have low expectations of how hard the pupils should be working and of their attitudes to lessons. In return the students' response was unsatisfactory. They had poor recall of facts showing insufficient preparation for their lessons and their written work shows limited independent investigation or research. They do not have the depth of knowledge or the study skills required at this level. The programme of recreational activities for Year 12 is satisfactory. The boys football skills are above average.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

254. In this curriculum area, the school provides courses to AS/A-level in art and design, music, drama and theatre studies. Art and design was inspected in detail and the former only sampled.

Art and Design

Provision for art and design is **very good**

Strengths

- Art teaching is good, with expert subject leadership.
- Teachers' are committed to their students – nothing is too much trouble.
- Results in 'A' level art and design examinations are good.
- Students' have positive views about the quality of art provision.

Areas for improvement

The department needs to:

- give attention to the quality of some of the written content and presentation;
- provide double periods to improve opportunities for extended development of practical work.

255. In the 2001 'A' level art and design examination all students passed the examination, with 77 % of students gaining A or B grades compared with 46 % nationally. This very good result follows a trend of above average success over the last three years. Current attainment in art in the sixth form confirms this trend, with standards seen that were very good, even for advanced courses.

256. Good levels of practical skills enable students to use materials and techniques confidently and fluently. Observational drawings have strong tonal and textural qualities and render detail accurately. Good observational skills, and skills in handling visual aspects like colour, tonality and composition, enable students to accomplish their expressive and creative intentions.

257. Students are able to follow their own particular interests and respond to the projects set in totally individual ways. For example, Year 13 work includes a large-scale painting of Futurist inspired machine imagery in striking black and white contrasts, self portraits against a variety of backgrounds inspired by Matisse, Monet, Manet and O'Keeffe, a multi-layered hanging sculpture using many different materials to create complex effects, and a multiple viewpoint collage inspired by Van Gogh. There are some very good examples of critical and historical knowledge and understanding. For example, a Year 12 study of Bruegel and Bosch, examining the symbolic and spiritual meanings within these artists' works and generating the student's own contemporary response to one of Bruegel's subjects, and Year 13 essays on the spiritual meanings of Eastern Orthodox Icons and the work of David Hockney. This long list of examples gives an idea of the breadth of sixth form study, made possible by the teaching approach that focuses on each student's individual creative development.

258. The quality of sixth form teaching is good. Teachers have generated a very positive atmosphere for creative work in the sixth form studio, which is always available for tutored and private study working. Detailed, evaluative and critical studio tutorials are provided to all students so that their individual pathways can be pursued productively. A great deal of interaction and discussion about the quality of work and its future course takes place within

these tutorials, and the expert support provided is highly valued by the students. All of the work set provides opportunities for creative, expressive interpretation, building skills and concepts progressively.

259. The department has recently changed from a craft based 'A' level course to a new examinations board that provides courses that meet all current 'AS' an 'A2' level academic criteria. The majority of the work seen fulfils all of these criteria, while the best work seen exceeds them. However, there is some work where the level of intellectual engagement with the subject is weaker, and this is most clearly seen in the quality of some of the written content and presentation, which is not reaching the levels required to gain the better grades.

260. Art in the sixth form is well managed. All of the recent changes of studio and examination board have been accomplished rapidly and smoothly. Students are provided with expert and experienced leadership. The school provides sufficient time for art in the sixth form, but all of this time is currently in single periods. Extra curricular art opportunities in the sixth form include open access to the studio as well as organised visits to galleries including recent visits to the Tate Modern and to galleries in Barcelona. A visit to Florence is at an advanced stage of planning. These international visits reflect the increasing influence of Language College Status on this area of the curriculum.

Drama

The quality of provision in sixth form drama is **very good**, but was only sample at this level.

Strengths

- High standards of performance are being achieved in the sixth form.
- There are extensive opportunities provided for sixth formers to perform to live audiences and so improve the standard of their work.
- Students learn well because they are stimulated and excited by the work and the challenge of public performance.
- As in main school, the strong leadership, excellent accommodation and resources and the extensive provision for extra-curricular experiences contribute significantly to the high standards of work seen.

261. The proportion of students attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2001 drama examinations was well below the national average because of the significant under-achievement of the boys in relation to boys nationally. The girls also did less well than girls nationally but not to the same extent. These results were not typical of the standards attained at GCSE in recent years when attainment has always been in line with national averages. No students took the Advanced level drama examinations in 2001. Previous years' results at this level for the small number of students studying the subject have fluctuated from well above average in 1999 to below average in 2000. All students attained a grade in the A to C range in the 2001 Advanced Subsidiary examinations and so achieved well.

262. The standard of work seen in the sixth form during the course of the inspection was very good. Year 13 students' command of movement, timing and facial expression when adapting work from Brecht's 'The Threepenny Opera' enabled them to develop characterization. They took responsibility for directing their own work. They collaborated well, evaluated each other's contributions and suggested ways to improve performance. The standards of work seen in Year 12 were equally high. The students were preparing for a

public performance of 'Lysistrata'. They were animated and challenged by the work and this found expression in the vitality of their performances.

HUMANITIES

263. In this curriculum area, the school provides courses to AS/A-level in geography, history, psychology and sociology. Geography was inspected in detail and the others only sampled.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The very good management of the subject.
- The commitment of students to their studies and the continuation of so many students from AS into A2 courses.
- The quality of fieldwork.

Areas for improvement

- The range of texts available to students in Year 13.

264. Students' performance in the GCE A level examinations over the past four years has improved, although in 2001 it dipped to below the national average. However in relation to the students' ability this level of attainment was good. In 2001 seven out of the nine students achieved pass grades of an E or better and one gained a B grade. Students' performance in the new AS examinations was good. All but one of the 24 students gained a pass grade of an E or better although none achieved the highest A grade. Furthermore, 21 of these 24 students have continued with their study of geography into Year 13. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work in Years 12 and 13 confirms the same picture of good standards and for each of the individual students' their level of achievement is good. The students are committed to their work, speak with enthusiasm about differing aspects of the course and are enjoying geography. They are clearly aware of the weaknesses in their written communication both in the precise use of geographical terminology and in the level of detail in their answers and they are working hard on this, as are their teachers. Students in both years are able to handle data with confidence and they are beginning to demonstrate the ability to think analytically about human processes such as the impact of multi-nationals on Jamaica. Their fieldwork has had a very positive impact on their learning.

265. The teaching of geography is very good. Strong features of this are very good teacher knowledge and planning. For example in a very good Year 13 lesson the teacher had carefully prepared a set of resources and tasks which enabled students to develop their understanding of the difference between glacial and fluvio-glacial deposition. The teacher's good use of slides and textbook and probing questioning led naturally into student discussion which in turn allowed the teacher to pinpoint and clear up their areas of misunderstanding. Throughout, the atmosphere was one that both valued and enjoyed learning. Teachers are very aware of the assessment demands of the syllabus and the learning needs of their students and these inform their teaching. Where possible teachers are making good use of up to date materials such as the recent article used in the preparations for the forthcoming Year 12 fieldwork in Devon.

266. The leadership and management of geography are very good. The head of geography, together with his team, has worked very hard to successfully develop the new AS and A2 courses. There has been good improvement since the last inspection report. An appropriate focus is being given to examination requirements and, with the exception of a wider range of text for A2, new resources have been acquired. There is a strong, shared commitment to raise standards and to succeed amongst teachers and students alike and teachers are giving very good advice to students on what they need to do to improve.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

267. In this curriculum area, the school provides courses to AS/A-level in English, English literature, French and German. English, French and German were inspected in detail.

English

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

Strengths

- High standards are attained in the Advanced level examinations.
- Students learn well because of the ability of their teachers to adapt their teaching approach to individual needs.
- The good range of extra-curricular provision enables students to extend their understanding and enjoyment of English.

Areas for improvement

- There are students who fail to develop an independent and critical personal approach to their reading of literature.

268. The English Literature Advanced level results in 2001 were above the national average. All students passed and nearly half attained grades A or B. This represents good achievement compared to their levels of prior attainment at GCSE. Males and females achieved equally well. These results represent an improvement on what was achieved in 2000 when examination standards were average. They are also an improvement on what was attained at the last inspection when the proportion of A and B grades was in line with the national results. Results in the 2001 Advanced Subsidiary examinations represent satisfactory achievement for the students.

269. During the course of the inspection the work seen of Year 13 students was in line with the national average. Most had developed an independent, personal approach in their evaluation of literary texts but there was a minority of students whose analytical skills were not sufficiently developed. Although confident and articulate in small group conversations, these students failed to engage fully in class discussion. This was seen in a lesson on the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson when a small number of students were passive learners and were dependent on the teacher for explanations of textual difficulty. As a result, they were not developing their own analytical skills sufficiently. They were, however, positive in their attitude to their work and keen to do well.

270. The work seen in Year 12 was also of average standard but the students were beginning to develop their own critical approach to literature. In one lesson seen the

standards were above average in terms of the students analytical ability. They were able to identify the comic devices used in the play 'Waiting for Godot' and comment perceptively on their dramatic impact. The pace and quality of their learning was good. Students in this year were responsive and their attitudes reflected the quality of the teaching they received. They worked well collaboratively, shared ideas and engaged readily in discussion.

271. The teaching of English literature is good. Teachers know their subject well, have high expectations of the students and support them effectively. The planning for the lessons seen was good and resources were always carefully prepared. Year 12 students responded to the high expectations and the demands made on them and shared in their teachers' enthusiasm for literature. The teaching of Year 13 was more directed by the teacher with greater emphasis on group activities. The specific focus on the group task and the organization of the lesson into learning units met the needs of these students and enabled them to progress at their own rate. Teachers of Years 12 and 13 are skilled in the use of questioning techniques to improve understanding of the texts being studied and they communicate their own sense of enjoyment of the subject to the students. Teachers also encourage students to make good use of computers to develop their skills beyond word processing.

272. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department provides clear direction to the work of his colleagues with the emphasis on raising standards through improving teaching and learning styles. He is well supported by committed and enthusiastic teachers who have high expectations of the students. They collaborate well to share good practice and maintain high standards. There has been an improvement in standards since the time of the last inspection when the number of students attaining grades A and B were close to the national average. Standards overall at Advanced level are now above the national average. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular provision to support students in their work and to extend their experience and enjoyment of the subject. The department is now well placed to secure further improvements in the quality of provision.

French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **good**. Results at A-level have been satisfactory and numbers opting for the subject are increasing.

Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Lessons are very well prepared and offer a good range of activities.
- Relationships within classes are very good and there is a good learning atmosphere.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' self-confidence in speaking is low.

Standards and achievement

273. Results in A-level examinations over the past four years have been comparable with those reached nationally and with those elsewhere in the school. On occasions, the highest grades have been attained. Numbers taking the subject to this level have been very low, and only one of the ten candidates in the years 1998-2001 has been male. Numbers planning to sit for A2-level in 2002 are still very low, but numbers in Year 12 are considerably higher.

274. The current Year 13 class of five students is not strong and finds great difficulty in expressing ideas clearly, accurately and fluently in French. This class shares with the Year 12 group the common difficulty of progression from GCSE to post-16 work. GCSE makes relatively modest grammatical demands and a higher-grade pass is no guarantee of capacity to master the full range of grammatical complexity of a foreign tongue. Immediately on entering the sixth form, however, great demands have to be made if students are to make sufficient progress. Verb tenses, adjective endings and appropriate vocabulary are serious hurdles. The Year 12 set is much stronger and may well represent a continuing trend of improvement in numbers and academic level, consequent upon the arrival of Language College status.

275. Students in this year-group respond well to good teaching and to the use of the foreign language as a means of classroom discussion. They are less hesitant in speech and willing to 'have a go' even at the expense of grammatical accuracy. Comprehension is generally good, and teachers do all in their power to make the foreign language accessible to students.

276. Teaching is always good. Teachers prepare their work thoroughly and with appropriate reference to the aims of the syllabus. Sometimes the narrow demands of the syllabus limit what can be done to improve students' grammar and there is a need for a rigorous, sequential and thorough teaching of basic elements of the language. In a number of cases, teachers are themselves native speakers of French. Teachers provide students with an excellent model of spoken French and are willing to use the language as a basis for a discussion of many of the issues of today which affect not only France, but the whole of European society: feminism, immigration and drug dependency.

277. Language College status has brought with it many advantages for sixth form students of French. Provision of ICT has expanded, resources have improved and the incentive to take a language in the sixth form has increased dramatically. This combination of good resourcing, good teaching, good accommodation, excellent subject leadership and the pivotal position now occupied by the subject in the school, augurs well. The previous inspection noted good work in French: this statement continues to hold true, with the prospect of considerable further improvement in the near future.

German

Provision for German is **good** and improving.

Strengths

- By the end of Year 13, students have a good grasp of the essentials of target-language grammar, and are beginning to be fluent in speech.
- Teaching is good, and staff are adapting to the new demands of AS and A2 exams.
- The Language College has brought new opportunities for student exchanges and contacts with Germany.

278. Standards and attainment. Results in German at A-level have, over the past four years, been very close to those obtaining nationally and in the school as a whole. Great care must be taken when analysing results from such a small number of candidates: only 13 candidates were entered for A-level over the whole period. Numbers in the current Year 12 are much stronger and may, with the new Language College status, be the forerunners of much greater numerical strength in German.

279. In both Year 12 and Year 13 students make good progress and show a real interest in their learning. Effective teaching, mostly conducted in the target language, makes serious demands on students and they respond well, often making great efforts to construct lengthier passages in German. In one lesson students were faced with some very rapid German, in a regional accent, via the tape-recorder, and made a good job of eliciting the information contained in it.

280. GCSE examinations make relatively slender grammatical demands on candidates, whose confidence is often severely tested by the AS and A2 syllabuses, which require a comprehensive knowledge of the grammar of the foreign language. Candidates find difficulty in mastering the complexities of German and there are still some weaknesses. Verb tenses and conjugations, adjective endings and word order, all familiar problems for English students of German, continue to be a challenge.

281. A strength is the quality of teaching. Teachers use the language with fluency, but not at such a speed as to make their students despair. Over a period of time students become used to native speech and students in Year 13 are able to cope with rapid German. Teachers are at pains to assist students experiencing difficulty.

282. Language College status has brought benefits for German teaching and learning. There is a flourishing link with a town in South Germany, and Year 13 students had had their work experience abroad there. There is abundant opportunity to use ICT and a wealth of good materials for study. Accommodation is good, and firm and enthusiastic leadership indicates that the opportunities of the Language College will not be missed.