

INSPECTION REPORT

MARDEN HIGH SCHOOL

Cullercoats, North Shields

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108627

Headteacher: F Lloyd

Reporting inspector: W K Baxendale
02928

Dates of inspection: 4th - 8th February 2002

Inspection number: 243491

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

Addendum to the Inspection Report on Marden High School 4th-8th February 2002.

Ofsted has upheld some parts of a formal complaint from the school about the way that my inspection team interpreted evidence during the inspection. As a result, I notify a change in my judgement on the quality of leadership and management of subject departments. This should now read 'satisfactory', see paragraph 70 of the report. As the original judgement had an influence on other aspects of leadership and management, I also, without requirement from Ofsted, notify a change in my judgement on the quality of senior leadership and management from satisfactory to 'good'.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 - 16

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Hartington Road
Cullercoats
North Shields
Tyne and Wear

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs A Carlile

Date of previous inspection: 10th - 14th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
02928	Mr W Baxendale	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students? What should the school do to improve further?
09039	Mr B Eyre	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20421	Mrs E Raitt	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27050	Ms V Blackburn	Team inspector	Science Equal opportunities	
16348	Mrs J Nichol	Team inspector	Art	
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Design and technology	How well is the school led and managed?
30978	Ms E White	Team inspector	Geography	
19915	Ms P Hooton	Team inspector	History	
22906	Mr B Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Physical education	
12408	Mr A Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
29510	Mr N Mayfield	Team inspector	Music	
15678	Mrs J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and students' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	23
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	25
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	26
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	31
THE DEAF SUPPORT CENTRE	31
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	33
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	37

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Marden High School is an average sized fully comprehensive school educating 912 boys and girls in the 11 - 16-age range. When they start the school as 11 year-olds, the students' attainment is above average, with no significant gender difference at this stage. Very nearly all the students are from a white-UK heritage and a very few have English as an additional language, with none at an early stage of learning the language. The students are from areas where above average percentages of the adult population have studied in higher education. The proportions from areas of high social class housing are well above average, although about 20 per cent of the students now come from further away; some of these are from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The percentage of students eligible for a free school meal is below the national average. The percentage identified as having special educational needs (15.5 per cent) is below average, mainly for moderate learning difficulties and deafness. The school houses a regional centre for the deaf: each of its 14 students has a statement of special educational need and 10 others also have such statements, a total broadly in line with the national average. The school is not experiencing difficulties in recruiting teachers. The school receives extra funding from phase 2 Excellence in Cities and has recently been selected to host a city learning centre.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a fully subscribed, popular school that fits well into its local community. It provides a satisfactory quality of education and standards are above average, but in the last few years it has not maintained its position in relation to the national trend of improvement. The headteacher has formed a good vision of the school's future direction, but management's steps to raise standards have not yet produced rigorous enough systems of evaluation. Nonetheless, the school produces very well rounded students who are appreciative of the good breadth of learning opportunities offered. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in mathematics are well above average and rising.
- GCSE standards are well above average in art and design, and physical education.
- Much of the teaching in mathematics, girls' physical education and history is very good.
- The students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good.
- Provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Preparations for students to live in the local and wider European communities are excellent.
- Provision for broadening the learning experiences of the gifted and talented outside school is very good.
- The work of the deaf support unit is very good.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching, learning, resource allocation and use is not evaluated rigorously enough.
- Teachers' expectations of students are sometimes not high enough.
- Standards in GCSE science are not high enough.
- There is too much under-achievement amongst students in Years 10 and 11, especially boys.
- Accommodation, for physical education especially, is substandard.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvements since it was last inspected in March 1997. Many initiatives to raise standards are starting to be effective. National Curriculum tests indicate that the standards of Year 9 students are rising, but GCSE results show those of Year 11 are not. Amongst students in Year 11, high attainers do well, but the achievement of others, mainly boys, is not good enough. Each of the key issues raised in the previous inspection report has been remedied: the much-improved curriculum and provision for ICT (information and communication technology) are satisfactory.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards are above average throughout the school. Achievement is satisfactory overall; many students achieve well, but there are some unsatisfactory aspects: some students, especially boys, do not do as well as they should in Years 10 and 11.

After declining between 1998 and 2000, the students' attainment in National Curriculum tests for 14 year-olds at the end of Year 9 is now rising again and is about back to the well above average levels recorded at the time of the previous inspection. Achievement in Years 7 - 9 is good in mathematics and English and satisfactory in science, where too little work is designed to stretch both the highest and lowest attainers. Improvements in mathematics, because of the good teaching, are greater than in English and much more so than in science, although the numbers of students making more progress than would be expected is good in these years. However, compared with how students do in similar schools, there is scope for further improvements, especially in science. In other subjects, attainment matches quite closely the best teaching; it is good in art, geography and history and satisfactory in all the rest.

Generally, the students write and read well throughout the school; they also understand and use technical phrases and words well. Their weakness is in confident speaking, mainly because they do not get enough practice. The students' handling of number is good: they practise thoroughly, for example in science and design and technology. The use of ICT is not widespread enough to satisfactorily improve learning in most subjects.

Attainment in GCSE is above average. Continuing improvements in mathematics results that are now well above the national average are matched by those in physical education, which are high in comparison with the national picture. Students also do well in geography and there are improving results in history that reflect some good teaching. The school sets realistic targets for improvement, but in 2001 it failed to reach those for Year 11; the pattern of results over the past four years has been below the national trend of improvement. Results in science fell to below average for the first time in 2001 and were also below average in French, where, mainly because the school enters a much greater proportion of its students than is now the case nationally, least improvement has been made since the previous inspection. In French and design and technology, the falling performance of boys is the major area of concern. Results are above average in all other subjects. The absence of an examined course in religious education is a weakness.

Students with special educational needs make good progress and reach standards expected of them in both GCSE and a Youth Award Scheme. Achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 10 and 11, but it is unsatisfactory for too many students, especially in science where they make no measured improvements on their standards in Year 9. Inspectors' work scrutiny and classroom observations reinforce a pattern of good achievement in English, mathematics, art, history and music, reinforcing the school's claim for arts college status. There is satisfactory achievement in ICT, geography and physical education and unsatisfactory achievement in religious education, as well as science.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: The students enjoy school, have very positive attitudes to learning and most want to do well, appreciating the many opportunities available to pursue studies and interests outside the classroom.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: Inspection evidence highlights the keenness most students have to do well. Very few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour occurred during the inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: Many show real initiative, are trustworthy and responsible individuals. The school produces some very well balanced, rounded students clearly well prepared for their next steps in life.
Attendance	Above average: Rates are better than the national norms and the amounts of unauthorised absence are lower than average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in English and mathematics and, although satisfactory overall, there are too many weaknesses in science teaching. The best teaching in mathematics carries the students along and gets them to think deeply and to offer solutions confidently. Good English teaching is characterised by a shared purpose, crisp pace and humour that also develop the students' capacities to think. Some good teaching in science also cultivates discussion and the production of original rather than copied work. Other science teaching underestimates the students' capabilities: spoon-fed, they lose interest, sometimes fail to complete work and so fall behind. Unsatisfactory expectations of students are also too frequently seen in modern foreign languages and design and technology, so the students lack confidence in the former and have weak design skills in the latter. Generally, the best teaching provokes very positive responses to challenging situations, often developing the students' moral or spiritual awareness and at the same time enticing them to further study. The contribution of homework to learning is unsatisfactory for some average attaining students, whose learning is inhibited because they do not have enough practice in writing at length, for example, to help them with coursework. Good teaching helps the students with special educational needs to make good progress and the deaf students learn well with the skilful assistance of signers and, in most cases, the good support of their fellow students. A weakness in organising learning to meet directly the needs of both the gifted and talented and low attainers when grouped in the same class hinders progress amongst Years 7 - 9. It is the main reason for the adjudged differences in teaching and learning quality in those years and Years 10 and 11.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: The curriculum meets statutory requirements throughout; it has a good range of basic courses, but vocational education, except for students with special educational needs, is weak. The very good out-of-school activity programme is well supported by students who organise some of it themselves. A full work experience programme extends the good provision for careers education.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good: Students benefit from some effective specialist teaching and good support as they move from one stage of education to another. There is very good provision for the deaf who make good progress and feel at ease in the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: Students have time for reflection; their sense of fair play is good and moral issues are raised very effectively in many lessons. Social development, through collaboration with peers and other students, and organising charitable events and active membership of the European Schools Family, is excellent. Very good cultural development comes through studies and often-enterprising work outside school.
How well the school cares for its students	Satisfactory: There are good procedures for child protection and to eliminate oppressive behaviour and effective systems for identifying students in need of extra support. The tutor programme needs refinement, better to support students' learning through discussions on progress with their tutors.

The school works well in partnership with parents, including those with students who have special educational needs. Good quality reports to parents, full annual reports compiled by the governors themselves and a comprehensive prospectus are good means of conveying information. Arrangements for consultations are in line with those in most schools and the headteacher and staff are very open to any approaches from parents with concerns.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory: The headteacher gives good direction to the school in achieving its aims of providing a positive, caring environment for students. Senior managers do not have a concerted enough role in evaluating performance.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: The governing body is generally effective in interpreting its legal duties, but risk assessment procedures are not conducted. The governors set challenging targets, know the school well and act effectively as its critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory: Managing improvements in teaching and learning and for planning the allocation of resources in subjects does not work well enough. It needs greater rigour and the involvement of all senior managers in quality evaluation and resources allocation and use.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: Specific grant is used well for its intended purpose, giving, for example, good provision for students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. In light of historic low funding levels, the uses of basic funding to make sure learning resources are sufficient and

standards raised are unsatisfactory.

The school is fully staffed and has a 'best large school' award for Investors in People. The unsatisfactory accommodation affects standards adversely in physical education, science and ICT particularly. The school has insufficient computers for its needs and the supply of consumables in design and technology is poor. Overall resources for learning are unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school expects the students to work hard and to achieve their best.• The students make good progress.• The students like school.• The teaching is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The way the school works with parents.• The amounts and regularity of homework the students get vary too much.• The range of out-of-school activities.

Inspectors agree with the parents that the school does expect the students to achieve of their best and to work hard, although there is a need for the school to consider ways to improve how it makes sure achievement is as good as it could be. Teaching is good with Year 10 and 11 students preparing their public examinations; it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Many students do make good progress, but, taken overall, progress is satisfactory: some students, especially boys do not make enough progress through Years 10 and 11. In science, for instance a number make no improvement after Year 9. The students do enjoy the school. Homework's impact on learning needs to be improved for some who find difficulty in completing it and for others who find the irregularity of setting homework unhelpful. The information for parents is, inspectors find, good and the range of out-of-school activities very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Around the time of the previous inspection in 1997, the average attainment of students starting the school fell a little. However, 11 year-olds' attainment is still consistently above average, with no significant differences between boys and girls. At this age, Year 6 national test results in English, mathematics and science are all above those expected, but there are comparative weaknesses in some other, non-tested subjects, for example, music and physical activities.
2. The school builds satisfactorily on Year 6 accomplishments and results in national tests for 14 year-olds in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 reveal a similar, above-average pattern. Careful analysis of the results, using the national and a university-devised system to check if students make enough progress through Years 7 to 9 shows the school adds clear value to the students' education during these years: most reach their target minimum attainment grades by the end of Year 9. The rate of improvement over the past four years is, however, below the national one, partly because of the continuing effects of the decline in 11 year-olds' attainment on entry, and partly because of a lack of rigour in how the school evaluates the quality of its provision. Results in each of English, mathematics and science declined significantly, but not uniformly after 1997, dropping first in mathematics in 1998, substantially in English by 1999 and continuously in science up to 2000. Although inspection evidence indicates a need for further effort in 2002, measures taken to stop the decline were effective in 2001 when results improved overall. They are now about the same as those recorded by the previous inspection. The proportions of students improving their entry standards by at least two national test grades have risen substantially, especially in science. The very good way mathematics is managed and its better quality of teaching are main reasons for improvements in the subject, where the 2001 national test results were higher than at the previous inspection. For example, more students gained higher national test levels (Level 6 or above) in mathematics than in English and science: the students are further ahead of their counterparts nationally in mathematics than they are in the other two subjects.
3. When compared with all schools nationally, the students' average points scores (a national system that allocates given points to different levels and grades in tests and examinations) in the national tests for 14 year-olds are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Comparing these average scores with those obtained by students in similar schools (based upon the proportions entitled to a free school meal), standards in English and mathematics are above average and average in science. There is scope for further improvements in each subject. Compared with the national picture, the overall attainment patterns of boys and of girls are, at this stage, identical in English, but the girls do slightly better against their gender nationally in mathematics and science than do the boys. However, the rise in standards, back to their 1997 levels, is mainly as a result of improvements in the performances of boys; the girls' attainment in each subject was still lower in 2001 than in 1997. The relative standards of Year 9 boys and girls contrast substantially with those of 16 year-olds, where the girls, reflecting the national picture, are much further ahead in each of these three subjects, and in most others.
4. Students with special educational needs usually attain the standards which their teachers expect of them, and in their whole class lessons they progress at the same rate as other groups of students. In small group and individual lessons they make

good progress in improving their basic skills. There are no students at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

5. Standards of work seen are above average overall in Years 7 to 9. Work seen in class and in the scrutiny of Year 9 written work confirms the students' well above-average attainment in mathematics: achievement is good, because the work extends them well. By the end of Year 9, students are able to use effectively what they have learned beforehand to improve their work and can, for example, express through very good technical terminology the meanings of graphs. Comparisons between work in class and in books in both English and science match the test results less clearly. Whilst achievement is satisfactory in both subjects, in English, the work in mixed-attainment classes does not sometimes stretch the higher-attainers sufficiently; standards are above, rather than well above, average at this stage. In science, there is too little work to stretch both lower attainers and the gifted and talented, as a result, standards are not as high as they could be.
6. In other subjects, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good in art, geography and history and it is satisfactory in design and technology, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and physical education, where the girls do well and the boys are further behind.
7. Good achievement in art is typified by the students' understanding the complexity of artistic processes and abilities to paint in distinctive styles. In geography, students understand the reasons why people choose to live in given places and the impact that settlement has on surroundings. In history, the students use correct vocabulary to explain effectively the ways life has changed since Roman times; they use knowledge selectively and improve their use of number and language very well.
8. Satisfactory achievement in class and scrutinised design and technology work show the students are confident in using tools and have good basic techniques; designing and evaluating their work are weaker. Less experience than normal in ICT mean that students are disadvantaged, but they do make satisfactory progress in using software and in typing. Most, by the end of Year 9, reach expected standards for their age. Some Years 7 to 9 students remember their modern foreign languages learning well, they are able to use grammatical terms and achievement is satisfactory overall. Too few are, however, able to compose either French or German with sufficient confidence, because they do not use practice in drama, music or verse well enough to help their memorisation and to raise their fluency. Satisfactory achievement in music builds on a below average standard on entry, but attainment at the end of Year 9 is still below that expected. The students gain some playing skills, but their composition is below expectation. In physical education there are some higher levels of performance but overall, achievement is satisfactory. Students learn the rules of games; they pass, dribble and tackle at rates expected of 14 year-olds. Not enough opportunities for independent work reduce standards in several subjects, including religious education where, however, satisfactory achievement shows through the gains in knowledge and understanding, for example of different world religions, and the students' fairly precise use of related technical language.
9. Standards of work seen in class and in scrutinies of work are above average overall in Years 10 and 11. The results in GCSE examinations are also above average. In collaboration with the Local Education Authority, the school has set quite rigorous targets for GCSE higher grade, A*-C, pass rates. It just failed to meet them in 2001 when, although still above average, the percentage of students obtaining five or more such passes fell in comparison with previous years. Results in the full, A*-G range were also just above the national average, as were average point scores. Analysis of results using the same analysis system as for Year 9 national tests shows that the

school did not add value to the students' education in Years 10 and 11. Although most girls did attain at least their minimum target grades, too many boys did not. Under-achievement on the part of boys is a cause for concern in these year groups. For instance, the list of students identified as gifted and talented has equal numbers of boys and girls in Years 7 - 9, with a greater number of boys in Year 8 – the year in which inspection evidence shows standards are highest. Girls eclipse boys in Years 10 and 11.

10. Reflecting the students' above average attainment overall, the school enters greater numbers for the GCSE examinations than the national average in science, English language and French. Under-expectation of students' capabilities on the part of teachers in several subjects affects the GCSE results students obtain: these have oscillated since the previous inspection. Average point scores comparisons with all schools are below the national pattern of improvement since 1997. The school's practice of entering students for a maximum of only nine subjects can prove a disadvantage in such comparisons, but the downward trend rightly concerns the school. The performance of girls is also disappointing, as they too have not kept up with national improvements. Whilst the school's average GCSE point score is above the national average, compared with similar schools it is below average.
11. The falls in 2001 higher-grade, A*-C, GCSE results and point scores are largely attributable to unexpectedly poor results in double award science that have fallen year-on-year since the previous inspection and are now below the national average. There was below-average performance in design and technology and French, although the school's policy of entering annually some 80 per cent of the students for an examination in French is, nowadays, abnormally high. Mathematics GCSE results are now well above the national average: continuous improvements over three years, 1999-2001, reflect the good quality of provision in the subject. Results in physical education are also high compared with national averages, and are the best in the school. Students also do better in geography than in most other subjects, though this is mainly attributable to the results obtained by the boys; the proportion of girls achieving B grades is low. In 2001, the proportions of students obtaining the highest, A*/A grades were substantially above the national average in art, media, English Literature (the school selection procedures are stricter than is normal in this subject), geography, German and physical education. In the other subjects, these results were about or slightly below average. The number of D grades was too high in science in 2001, but the mathematics and English Literature results were notable for the high proportions of students who obtained C grade passes, so raising the proportion of higher grade passes in them. English language results were only in line with national averages in 2001 and were lower than the year before. Boys' results were below average in history and in design and technology and those of the girls were above average; girls also did very well in food technology in 2001. The gap between the results obtained by boys and girls is also growing annually in modern foreign languages and girls, who do very well, attain much higher results in physical education than do the boys. The same does not apply to music, where more boys are taking part: results are above average for both genders.
12. Whilst achievement overall is satisfactory in the school, that of Years 10 and 11 students, especially boys, is unsatisfactory. The school's own analyses show a negative rate of improvement overall between the end of Year 9 and that of Year 11. In lessons observed and in the scrutiny of work, achievement is good in English, mathematics, art, history and music. It is satisfactory in ICT, geography and physical education. It is however, unsatisfactory in science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education.
13. Good achievement in English stems from the students' good reading, writing and

understanding. In speaking, too many, contrasting with their confidence in history, are less confident in making oral presentations. Confident explanations of how they have reached an answer, based on a broadening grasp of facts and ideas in the subject, typify the good achievement made in mathematics in Years 10 and 11. Too many students in Years 10 and 11 make no discernible progress in science because some teachers' expectations are too low: the students have too little opportunity to explore topics for themselves or to write in depth about their science learning.

14. Good achievement in art leads to improving observational drawings and clever adaptations of images. The students' growing perceptions of inherent implications and the application of theories produce good progress in history; students are keen to milk the teachers' of their knowledge and also to find out for themselves from many sources, including, for example, the Internet. In music, the students' good achievements in performing and composing show increasing sensitivity and structure. Satisfactory achievement in physical education shows as students learn new skills and refine ones they already have. Achievement in the GCSE course is good, especially for girls; some boys' coursework appears unlikely to be completed on time. From well above average standards in Year 9, students achieve satisfactorily in geography through Years 10 and 11. They understand tectonics and good fieldwork helps them to make progress in other aspects of physical geography, so they reach above average standards. In ICT most students are able to use skills they learned earlier to continue to achieve satisfactorily.
15. The non-completion of coursework contributes to unsatisfactory achievement in design and technology; their weaknesses in designing continue to inhibit progress. Inadequate resources also undermine achievement, as the students are unable to justify choices in circumstances where they do not have them! In modern foreign languages it is the students' lack of opportunity to practise speaking that leads, despite listening well, to unsatisfactory achievement, as they remain diffident in stringing together language of any consequence. The absence of an examination course reduces the motivation of students in religious education so their achievement is also unsatisfactory.

The contribution made by other subjects to the students' competence in literacy

16. Standards of listening, reading and writing are above average throughout the school. Speaking, though fluent, is sometimes not sufficiently clear and expressive in English and is, therefore, no higher than the standards expected at the end of Years 9 and 11. Provision for improving standards of literacy is very varied. The new literacy initiative is starting to have a positive impact on standards and the results of training are starting to permeate practice, although the school needs to follow this up carefully. Excellence in cities (EIC) money has been well spent to improve the standards of high attainers and the new post of Key Stage 3 co-ordinator is geared to implement both literacy and numeracy improvement, but monitoring effectiveness needs tightening. Literacy is consistently good and sometimes outstanding in history. Students discuss, give presentations, research, make inferences and explain the reliability of their sources, and where they write argumentatively and also imaginatively, as in letters advising Queen Elizabeth the First on a choice of husband, and in estate agents' advertisements for a Roman villa. Both history and modern foreign languages cultivate careful listening for information from audio and videotapes. The new learning resource centre staff is working hard to encourage reading. History, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology and physical education at GCSE teach vocabulary specific to their subject but other subjects do not concentrate on this enough. Across the curriculum overall there are insufficient chances for students to talk about their learning and pool ideas either formally or in small groups. Teachers do not require students to read widely enough and in design and technology weaknesses

in research keep standards lower than they should be. Although in humanities subjects there are some examples of students writing at some length from different perspectives, there is too little writing for different purposes in most subjects. In science, insufficient interesting writing tasks and too little attention to reading and accurate spelling contribute to slower progress than there ought to be in this subject.

The contribution made by other subjects to the students' competence in numeracy

17. The National Numeracy Strategy is not formally a feature of the work of departments across the school. Some preliminary discussion work has taken place and a fuller consultation exercise with teachers is planned. Standards of numeracy are above average. In science, graphical representation of data from stretching springs, distance time graphs, heating curves and evidence of understanding and using positive and negative axes are good examples of how the curriculum provides outlets for the improvements of students' number work. Power calculations with electric currents using formulae were seen in Year 11; the level of attainment with above average students was high. In a Year 8 class, students were able to substitute values into simple formulae, however this was weakened by the use of a calculator. In design and technology, students were able to measure accurately to produce good drawings and understood key terms such as square and parallel. Modern foreign languages provided some examples, for instance the identification of prices and an attempted discussion in French of the cost of cigarette smoking per day and thus per week. In personal, social and health education discussions (PHSE) about decision-making, a group of students used a frequency chart to record votes about equipment required for survival techniques.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The students' attitudes towards each other and their work have improved since the previous inspection and they are now very good. It is particularly evident in the work the students do outside their lessons because they are actively encouraged to take responsibility for the organisation of many high quality initiatives. In lessons, the students have good attitudes, but too much of the work they do is over directed by their teachers, consequently students, particularly those of average attainment, are sometimes stifled from achieving their full potential. There are too few opportunities for them to study independently or to extend reasoning when giving answers. In some subjects where discussion would develop fluency of expression, for example art, students work too often in silence and in modern foreign languages there are insufficient opportunities for them to develop verbal reasoning skills by giving discursive answers. When teachers do allow debate, the students demonstrate a very good ability to make lessons exciting: this was the case in a history lesson where Nazi brainwashing tactics were argued and debated vigorously, producing excellent learning. The school has a very good range of arrangements, for example, young enterprise and mentor schemes, to ensure that students are well prepared for the world of work and in making their choices for further education.
19. Behaviour in the school is very good and students become frustrated when a few inconsiderate peers occasionally disturb the pace of lessons; they find negative or challenging attitudes towards the school difficult to understand. Students have been invited to make suggestions to improve the awards and commendations system. Discussions held with them confirm that they feel that more emphasis should be given to encourage positive attitudes and less emphasis should be placed on awards for achievements. Support from tutors and heads of year is now enhanced by an EIC funded full-time learning mentor. The arrangement is working very well by helping some students to come to terms with sometimes deep-rooted and complex

difficulties. It is a strong contributory factor in the reduction in the frequency of exclusions. The two permanent exclusions that have been invoked in the current academic year have been necessary following an accumulation of acts of defiance and violence.

20. Students confirm that they have a high level of affection for the school, they say that its particular strength is the way staff work together to provide support. Students are perceptive to the challenges the school faces and are able to say what needs improvement. For example, they do not like the uninspiring atmosphere in too many classrooms; they complain that the heating system is inadequate and that some practical subjects are affected badly by a shortage of learning aids. Students show a high degree of tolerance and understanding but, just occasionally, they overlook the needs of the deaf students who are not always able to develop the richness of language necessary to enjoy some lessons fully. In many lessons, however, very effective signing helps deaf students, for example, to play full parts in group work in class.
21. The student's personal development is very good because, outside of lessons, they are treated as trustworthy and responsible individuals. They are, for example, encouraged to organise concerts and to write articles, edit and subsequently publish the school newspaper. Year 10 and 11 students volunteer to support their younger colleagues in the paired reading arrangements; they participate very well in the consultation process by being members of the school council. The opportunities they have to participate in European school family initiatives, participating in cultural activities with counterparts from several European partner schools, are exceptionally well developed. Similarly, the quality and range of physical activities is very good, as they prepare, for example, Junior Sports Leadership awards and colours.
22. Most students with special educational needs respond well to the support they receive. They have positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour in lessons is good. They establish good relationships with other students as members of school clubs and teams and through working together on such projects as the memorial garden. Year 10 and 11 students who follow the Youth Award Scheme make good progress in learning to work together constructively and in organising their time effectively.
23. Good work experience opportunities and other career-related experiences are offered to each student in a manner that encourages a self-awareness of personal aspirations. Students are encouraged to make informed, independent choices and opportunities combine to prepare them very well for their future careers.
24. Attendance figures for the whole school are above average and the amount of unauthorised absence is lower than average. The school does not produce a regular or complete analysis of attendance data; consequently a full evaluation of the variations in attendance was not possible. Scrutiny of the registers indicates that there appear to be relatively few very poor attendees. Registers are marked manually and heads of year follow up unexplained absences. However, the school has activated, with EIC funding, a rigorous first-day call system to alert parents of absences: this is improving substantially attendance in Years 10 and 11. Punctuality at the start of the school day is satisfactory, and teachers are quick to remind students of the importance of good timekeeping. Punctuality throughout the day is less satisfactory, Year 10 and 11 students do not always return promptly after lunch and the dispersed layout of the school means that it is easy to make plausible excuses for lateness.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. The overall quality of teaching and of learning is satisfactory: it has improved since the previous inspection, as the amount of good quality teaching is now greater. Teaching and learning are good with older, Year 10 and 11 students and satisfactory with the younger, Years 7 to 9 students. The main reasons for this discrepancy are because Year 7 students have not yet accustomed themselves to the ways of working in the school and because those in Year 9 are the least well disposed to learning. On the other hand, students in Year 8 are the best learners in the whole school. Teachers also build the examination requirements well into their teaching of Year 10 and 11 students who are the more highly motivated to learn. Only around one lesson in five, the ones that were very well taught, really capitalised on the students' often very good attitudes to learning.
26. The quality of teaching and learning improved significantly as the inspection week progressed; many teachers were keen to put into practice the comments and advice received from inspectors and senior managers, and did so well. The identification of such improvements suggests that the school itself could do more to monitor rigorously teaching and learning quality. It was also clear from observations that a few teachers had not adapted their teaching methods to take in newer teaching methods, for instance, using ICT. They were not helped by the absence, despite the efforts of a working group, of an agreed teaching and learning policy in the school. A major weakness is frequent under-expectation of students in a number of subjects.
27. Teaching and learning were excellent in two per cent of the lessons observed; they were very good in 19 per cent and good in a further 43 per cent. Satisfactory teaching and learning occurred in 31 per cent of lessons and they were unsatisfactory in five per cent of the 155 evaluated lessons. The students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour were good, indeed very good in Years 10 and 11.
28. Characteristics of excellent teaching were typified in an enjoyable Year 10 history lesson on how the Nazi party controlled German youth. Judicious use of video, artefacts and leading questions helped the students come to clear decisions and be in no doubt as to the dangerous nature and purpose of indoctrination, relating them to the tensions and feelings of actual people. Boys and girls both held their own in the vital, deep discussions that were beautifully encouraged by the teacher. The students' reaction to what they saw as 'a brilliant lesson' led to further reading with clear comprehension. Similar highly stimulating experiences were enjoyed in mathematics, learning about rotational symmetry and in physical education, learning about skeletal systems and structures.
29. Very good quality teaching did capitalise well on the students' attitudes to learning that were very good or excellent in 40 per cent of all lessons and at least good in very nearly 80 per cent! Teaching used these advantages best in mathematics, physical education, (most often for girls) and geography. Whilst in two-thirds of the modern foreign languages classes students' attitudes were at least very good, the teaching quality did not build on the conducive atmosphere to learning well enough: only one lesson in five matched the disposition of the students in providing very good teaching quality. A similar situation arose in science, although the students' attitudes were less positive in this subject, because of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching overall.
30. Very stimulating teaching and learning in English, in all years, went along at a rapid pace, retaining the students' attention and promoting their personal development and capacity to work independently and to think for themselves. The same applied to mathematics teaching and learning that challenged the students, got them to concentrate and to offer opinions by using a variety of different methods, for example, purposeful questioning, ICT and graphical calculators, in the process. Similarly in

science, where some very good teaching took place, such methods were also used effectively in science, so small groups of lower attainers, for example, learned thoroughly about circuitry. A feature of the best art teaching was the way students had to make their own tools to imitate primitive artists and art forms. Varied experiences led to very good learning in food technology as the students worked rapidly to produce good results. Personal research, monitored well by the teacher, produced very good learning in geography, music and history. In modern foreign languages, the best teaching placed responsibility on the students to produce their own constructions; it went along at a rapid pace and sustained their interest well.

31. A common feature is the teachers' good knowledge of their specialist subjects. The best teaching invariably helps the students to understand what is expected of them by sharing the lesson's purposes clearly. Instances of these purposes being written on the board and used as regular points of reference in the lesson were not frequent enough, so a means of assessing progress was often missed. It was only in mathematics that the regular allocation of sufficient time to conduct a thorough analysis with the students of what had been learned was common practice, showing the need for a monitored policy on teaching and learning.
32. Throughout the school, the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, although the use of ICT to support learning is not use widely enough. The main reason is the insufficiency of suitable, working electronic resources, but the allocation of a laptop computer to each teacher has gone some way to resolving the problem. Most teachers are aware of the need for precision in the use of language and emphasise this well. An area of concern is the paucity of opportunity for students to talk about what they are doing, characterised, for example, by teacher insistence on working in silence, for example, in some art lessons. The best teaching in history, geography and religious education makes sure that full participation in discussion improves the students' learning. Design and technology teaching promotes basic calculation and accuracy skills well and much science teaching is geared to the development of mathematical skill.
33. Lessons are planned well and thoroughly for Years 10 and 11 and satisfactorily so for Years 7 to 9. The main difference lies in the often weaker planning to meet the needs of Year 7-9 students in mixed-attainment classes; planning to stretch either the highest or lowest attainers is, for example, unsatisfactory in some science teaching. Whilst teachers' expectations are good in much history and mathematics teaching, they are unsatisfactory overall, as too often the work is not pitched as precisely as is needed to the students' attainment. Under-expectation characterises, for example, substantial amounts of modern foreign languages, design and technology, in Years 7-9, and science teaching, so the students' achievements are lower than they should be; too many students are uncomfortable speaking French without the crutch offered by the teacher who does not let them experiment. In science, weaker teaching relies too much on copying from texts and the students are not kept fully occupied. A lack of continuity of planning undermines the students' designing skills, so they do not improve sufficiently in design and technology; the learning of boys, in particular, suffers as a result.
34. Learning is satisfactory amongst Years 7 to 9 students and good with the Years 10 and 11, except for some boys. Many become more and more self-motivated, improving their concentration and independence: the heavy use of the learning resources centre is symptomatic of these attitudes: it is well used despite the frailties and under-provision of electronic learning aids. The general management of Years 7 to 9 is good and that of Years 10 and 11 is very good. As a result, the atmosphere for learning is almost uniformly positive, with some occasional lapses in Years 7 and 9. The pace of learning is satisfactory. In the best cases rapid work that demands full

concentration produces lively responses that keep learning flowing. Time and resources are used well to promote a high quality of learning and, when available, learning support staff complements teaching well. The students are ready to work, but their knowledge of how well they are doing is less good. Satisfactory amongst Years 10 and 11, but unsatisfactory with Years 7 to 9, the main problem is that teaching does not always make the students aware of their standards against National Curriculum levels. As a result students do not know what is needed to improve their performance. Whilst nearly all teachers correct written work conscientiously, the marking comments do not say how the work could be better or what needs to be done next.

35. The students, sometimes benefiting from the out-of-school study opportunities provided complete set homework satisfactorily overall, but sometimes incomplete work indicates inappropriate homework or weak follow up by some teachers. Confirming the parents' reservations, there are too many instances of non-completion of both home and course work by average attainers who do not get enough practice in writing for different purposes and at appropriate length. The effectiveness of homework in raising standards is, therefore, unsatisfactory for these students.
36. Students with special educational needs are often very well taught in small special tuition groups and in those main school classes where teachers have a good understanding of students' needs and know how to meet them. The good teaching is characterised by step-by-step guidance, regular review, effective questioning and well chosen learning materials, such as key vocabulary lists and close guidance on how to set out written work. However, these methods are not used consistently within or across departments. Students with hearing impairment are well integrated into the lessons, sometimes without adult support, and they usually complete their work successfully. This was well illustrated in an English lesson on media texts, where the teacher's clear articulation was an effective aid to communication. Individual education plans give teachers a composite picture of students' strengths and weaknesses but the agreed targets are not always sufficiently specific and measurable for teachers to make effective use of them in planning their lessons.

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

37. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for all students. Very good additions to the basic provision make significant contributions to the students' personal development, helping to produce the very many well-rounded young persons who leave as 16 year-olds, mostly to continue their studies in local colleges. Good improvements since the previous inspection have led, for example, to the now satisfactory provision for religious education, ICT and physical education and increased time for music and art. Close analysis of syllabuses has eliminated repetitions of topics between subjects although some still persist between what students did in primary schools and aspects of work in Year 7.
38. Full provision for all is strongly emphasised and generally well founded in the school's curriculum, with very nearly all students having full access to everything on offer. The only exception is that some of the profoundly deaf students are disappplied from the study of a modern foreign language. The organisation of smaller classes for slower learners helps their progress in English, mathematics and science: some of the best teaching and learning in the school occurs with these classes.
39. Winning solid approval from parents, there are very good arrangements for the transfer of students starting the school from the primary sector. Of particular note are clear communications, effective preliminary visits and summer schools to promote

literacy and numeracy.

40. Satisfactory provision for Years 7 to 9 includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, complemented by a good programme of personal and social education that continues for each of the five years, 7 to 11. It has relevant aspects of personal development, with sex education and drugs awareness fully covered. German is introduced as a second modern foreign language for about three-quarters of each of Years 8 and 9. The very low take up of a second language in Years 10 and 11 hardly justifies the erosion of time from arts-related subjects in Years 7 to 9. Lower attainers enjoy helpful extra, specifically targeted sessions to improve key literacy/communication skills instead of German study.
41. The school has satisfactory procedures for teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills, having identified a slight downward shift in the attainment of students on entry, against the national trend. There are ongoing relevant literacy training sessions and the appointment of a keen co-ordinator has provided early, encouraging steps to develop shared practice in fostering language and number amongst all students. Experiments with single-sex geography, history and religious education lessons for high attainers in Year 8 are highlighting the need to raise teachers' expectations of all students throughout the school. The practice of grouping students in otherwise mainly mixed-attainment classes in Years 7-9 is not always matched by teaching that caters for the full breadth of attainment: some students make less progress than they could, as a result.
42. The school provides a satisfactory basic curriculum for Years 10 and 11 students. There are enterprising extensions, through EIC funding for the gifted and talented in, for example, A/S mathematics and music courses, shared with the local sixth-form college. The highest attainers are able to study separate physics, chemistry and biology: they are uniformly successful at GCSE. Selected high attainers also do a one-year media studies course in these years. Although provision complies with statutory requirements, the absence of an examined course in religious education is a weakness: it affects adversely students' motivation in the subject. A special Youth Award course (ASDAN) successfully caters for some low attainers and collaborative provision with further education institutions helps, each year, to retain a few students who would otherwise be in danger of falling out of education prematurely. EIC funding provides a full-time learning mentor for some other students identified as underachieving. Now operating from the start of Year 11, other teacher mentors are lending often-effective extra support to these and other students. Other relevant ambitions to broaden the work-related provision for Years 10 and 11 students are inhibited by budgetary constraints: the school offers no nationally recognised vocational courses under GNVQ accreditation, but a basic food hygiene certificate and a 'Clait' ICT course are run successfully. This is a weakness. Good bespoke advice in careers education is well complemented by a full programme of work experience. The award of the 'national guidance standards award' is particularly noteworthy in this respect.
43. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. Students benefit from individual tuition and from working in small groups, where there is a strong emphasis on improving basic skills. A flexible curriculum in Years 10 and 11 enables students to achieve success not only by taking the vocational course but also a modified range of subjects at GCSE. The school's good relationships with its local primary schools and colleges ensure that students make a smooth transition from one stage of education to another.
44. Students with special educational needs have good opportunities for personal development through taking part in activities aimed at improving their social skills such

as sports, study trips and school clubs. They also benefit from having a hospitable base in the learning support area where they meet in the lunch break for the changing of reading books and informal discussions with staff.

45. Historical limited resources severely constrain the breadth and quality of the curriculum on offer in certain subjects. In design and technology, old computers and very limited supply of resistant materials inhibit flexibility. The provision for food technology is, however, good and the school is able, despite deprivations, to develop well students' technical skills of accurate drawing, precise use of number and technical vocabulary. The physical education programme is severely affected by recurrent floor problems that have put the gymnasium out of commission for lengthy periods and so curtailed the curriculum.
46. So far unsuccessful, but very detailed planning for arts and media college status has given the school very thorough practice in the preparation of bids to overcome financial stringency and improve provision. With strong local support from schools and industry, the school's imaginative proposals to act as a City Learning Centre have recently been approved, so giving scope for some impressive ICT-based plans to be put into practice.
47. The school's basis for consideration as a media/arts college is substantial. The school provides very well for students to organise their own activities in a Christian Union, computer clubs, musical and drama productions and talent shows. Good links with local businesses not only give support in bidding for grants, but also are expressed in the extension of the art curriculum and the creation of a delightful memorial garden.
48. A very good range of out-of-school activities includes sports and other clubs, homework classes and holiday refresher courses, for example, mathematics weeks. Young enterprise schemes operate well each year. Imaginative, challenging extra activities for the gifted and talented are a strength of this aspect of the school's provision. Very good participation in a European School Family project, financed by the EC (European Community), gives the school a clear international cachet, with students enjoying outstanding opportunities to work closely with their peers in Scandinavia, Germany and the Czech republic in a dynamic programme of collaborative activities. No one is denied participation through financial hardship and the programme's contribution to the students' personal development is excellent. International activities now stretch to the Far East.
49. The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The opportunities offered for students' social development are excellent and are a strength of the school.
50. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Students have time for quiet reflection in the regular assemblies and there are examples of good opportunities for spiritual development in the way in which the "thought for the day" is presented in the form tutor sessions. Students take part in the Christmas carol service. Subjects such as English, religious education and history make a good contribution to the development of students' spiritual awareness through well planned opportunities when discussing poetry and religious beliefs and visiting the battlefields of the First World War. However, not all departments include opportunities for spiritual development in their schemes of work.
51. Moral education is very good. Students learn about right and wrong in assemblies and the personal and social education course, and subjects such as science and design and technology. Staff are good role models in their care for individuals and insistence

on good behaviour. A strong sense of fair play is developed in team games. Moral issues relating to the sanctity of life and the injustices of discrimination are explored in religious education, history and English.

52. The provision for social development is excellent. Subjects such as English, music and science offer very good opportunities for collaborative working and deaf students are well integrated into main school lessons. Older students help younger ones to enjoy board games and reading and students of all ages represent the interests of their classmates on the school council. Students in the Deaf Support Centre develop their social skills through membership of clubs, cultural presentations and work experience placements. Year 7 students learn to become responsible organisers when they host their regular coffee mornings in aid of charities. International relationships and activities are of huge benefit to students' social development.
53. There are very good opportunities for cultural development. Students benefit from a comprehensive programme of activities that are linked to the curriculum. For example in history, Year 7 students build up a clear picture of Roman beliefs and traditions, and the impact of native American culture is studied at GCSE. Students learn about Hindu and Buddhist customs and enjoy presentations from members of local faith communities while musical offerings range from classical orchestral works and madrigals to rock and original compositions. Modern and pre-twentieth century literature is studied in English and students gain experience of media writing through working on the school's newspaper. Students also enlarge their cultural horizons through field studies, visits to the theatre and regular work with their European counterparts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

54. The school provides a good level of educational support and guidance and it has good procedures to eliminate aggressive behaviour. Good procedures for child protection are co-ordinated and managed well. Key members of staff have all undergone formal training and the latest "code of practice" requirements are fully understood. The teachers and support staff are alert to their duty to protect students from harm although some routines, for example, risk assessments, are not always given the attention they deserve.
55. The school's monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is satisfactory. Teachers know their students well, and teachers' mark books and registers give a good indication of the relative performance of individuals in each class in terms of attendance and attainment. Support sessions are made available outside of normal class times to students who, for a variety of reasons, need extra help in subjects. Students speak very well of their teachers' willingness to provide extra support as required. Support and guidance through the tutorial system is, however, weak. Students do not have regular, formal meetings with tutors to discuss academic progress against their targets. Tutors and year heads do not have enough information from subject leaders, nor enough opportunities to discuss every student's overall academic performance in order to take necessary action.
56. The school has effective systems for identifying students in need of extra help and students receive good support. The academic and personal progress of students on the special needs register are regularly and carefully monitored and subject teachers make detailed reports of students' current achievement at the time of annual reviews with parents. Support staff have a strong commitment to promoting the well-being of the students in their care and are successful in promoting an atmosphere of trust which gives students the confidence to succeed. The close working partnership of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the learning mentor ensures

that other students whose attitudes are a cause for concern are also supported through advice and monitoring. Individual education plans are in place for all students who need them but although they provide teachers with very helpful information on students' needs and advice on teaching strategies, there is insufficient attention paid to developing specific, measurable targets. There is good liaison between the school and the local support services so students have access to a wide range of expertise for their different needs.

57. First-aid arrangements are satisfactory. Fire drills are conducted at satisfactory intervals. Safety on outings is given proper emphasis. The inspectors discussed departmental safety matters with appropriate members of staff and their attention was drawn to areas for improvement.
58. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The present system of shared responsibilities amongst heads of years and other key staff does not work crisply because management responsibilities plus teaching commitments frequently and understandably take precedence. An EIC-funded initiative is improving attendance in Years 10 and 11, however. The absence of an electronic data collection system makes it difficult for information to be collated quickly and whole school attendance trends are not evaluated systematically. The school has identified the need to improve this aspect, but costs are prohibitive.
59. Behaviour management procedures are satisfactory; the behaviour policy has clear guidelines to define what is acceptable and how transgressions are to be addressed. Tutorial time, PSHE lessons and student consultation all combine to ensure that the system for making commendations is understood. Strategies to help students to modify their behaviour are less well applied; in a small number of lessons this was exploited. Students who have complex behavioural or emotional problems receive very good confidential support from their learning mentor, creating a calmer atmosphere in lessons. The parents who attended the meeting with the registered inspector said that a few lessons were disrupted by misbehaviour, but overall behaviour in the school was good, during the inspection. Inspectors find behaviour and attitudes in class to be very good. Parents felt that the balance between sanctions and rewards should be reviewed. The inspectors and students agree with this view: it is a key issue for the school council.
60. The procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Each subject has its own assessment policy statement, developed with reference to broad guiding principles for the whole school, which are effective in ensuring satisfactory day-to-day marking of students' work, and which result in clear indications about how each student is doing in relation to others in the class. Many subjects, however, do not adequately specify targets for the improvement of students' attainment. The lack of use of attainment targets in Years 7-9, which should offer clear statements about how students can raise their levels of attainment, means that teachers have unclear expectations about what their students should be able to do. Uncertain expectations among teachers cause, for example, work to be pitched at an undemanding level in geography, modern foreign languages and religious education, do not extend the higher attainers enough in science, nor take sufficient account of the lower capabilities in the subject of some students in science. Students in most subjects are unclear about their National Curriculum attainment levels in Years 7-9, and where they can give a level, such as in history, they are not clear about the skills they have shown to warrant that level. Students do not, therefore, have a clear enough understanding about what they need to do to improve in Years 7-9. The expectations of teachers and students are much better by Years 10 and 11 when they have examination specifications to guide them: assessments in these years are mostly accurate and helpful.

61. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment information to help to plan its curriculum. This is becoming increasingly effective in Years 10 and 11, where each student has a target minimum GCSE grade based on his or her previous attainment in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 and reflecting the nationally expected “added value”. Teachers are intended to monitor students’ current performance against target grades, and by subject departments, to analyse examination performance against targets to help plan for improvement, but this is not consistently done. Senior managers are aware that the use of such information within departments has been unsophisticated, and have set in place appropriate programmes to improve performance in this area. For example, all departments were expected to complete a formal review of Year 10 students’ performance against target minimum grades after their summer 2001 examinations. Returns indicated significant changes: a business communication systems course to suit the needs of students who found the traditional business course too challenging; either English literature, media studies or a fast track programme, depending on students’ assessed capabilities, are good results. More generally, the Youth Award Scheme has been designed for students for whom the standard programme of GCSE options is seen to be inappropriate. Teachers are to be given further advice in their use of assessment data in training days for heads of department later in the year. Target minimum grading is to be extended to Years 7 - 9, where the current lack of clear use of attainment targets makes measuring of performance unsatisfactory in many subjects. The school has also taken part in a “value added” pilot initiative, which has enabled it to develop good systems for measuring students’ achievements; these have not been shared with all departments.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. Parents have positive views of the school. The registered inspector received a number of letters expressing appreciation for the efforts made by the school to support their child’s academic progress and for the very good opportunities the school provides for out-of-school activities; they believe, very justifiably, that this enriches their child’s life.
63. A significant number of responses said that parents are not well informed about how their child is getting on and that variations in the quality and timing of homework caused problems. Scrutiny of the reports provided for parents confirms that they are of good quality. They have several very good features, for example, a full description of the topics that have been or are to be studied for each subject. The reports by individual tutors evaluate the progress and attainments of each student against these headline parameters; grades of attainment are also provided. The slight weakness is that no evaluative comment is made to say if predicted levels have been achieved. Some parents feel that the opportunities for formal discussion and review are too few and that they are not well timed in the school year. Inspectors find that both the formal and informal consultation procedures are satisfactory. They are consistent with the ones usually encountered in secondary schools and inspectors consider that the procedures for consultation when concerns arise are well established.
64. The school has a good partnership with parents of students with special educational needs and keeps them well informed of their children’s progress. Parents contribute to their children’s annual reviews and usually attend the meetings. They appreciate the work done by teachers and support staff and are supportive of their children’s efforts to succeed. Generally, the relationships with parents of deaf students are very good; they are appreciative of their child’s progress and the support available. The parents of one deaf student expressed some reservations regarding the provision and support their child receives; feeling that poor quality signing is holding their child back,

for example, in the acquisition of French. Other observations indicated that senior managers are alert and supportive of deaf students' needs and that means of communication, other than signing were equally important in the school's provision.

65. Efforts to sustain support for the fund raising activities of the 'Friends of Marden' Association have proved unsuccessful owing to a lack of parental support. In earlier years, large sums were raised to enhance aspects of school life. For example the 'Friends' made a substantial financial contribution towards the shower refurbishment programme and purchases of the school minibus and of books.
66. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report both include the complete range of information required and emphasise well the good pastoral support provided for students.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. The caring, highly committed headteacher gives good direction to the school in achieving its central aim of providing a positive environment that produces mature students who are well prepared for their next steps in education or training. Careful management since the previous inspection has enabled improvements to be made in the quality of education and the range of planned curricular opportunities, but has not raised overall standards in line with the national trend. A high proportion of the parents who completed the questionnaire considers that the school is well led and managed. However, the senior management team and heads of subject are insufficiently rigorous in the evaluation of the quality of teaching and in determining whether standards are high enough. Leadership and management of the school are, nonetheless, judged as satisfactory.
68. At the time of the previous inspection, the leadership and management of the school were found to be bringing about positive changes in the culture of the school. Communications in the school were improving, and a "visioning" planning process had set out to involve all who had a relationship with the school in a process of consultation and planning for future improvement. The visioning process has continued to drive longer-term strategic developments since that time, and has produced significant improvements in the school, for example, in the learning resources centre, better computer resources, the school council, the European Schools Family and the re-awarding of Investors in People status. The school has also made very good progress in implementing its procedures for the performance management of teachers.
69. The headteacher and senior staff have clear aims for the school and a good commitment to its improvement. These are stated precisely in the annual school improvement plan. This defines clearly the school's priorities in terms of:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning;
 - successfully implementing the literacy and numeracy strategies;
 - more effective evaluation by departments of their strengths and weaknesses;
 - sustained development of the culture of the school;
 - the achievement of the City Learning Centre and media arts school status.The plan also refers to the on-going work by individuals and working groups in considering other aspects of the school. Important developments have not yet produced results, particularly with regard to the crucial need for a clear teaching and learning policy to be fully implemented in the classrooms.
70. The overall quality of the leadership and management of subject departments is unsatisfactory because the evaluation of performance is not stringent enough. There is a clear link within the school between good subject leadership, good teaching and

students' good levels of achievement. Where leadership and management are very good, as in physical education and mathematics, standards are higher; some effective monitoring of teaching occurs and clear targets are set for students' achievements. Similarly, in English, good leadership is characterised by active arrangements to share ideas about teaching, but the evaluation of practice is not thorough enough. In design and technology, where leadership and management are unsatisfactory, there is no established system for the monitoring of teaching and sharing ideas, and planning throughout the subject is weak. The overall quality of development planning within subject departments is unsatisfactory, partly because of a lack of middle management expertise in planning for improvement, and partly because there is no clear system for departments to communicate their resource needs to senior managers and on to governors. Extra EIC grants to augment resources were not requested by some under-resourced subjects, such as design and technology, a further indication of unsatisfactory middle management.

71. Leadership and management of the learning support department are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) gives clear educational direction, so daily routines run smoothly. The development of staff expertise is carried out efficiently through the work of the department and the school liaison group, which latter representatives from each subject. However, the SENCO's task of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of special needs provision is hampered by insufficient time for doing it. Record keeping is efficient and statutory requirements in respect of students with statements of special educational needs are met. Accommodation for administration, special tuition lessons and social activities is adequate and the use of display to celebrate students' achievements is good. Supplies of books, learning materials and computers are satisfactory. The department recognises that immediate priorities for development relate to improving the quality of target setting for students and continuing the work to improve teachers' expertise in meeting students' individual needs effectively.
72. Departmental development plan priorities reflect the school improvement plan. However, because of past financial constraints, all funding has been devolved to departments and there has not been money available, for which departments can bid, in order to finance special developments or one-off capital expenditure. Senior managers have, therefore, not been able to exert control over priorities for developments within departments, some of which have not established systems to plan the allocation of their funds to satisfy their longer-term needs. In art, design and technology and science, all subjects with a strong practical component, there are significant shortages or poor quality resources as a consequence.
73. There is not a coherent system of line management running through the school. Responsibilities for monitoring the performance of individual subjects are therefore fragmented within the senior management team. The deputy head (curriculum) has regular meetings with heads of departments to discuss development issues, but it is the assistant head (assessment) who holds the data on subject performance and the deputy head (resources) who determines what the subjects have to spend on their needs. The assistant head (staff development) plays an important role in supporting the training of staff but does not implement a rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. Overall accountability of performance in each subject is, therefore, not strong enough, and the school does not take effective action to identify weaknesses in academic performance and to remedy them.
74. The governing body is generally effective in fulfilling its statutory duties although all legal requirements for risk assessment throughout the school are not fully met. Governors are fully involved in important strategic decisions such as the purchase of laptop computers for all teachers. In order to gain greater insight into the work of the

school, governors are linked to subjects, and make visits at least annually, as a result of which they produce formal written reports to fellow governors. Such visits provide an effective means for governors to develop their good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and for subject departments to communicate their needs to the governing body. The governing body is very effective in the oversight of provision for students with special educational needs; this provision is evaluated in detail within the annual report to parents, which itself is of a very high quality. Governors work supportively and to sound effect as the school's critical friend. Governors set the school appropriately challenging academic targets, which most recently the school has not been able to meet; the headteacher is required to give – and does so – a full account of the reasons for this lack of success and preparations to redress the situation. Governors have a strong commitment to the school's aims and values and relationships between the governing body and the school are good.

75. All departments are fully staffed with appropriately qualified teachers. Where supply staff are employed, they too are qualified. Administrative and technical support are adequate for a school of this size. Staff attendance is satisfactory and the procedures for dealing with absences are good. Teacher recruitment is comparatively easy and there are no problems of staff retention.
76. The school received the Investors in People “Best Large School Award” and its Threshold procedures were described as “embedded” by the Assessor in 2001. New and newly-promoted members of staff are assigned a mentor to guide and assist them when they are new in role. The senior manager responsible closely monitors the targets set for each member of staff and maintains a clear and well documented view of their development needs, keeping a comprehensive record of training undertaken: this is good practice. Every teacher possesses a personal development file, containing the school, departmental and staff development plans. The government-issued observation form for the single classroom observation per year does not include explicit reference to the levels of expectation set by teachers nor whether or not these are pitched high enough. Observations and evaluations are more frequent in some departments, but not enough to guarantee the sharing of good practice and improvements in teaching required across the whole school.
77. The quality of resources for teaching is unsatisfactory. There are good resources for teaching history and music and satisfactory resources in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and geography. However, the provision for science teaching is poor in general, with only two teaching computers. In ICT there are not enough computers to equip the teaching rooms and there are no facilities for students to learn about more refined applications. In design and technology, the shortages of suitable materials have an adverse impact on learning. Resources for art are only sufficient for teaching two-dimensional work and the sinks and book stock are in a poor state. The provision of consumables for practical subjects is also a particular weakness that has also been adversely affected by historically low funding.
78. A capable learning resource centre manager who carefully monitors and reports on its use runs the new, attractive learning resource centre. She has been successful in promoting the use of the centre but has not persuaded fellow members of the consultative groups to make coherent proposals for further developments. The centre is popular with students for private study before and after school and, at these times, space is limited. There is a good stock of up-to-date computers that do not work because of difficulties outside the school's control. As a result, the centre is not yet working to its full potential. Students are supported with helpful study sheets. The book stock is below average for a school of this size.
79. The unsatisfactory accommodation has an adverse effect on the students' learning

and progress. For example, the physical education provision is severely affected by worn out gymnasia that are closed long-term; the science facility, on three floors, and at opposite ends of the building, is very hard to manage and to equip. Heating in some parts of the school is inadequate; conversely some rooms are unnecessarily warm. In the art department there is insufficient space to store equipment. ICT lacks dedicated space and the buildings are not adapted to accommodate students with mobility problems. Some boys' toilets are unsanitary. The general appearance of parts of the buildings is drab, with paint peeling from walls and plaster showing.

80. Financial controls are good with clear, well-administered procedures. The most recent auditor's report was positive, raising only minor issues surrounding the approval of expenditure within departments. The school had a small surplus of funds last financial year. Under-funded over a number of years, the school's base income has improved. It is now a little above the median for schools nationally without sixth forms, but it feels aggrieved by a LEA funding formula that skews resources so it is disadvantaged, having the lowest income for local, LEA secondary schools. Senior managers and governors have focused their attention strongly on ways of getting extra income, through pressure to change the LEA practice, and through time-consuming preparations of, sometimes successful, bids to win more specific prizes. The school has not successfully redressed its balance of expenditure to eradicate resource shortages that are having an adverse impact on standards. It has not evaluated properly the impact of these shortages or considered adequately the methods and costs of overcoming them, by for example, reducing the relatively large number of teachers in very senior positions, although it now has intentions to do so. The school's financial planning has not, therefore, adequately supported the key priorities of raising overall attainment and of improving the achievement of boys.
81. Specific grants have been used well to expand the curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11, particularly for lower attainers, to support provision for gifted and talented students, and to improve special needs provision through EIC. Funding allocated for special educational needs is used effectively to meet students' needs, including those with statements. The school's great success in hosting a City Learning Centre should be a valuable asset and has led to an adjustment of management responsibilities and reduction in leadership costs. Overall, the strategic use of resources and funding is satisfactory.
82. Across the school as a whole, satisfactory use is made of ICT, including the particularly effective provision of laptop computers to each teacher. These laptops are very well used in teaching administration and as an extra classroom resource. As data becomes available and teachers are trained in its interpretation, more heads of department are using their laptops to obtain and process information about their students' progress. Elsewhere, provision for ICT has improved considerably since the previous inspection, but weaknesses remain in the capacity and reliability of the computer systems, so the impact upon learning is unsatisfactory overall. The school has not received significant funding from the National Grid for Learning initiative, and as a consequence has not been able to invest sufficiently in its systems. For example, the learning resource centre computer network does not work; the school website was unobtainable during the inspection and there are no scanners in the ICT suites. Design and technology and science are very short of equipment: standards suffer, as a result. The school is developing some effective systems for monitoring students' academic performance, but has not deployed new technology to record and monitor attendance. Elsewhere, the administrative use of ICT is satisfactory.
83. The school applies the principles of best value through a balanced use of LEA services and in seeking quotations on the open market for goods and services. The school seeks diligently to provide an education service in a highly competitive

environment, where students who live nearby can and do decide to go to other schools that offer specialist facilities. Parents and students are strongly supportive of the service the school offers, and the school is keen to highlight and build on its reputation as a caring, fully comprehensive school with standards of attainment and student attitudes which are above average.

84. The socio-economic circumstances of the students and their attainment on entry are above average. The proportions of students with special educational needs and with statements of special education needs are in line with the national averages. The school maintains above average standards in relation to national averages, but could do better, especially with boys and in science. When the satisfactory attainment of students, their satisfactory progress, their very good personal development and satisfactory quality of education are weighed against the average unit cost of their education, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

85. In order to improve standards the governors and senior management should:
- (1) Improve the ways management evaluates the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - drawing up, as a matter of urgency, an agreed teaching and learning policy;
 - establishing a programme of regular evaluations of classroom practice, using rigorous and explicit criteria and, after training, insisting that all tiers of management to participate in this;
 - reporting details each term to the governors.(Paras: 16, 67, 69, 70, 71, 73, 76, 101, 142, 144)
 - (2) Raise the teachers' expectations of the students by:
 - making sure that the teachers organise tasks that really challenges all students, using, for example, the work done by the gifted and talented and special educational needs units;
 - analysing the wealth of assessment data available and adapting teaching and students' learning more closely to build upon them;
 - organising a comprehensive system of tutorials with students to evaluate their progress and to advise them precisely what they need to do to improve;
 - setting up a rigorous programme of monitoring written work to make sure that it is up to standard and its correction is sufficiently developmental;
 - expecting that homework will be done and handed in on time;
 - making sure that the pace of working in class is consistently high;
 - improving the management of resources to support learning in practical subjects.(Paras: 13, 33, 41, 60, 115, 116, 121, 137, 158, 180, 182, 183)
 - (3) Raise standards in science by the application of the above issues and by increasing opportunities for literacy skill development through more writing at length, speaking and reading about science.
(Paras: 5, 11, 12, 13, 16, 29, 33, 60, 72, 77, 84, 110, 111, 119, 121, 122)
 - (4) Improve the attainment of students in Years 10 and 11 by:
 - providing a more vocationally-oriented curriculum for those who would benefit;
 - encouraging the students to vary their writing style and content to cater for different readerships.(Paras: 18, 80, 132, 135, 144)
 - (5) Improve, as a matter of urgency, the accommodation for physical education so that the school may fully provide the National Curriculum.
(Paras: 45, 79, 177)

THE DEAF SUPPORT CENTRE

86. The North Tyneside Deaf Support Centre for students aged 11 to 16 is an integral part of the school. The previous inspection found that it offered very good provision. The centre has now moved into a well-equipped, spacious suite of rooms funded by a Department of Education and Skills (DfES) grant in 1999-2000. It currently accommodates 14 profoundly deaf students with statements of special educational need who are drawn from across the region. These students experience a culture of 'total communication' with techniques such as lip reading, finger spelling, and signing used in conjunction with a variety of hearing aids, including cochlea implants. Two full-

time and two part-time specialist teachers of the deaf, together with six special support assistants, staff the centre. There is a close relationship with another centre in a neighbouring primary school; staff from both centres work together very effectively, so the students have stability and continuity in the changeover to secondary education. Staff in the main school have received training to help support deaf students in the classroom and have access to an informative booklet produced by the centre staff.

87. Provision is very good and most students achieve the standards expected of them. The centre's emphasis on creating a cheerful and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel at ease works very well. It helps students to establish positive relationships within the school and working routines to enable them to achieve successfully. These are evident in the informal but business-like sessions before morning registration when students meet to exchange news and prepare for the day's activities. Students spend most of their day in the main school where, with specialist support, they are integrated well into lessons. Teaching and learning are good overall and there are examples of very good support from specialist staff. For example, a Year 8 student was able to take part throughout a German lesson on food and drink because of the encouraging approach and skill of his signer. Similarly in a Year 11 science class, the support teacher's expertise in signing, miming, rapid sketching and fast jotting enabled the student to be fully involved in a practical lesson, to work productively with a hearing student, and to respond promptly and accurately to the subject teacher's questions. In small group lessons in the centre, students also achieve well because of the well-focused teaching and their own keenness to learn. This was the case in a GCSE geography session on volcanoes and earthquakes where students were, in most cases, attaining better than average standards. Students have very good relationships with their support staff and respond well to their subject teachers. They generally get on well with their classmates. This is particularly noticeable in Year 7 because many students are proficient in signing. However, this skill is not as widely practised by older students, so methods of communication are more limited and weaker.
88. Management is very good with very clear educational direction. Teachers and support staff form a strong team. They are well aware of the needs of their students and monitor them closely in work and personal development. The provision for individual students, as set out in their statements of special educational need, meets the statutory requirements. Individual education plans, in contrast to those of other students with special educational needs, are very well designed to give school staff a well-rounded picture of students' background and particular needs. Students benefit from carefully structured programmes for speech and language therapy with rigorous assessment twice annually. The service has been improved by the addition of three sessions, which are taught by a qualified special support assistant.
89. The arrangements for work experience are very comprehensive and effective. There is a good partnership with parents, who are very appreciative of the progress their children make and of the support that they receive.
90. There are two priorities for development. The first is to promote students' personal development by strengthening the relationships between hearing and deaf students and to provide appropriate mentoring for them, through, for example, establishing a 'buddy' system in Year 7; encouraging older students in the main school to become proficient in signing and appointing a learning mentor with signing skills. The second priority is to ensure that future changes of staff are managed smoothly so that students' well-being is not adversely affected through any lack of continuity.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	155
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	30	66	48	8	0	0
Percentage	2	19	43	31	5	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 students

students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	912
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	82

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	24
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	128

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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 (Year 9)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	94	84	178

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	68	75	74
	Girls	71	66	65
	Total	139	141	139
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	78 (72)	79 (77)	79 (69)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (32)	57 (54)	46 (34)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	70	77
	Girls	70	67	70
	Total	141	137	147
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (83)	77 (83)	83 (69)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (46)	51 (56)	51 (41)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	91	93	184

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	43	89	90
	Girls	55	87	90
	Total	98	176	180
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	54 (58)	96 (97)	98 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	40.9
	National	39.0

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

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	1
White	899
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	43	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.06
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	478

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

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

Key Stage 3	23.0
Key Stage 4	20.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	2,235,699
Total expenditure	2,214,716
Expenditure per pupil	2,449
Balance brought forward from previous year	-5,000
Balance carried forward to next year	15,983

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

13.7%

Number of questionnaires sent out

912

Number of questionnaires returned

125

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	61	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	46	13	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	50	23	6	2
The teaching is good.	29	62	4	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	54	19	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	46	9	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	47	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	21	46	26	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	27	49	8	0	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	60	6	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	50	13	4	9

Other issues raised by parents

Positive comments praised out-of-school activities; the confidence school life had given the child; good preparation for GCSE and English and mathematics teaching.

More negative points indicated concern over sports facilities; indiscipline; weak responses to parental queries; transition issues; homework (excess or peaks and troughs); cancelled out-of-school activities; ICT; teacher shortage in mathematics; bullying; the poor range of musical activities and poor lunchtime provision.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The well-qualified, dynamic staff teach well.
- The variety in the curriculum and the promotion of students' personal development stimulate students' interest well.
- Writing for publication both inside and outside the school is particularly good.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Although students speak fluently, they sometimes lack confidence when speaking to a large group.
- Boys' achievement is occasionally hampered by their reluctance to write.
- Assessment is often not used crisply enough to enable students to know precisely what to aim for in a piece of work.

91. Students arrive in Year 7 with fluency of speech and skills in reading and writing above those expected of their age. The results in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average, and above the results of similar schools. Since the previous inspection, results have declined and then risen again with both boys and girls improving, boys more so than girls. The difference between the attainment of girls and that of boys, who still do less well, was smaller in 2001 than that found nationally.
92. Attainment in GCSE English language in 2000 was above the national average. In 2001, although the points score in the same subject was above the national average, results at higher grades, A*-C, fell to be in line with the national average with grades A* and A slightly below. Nearly all students in 2000 and 2001 gained a pass. The gap between girls' and boys' results was wider than the national difference. The decline in points scores for both boys and girls in the period 1999-2001 mirrors these groups' attainment in their tests as 14 year-olds. However, GCSE results in 2001 should have been better. The 2001 results show that girls achieved well and boys satisfactorily over Years 10 and 11.
93. The four highest-attaining classes in each year sit the English Literature examination at GCSE; this is slightly more selective than that for the national entry. In 2000 and 2001 the points scores were above the national average; in 2001 the percentage of higher grades, A*-C, was well above the national average but there was a smaller proportion than in 2000. Boys did better than in their other subjects. The other three groups in each year took GCSE media studies, which they all passed and in which students did better than in their other subjects. There is also a one-year course taught in a lunch hour for very high attainers in Year 10. All did very well in this in 2001 with all gaining A*-C grades and 60 per cent achieving A* and A grades. Both of these media studies courses are very worthwhile for those taking them.
94. Standards observed during the inspection differ from the results in 2001 in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and GCSE. Whereas test results were well above average, by Year 9 standards are above average overall and students are achieving satisfactorily. This is because in the mixed-attainment groups in Years 7 to 9 the needs of the highest and lowest attainers are not always met with suitably structured learning for the lower attainers nor enough opportunities for the higher attainers to move faster.

95. By Year 11, standards are above average with both boys and girls making good progress through Years 10 and 11, better than that indicated by the 2001 results. In the work seen, students achieved particularly well in classes in Years 7 and 8 when discussing and dramatising issues of disability and of bullying stemming from their class novels. Students of all ages, both boys and girls, achieve well when writing for publications such as the European School Family magazine, 'Voice', the recently launched school newspaper, and class projects like the Year 9 autobiographical booklets. The public speaking team in Year 11 are articulate, engaging and polished performers.
96. Achievement in speaking generally is satisfactory for each age group. Students speak fluently, learning increasingly to explain their ideas, use relevant terminology and raise points independently. They enjoy discussing contentious issues and often use good vocabulary. However, they sometimes do not project their voices, articulate or vary tone and pace enough to do their ideas and themselves justice, for example, when speaking to the whole class. In Years 7 and 8 students are more confident than in the later years. Although teachers are very good role models for clear and expressive speech and there is a good amount of drama within the English timetable, there is a lack of sufficient emphasis on developing students' expression through voice, facial expression, gesture and movement. Students also do not have enough chances to perform to a variety of audiences. Listening is good throughout the school.
97. Students of all ages read well for their age gaining a detailed understanding of characters and issues in class texts and becoming aware of the features of a variety of fiction, non-fiction and media texts. By Year 11 most gain the confidence to interpret unfamiliar texts for themselves. Many average and above average attainers are sensitive to the meaning of words and phrases in poetry and prose though higher attainers both in Year 9 and in Year 11 do not explore the effects of an author's choice of form, setting and language as much as they might. Year 10 and 11 students sometimes make generalisations without substantiating them. Encouraged by the new, good learning resource centre as well as English lessons, students' personal reading is generally appropriate for their age though the quantity does decline after Year 9. Through the reading award scheme many Year 7 students are enjoying a good variety of books. In the media studies classes in Years 10 and 11 students learn about the purposes and characteristics of different media and then use these in their own creations such as promotional material and a CD cover for a new band.
98. Students' writing is overall above average for their age. In Years 7 to 9 they learn to write for different purposes and many write engagingly in stories, letters, diaries, argumentative essays and personal reflections. A significant number of boys from Year 8 onwards are slow to settle to writing if they do not perceive a good reason for making the effort. In Years 10 and 11 students write well, including interesting examples in their essays and skilful, realistic dialogue in their stories. Some higher attainers in Year 10 and 11 write expansively rather than precisely; some average and lower attainers do not make their writing sufficiently interesting to their reader and also have problems with paragraphing and the correct use of capital letters. Lower attainers of all ages make spelling errors, but do improve their work by re-drafting it, often using ICT: this raises standards. A significant minority writes untidily with poorly formed letters.
99. Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. Precise, achievable, personal targets are helping them in this. Their best progress is in the lower groups in Years 10 and 11 where the teachers choose challenging activities and structure the lessons so that students learn step by step. They take

pride in such achievements as spelling difficult words, discussing the discovery of Duncan's murder in *Macbeth* and composing to tight deadlines the front page articles of a tabloid newspaper.

100. Teaching and learning are good overall; they are good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The best lessons, which are very good, are very stimulating, teachers share the purpose of the lesson with the class and pursue a variety of activities at a crisp pace so that all students are involved and interested. Teachers promote students' moral and social awareness and capacity to think, they adjust their plan if the class encounters problems and round off the lesson with time for the class to evaluate what they have learnt. All teachers manage their classes very well, with humour, with the result that students are appreciative of their teachers, they like to please them and are keen to take responsibilities such as helping younger readers, rehearsing short performances on their own and being on the editorial board of the school newspaper. Teachers follow a rich, well-planned curriculum incorporating within each week a variety of skills and activities, including a lot of discussion in small groups, and a good number of out-of-school activities over time; students therefore enjoy the subject. Weaknesses that sometimes occur in the teaching are a loss of pace or confusing instructions so that students stop concentrating. Occasionally the teacher talks too much or starts questioning before the students have had time to reflect on what they have read. Insistence on writing responses that would be better shared orally leads to some untidy note making.
101. The head of department gives good leadership to her committed team, delegating very effectively and supporting newly qualified teachers very well. The team are sharing ideas and pursuing appropriate initiatives such as raising boys' attainment, providing for gifted and talented students, adopting teaching techniques from the national literacy strategy and forging links with feeder schools. Although the head of department makes time to acquaint herself with the teaching of all her team, there is not enough monitoring of national initiatives to raise standards. Currently, although teachers mark students' work helpfully, they do not use assessment data precisely enough to let students know what to aim for in a piece of work and what they need to do to improve. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Results have fluctuated and GCSE results are not as high as they were, nor is speaking as confident, but the recent initiatives are boosting students' achievement.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The attainment of students in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE at the end of Year 11 is well above average.
- Teaching and learning are amongst the best in the school.
- The department is receptive to change and is anxious to continue to raise standards.
- Out-of-school activities to support learning, for example, a mathematics week, are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Analysis of all assessment data to guide curriculum planning is not sufficiently developed.
- ICT is not used widely enough to help the students' learning.

102. The attainment of students on entry to the school is above national standards. The overall results of National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 were well above the national average and above average when compared to schools with a similar intake. Progress, based on their attainment in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests (at the end of their primary school years), exceeds the improvement gained nationally.

The attainment has been consistently above national averages during the last three years and currently shows an improvement at Level 7 (much higher than expected) and above. The attainment in mathematics is broadly equal to English and better than science. The overall results show a greater improvement since the previous inspection than English or science.

103. Higher grade, A*-C, GCSE results were significantly above the national average in 2001 and A*-G grades were equal to the national average. Results at the highest, A*/A grades were marginally beneath the national average. However, the increase in attainment during the last three years exceeds that of the national trend. Girls have performed better than boys have but in 2001, at the end of Year 9, this trend was arrested.
104. Standards in lessons and in work seen largely confirm the results of national tests for 14 year-olds and of GCSE. Many students, including lower attainers, are able to recall, apply and explain previously taught skills. Students are able accurately to express the meaning of positive and negative gradients and why the graph position can be predicted from information based solely upon an equation. High-attaining Year 11 students understand the use of surds, irrational numbers, various methods of solving quadratic equations and the purpose of standard form, including the reasoning of negative indices. Other students in Year 11 confidently explain random samples, mean, mode, median, scatter diagrams and calculations related to pie charts. These students' confident use of technical vocabulary is very good.
105. Strengths of the department, teaching and learning, overall are good and in many instances very good, with occasional excellence. The best teaching was characterised by well-planned lessons with clear, shared purposes, effective and challenging question and answer methods. These led to participative learning where praise was used well, opinions valued and reliance upon one single teaching resource avoided. The teaching scheme used textbooks but, when necessary, materials were chosen from a variety of more relevant sources: this created a balance and freshness, which encouraged interest. In one particular Year 7 lesson students successfully used graphical calculators to plot linear equations and investigated why some lines slope differently. The use of an overhead projector with an interactive screen enabled the students to follow the methods and compare results with those of the teacher. As a result, the teacher had enough time to work with those who needed extra help and to assess students' progress effectively. Students were totally engaged in the very stimulating lesson. In another lesson, good group work allowed students collaboratively to identify and match equations with the drawn graphs. They shared and tested their opinions and ideas thoroughly and so learned very well from each other. A skilled signer ensured that a profoundly deaf student was closely involved as the group discussion went on. As a result, the student was able to contribute his own ideas very well. Good reinforcement of mathematical language led students dextrously to use terms such as coefficient, intercept and gradient. They enjoyed the lesson, correctly concluding that the values of gradients were the same as the coefficient seen in the equation. This lesson was a part of a very good, currently developing thinking skill initiative. Comparatively rare unsatisfactory teaching was because of inappropriate planning and teaching methods, ill matched to the needs of the students.
106. Consistent very good behaviour in lessons fosters enjoyable learning. Learning by students with special education needs is satisfactory. Because standards are above average at the start of Year 7, the department is using catch up materials selectively. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, after a warm-up on squaring numbers, low attaining students could identify a square number from a set of three random ones; the teacher appropriately encouraged them so their self-esteem increased visibly. Clearly

rehearsed beforehand, subsequent steps included interesting worksheets on symmetry and purposeful use of an overhead projector; rapid pace, and excellent teacher/pupil rapport sustained full engagement and enjoyment throughout the lesson, so the students' challenging needs were met effectively.

107. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is clearly in evidence in many lessons. Most feature a short beginning of mental starters and effective use of teaching aids. Lesson endings always focused upon the student's learning, allowing the teacher to assess the effectiveness of what had been done. The department organises a locally esteemed Numeracy Summer School. Members of the department have organised Year 6 days in local primary schools, using teaching materials (bridging units) designed to ensure a smooth transition to secondary education. The positive outcomes of mathematics weeks, held out of school time, are evident in the students' wishes to do well. All these features are a direct link to the very good leadership and management provided by the very receptive head of department who is determined to secure higher standards. He is well supported by a gifted team who are similarly committed to improving attainment and to making learning mathematics enjoyable.
108. Regular termly tests record the work of the individual classes and form the basis of efficient assessments. Each teacher's laptop computer holds these data and homework results on a spreadsheet. However, sharing and emphasising this information with students, together with their target grades, lacks enough consistency. The full record of assessment data transferred to the department is not used rigorously enough in curriculum planning. A mixed response from some high attaining students who follow after school A/S level mathematics sessions, in collaboration with the local tertiary college, relates to the demands of independent study, grasping the wider and underlying principles and linkages of some of the material taught and work overload. Some have dropped out as a result. However, some Year 11 students have recently taken the module 'Decision Mathematics' and are now studying statistics. Little work with ICT was seen either in displays or in the classroom, so the impact of ICT on learning is weak.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- There are many opportunities outside lessons to extend and enrich students' science education.
- Very good technical support allows plenty of practical activities to take place.
- The head of department has clear vision for improving standards, despite constraints of accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results are below average.
- The expectations and demands made of many students in lessons are too low.
- The quality and detail of day-to-day marking of students' work is unsatisfactory.
- Often, provision to extend those students identified as gifted and talented is weak.
- The standard of many students' written work is too low.
- The range of homework tasks is too limited.

109. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 and separate sciences GCSE examinations are above the national average but GCSE results overall are not showing any significant improvement over time.
110. At the end of Year 9 there has been no improvement in test results since the previous

inspection: they were particularly high in that year. Results for the expected National Curriculum Level 5 have, however, gone down, against the trend of national improvement; there was a small rise in 2001. At the higher levels, (Level 6 and above), following a fall for two years, results have now improved to previous levels to well above all schools in 2001. The last results in 2001 were in line with similar schools for the expected Level 5 and above for Level 6. Boys' and girls' results have been very similar over the period 1998-2001.

111. GCSE results in double award science have dropped each year since the previous inspection, particularly in 2001, when they fell, for the first time, to below the national average. Many students failed to attain their predicted grade with many more, both boys and girls, attaining grade D than the national average. However, the small number of high attaining students entered for three sciences all attained the higher grades A*-C. In all three subjects, girls out performed boys, particularly so in biology where all the girls entered attained the highest grades of A* and A.
112. From scrutinies of work and lesson evaluations, students up to the end of Year 9 are reaching levels above national expectations in more than half the lessons. This higher level work is being attained by those both in mixed-attainment groups in Years 7 and 8 and in common-attainment groups in Year 9. However, within all groups, but especially the mixed-attainment ones, there is insufficient provision to extend and raise the attainment of those students identified as gifted and talented.
113. In Years 10 and 11, several groups of higher-attainers are working towards the higher grades, A*-C, at GCSE. Here work is above national expectations such as when Year 11 were analysing and evaluating experimental data on the effect of light intensity on photosynthesis, or working out reacting mass calculations in chemistry. Other groups are aiming at lower grades.
114. The progress made by students is satisfactory overall, being satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. From entering the school until the national tests at the end of Year 9, the proportion attaining the higher levels 6 and above has improved, particularly in 2001, where it is in the top 15 per cent nationally. Over the three years, 1999-2001, there has been a steady improvement in the proportion of Year 9 students improving their personal science results at age eleven by two levels or more. This is now the case for over half of all students. At GCSE, the progress students make in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9 is less good. Many are not improving the levels they attained at the end of Year 9: they fail to make satisfactory progress.
115. Within lessons there is a direct relationship between the progress students make and the expectations and demands made of them by the teacher. When teachers make realistic and attainable demands of students, they respond well and often achieve levels beyond those expected. For example, in a Year 9 lower attainment group, the teacher used a variety of methods to teach the abstract concept of electrons moving round an electrical circuit. This allowed the students to make very good progress in their understanding and kept them involved throughout the lesson.
116. Where students do not make sufficient progress, it is because teachers' expectations of their attainment are too low. Often students are not kept busy throughout, or are given undemanding tasks such as copying sections of notes, which occurs more often at GCSE. Students of all attainments have too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and are directed too much by their teachers.
117. Students with special needs, particularly the deaf, are helped considerably by the

support given them by specialist staff. This assistance helps these students to take as active a part in lessons as others and achieve well. Some students with problems of literacy are helped to achieve by the extra worksheets provided. Examples such as large print, easily-read sheets or partially completed tables for results of experiments are a great help. Consequently, these students are able to take a full part in practical activities and keep up with their peers.

118. The department provides an impressive range of activities to extend and enrich students' science education. The Year 7 to 9 Salters Chemistry Club has enjoyed success within the scheme and there are visits to lectures, local industry and the environment for all ages of students. Extra lessons are provided during lunchtime and after school for those taking separate sciences at GCSE and for those taking the higher tier papers in double award science or who want to improve their examination technique.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but there is considerable variation across the department. In nearly four out of ten lessons the teaching was good or better, and in half of these, it was very good. There were two unsatisfactory lessons. All teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons satisfactorily to provide plenty of opportunities for practical work. Here, the very good support of the team of technicians is particularly evident.
120. The best lessons are characterised by the teachers' high expectations of all students in the work they produce and they are kept busy all the time. Teachers use a variety of activities to reinforce an idea such as how blood passes through the heart. The students have plenty of opportunity to discuss ideas in groups, and produce their own rather than copied work. Teachers use questions directed at individual students, with degrees of difficulty closely related to their attainment: this is very good practice. These lessons result in good learning because students' interest in the subject is sustained, and they are constantly made to think about what they are doing.
121. The less successful lessons often contain too much teacher direction and lengthy periods when all students are not fully involved. As a result, the students have low levels of interest and application; their work is often poorly presented and unfinished. The use of files at GCSE does not help many students, particularly some of the boys, to keep their work in sequence. Whilst students behave well and work safely, their attitudes, although satisfactory, lack sparkle.
122. Teachers mark tests, examinations and GCSE coursework well. However, day-to-day marking of class and homework is irregular; it often lacks detail with few corrections and points to help students improve. The range of homework tasks set is usually restricted to the completion of worksheets or experiments and is not set to a tight enough timetable. There are insufficient opportunities for students to develop the skill of writing creatively or at length other than evaluating the results from experimental investigations and the occasional project. Within lessons, students are not presented with enough opportunities to read, extract information or develop speaking and reporting skills.
123. Leadership is satisfactory. The head of department has a clear perception of how to improve the department, but is hampered by a number of factors. She does not have enough time to monitor the department's work and there is no formalised system for lesson observation to share and build on good practice. The layout of the building and the position of the laboratories prevent informal daily exchange of ideas between staff. The department is under-resourced particularly in the provision of computers to use within laboratories. This prevents the students from benefiting from extra work to improve their achievement further in science education.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- GCSE results show a good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards achieved are now above the national average.
- Students learn well, they are attentive and work productively.

Areas for improvement

- Resources for learning are inadequate.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- There is under-use of ICT to help learning.
- Departmental action plans fail to propose how to improve the curriculum and raise standards.

124. The GCSE examination results were above the national average for higher grades, A*-C, in 2001. There has been a trend of improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were below national averages. Almost all students who took the examination gained a pass grade. Boys and girls did equally well.
125. Students enter the school with a variety of experiences in art. By the end of Year 9, the 14 year-olds are achieving at least average standards, with many achieving above average. Year 9 students have an awareness of Twentieth Century art and are able to produce paintings in the style of the metaphysical artists, like Carra. They know that such figures emphasise well-rounded forms, the use of light and shade and of dramatic perspective. They have developed a good standard of painting skills. Students with special educational needs make at least satisfactory, but more often good progress. Students develop an understanding of the complexity of the process of producing book jackets and posters based on Masefield's "Box of Delights". They understand the visual impact of these art forms when selecting a book.
126. The standard of work of students in Years 10 and 11 is also above average. Students are achieving well as a result of good teaching. There is clear evidence of progress from Year 9 to Year 11. Observation drawing skills are particularly well developed for all students. The students know the value of preparatory drawings, demonstrate their ability to select, enlarge and adapt images for the required range of GCSE design briefs. In a lesson, Year 10 students looked at the work of the painters Georgia O'Keefe and Henri Rousseau following studies of natural forms. They used the figurative drawings of plants to learn, through abstraction, how to develop non-figurative designs. In another lesson, students investigated Surrealism, turning the ordinary into the extraordinary, referring effectively to works by Archamboldo, Dali, Ernst and De Chirico.
127. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. The principal features of good teaching are clearly expressed purposes of each lesson, sound planning and well-established studio procedures, which bring about the good learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge in the work they set and integrate practical activities with the study of art from a variety of periods and cultures. Teachers set challenging work that gets the students to, for example, recreate the working conditions of Aboriginal artists by making simple tools to reproduce the original styles in their paintings. Good teaching fosters literacy well through the appreciation of the relationship between literature and art. Contributions to cultural awareness are further enhanced through topics such as creating totem poles in ceramics. The students explore the properties of clay, learn rolling, manipulating and joining techniques. They discover the traditional images used by Native American Indians, and the significance of the animals and

birds used. The lesson structure and activities clearly focus on students' good learning. They are attentive, work productively, and respond well to teaching. Students answer simple questions enthusiastically, but they are not confident in offering ideas and opinions in more open discussion, lacking some confidence when speaking, mainly because the teaching too often requires work to be done in silence: this is a weakness. By Year 11, students are confident in using books to extract information and make notes on the artists they are studying. Whilst students are able to use ICT well, access to computers within the department is unsatisfactory.

128. The good teaching and learning result from the work in art being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on achievements and to further improving standards.
129. Whilst the scheme of work effectively reflects most of the subject requirements, there is too little emphasis on resources. Owing to financial constraints there are no plans for extending the range or depth of activities on offer. The current departmental action plan is not an effective tool for developing the needs of the curriculum in art. There are no depreciation, maintenance nor servicing costs built into the development plan nor is the plan sufficiently linked to the professional development needs of the teaching staff. Whilst art is housed in two specialist rooms, the unsatisfactory accommodation is cramped, equipped with assorted old furniture, storage is poor, and rooms are dirty.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- There are very high rates of entry for GCSE among Year 11 students, and a high pass rate at grades A*-G
- There is good development of basic technical skills.
- Lessons are well managed by teachers to develop good basic skills in students.

Areas for improvement

- The achievement of boys is not high enough at the higher GCSE grades, A*-C
- There are weaknesses in the development of designs among students.
- Accommodation and resources available to the subject are poor.
- The quality of planning for development of resources, for raising attainment for each year group, and to assess the health and hazard risks of the work of the department is poor.

130. GCSE results in 2001 were just above the national average at higher grades, A*-C. Girls results at A*-C were above average, but boys' results were below, and the difference between girls' and boys' performance was greater than the national difference. At grades A*-G, results exceeded national averages for girls and for boys. Teachers are effective in getting students through the basic requirements for examinations in the subject: the school's very high entry rate of students for GCSE means that average points per Year 11 student in design and technology are high for girls and for boys. Nonetheless, many boys did not achieve as well as they should have done given their previous attainment, especially at A*-C, higher grades. Results have varied over time in the different aspects of the subject offered by the department, but overall results have been in line with or above national averages, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Overall, A*-C higher grades have declined since 1999, although they improved a lot to above average in food technology in 2001.
131. Students' standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 meet overall those expected in schools nationally. Basic skills are well-developed across all years: students draw and sketch well, annotate clearly, measure accurately, have a good technical and

evaluative vocabulary, and use computers well to enhance the quality of their work. They are generally confident with tools and equipment and make products competently. Their folder work, however, reveals weaknesses in the development of designs. There are weaknesses in the breadth of research into the needs of likely users of their products, in the depth of analysis of possible approaches to the solution of design problems, and in the extent of the evaluation of products against the design criteria that students have established.

132. Similar strengths and weaknesses characterise work by the end of Year 11, too, where standards seen are also overall in line with those in schools nationally. The weaknesses in design development work particularly constrain the attainment of boys in coursework in Years 10 and 11, so that a significant proportion, for example in systems and control, have made unsatisfactory progress on major coursework portfolios well in to their final full term before the examination. Standards throughout are constrained by a lack of resources. Inadequate provision is very noticeable in the resistant materials course where students are unable to say why they have made specific choices. They have to select pine as their working material for storage boxes, because it is the only material widely available in the department.
133. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons seen were at least satisfactory, and many were good or better. Teachers mostly manage lessons well to develop the students' basic skills so enabling them to complete tasks effectively. Very good lessons were seen in food technology and in a computer-aided design lesson where the purposes of the lessons were made very clear at the start, and where students operated at a fast pace using a variety of utensils or tools to produce work of good quality. Teachers work hard, often against the odds of poor resources, to offer students a good range of experiences in lessons. For example, computer resources within the department are mostly old and lack capacity, speed, reliability and the capability to manufacture products. Teachers overcome these computer problems by making temporary use of mobile equipment such as laptops and digital projectors, by building equipment, by preparing students' files using teachers' own equipment at home, and by teaching the principles of computer-aided manufacture which students cannot directly apply for themselves. Students, therefore, produce some effective computer-aided work, and in Years 8 and 9 are able to use powerful design programs well to design mobile phones and to manipulate hand-drawn items.
134. Teachers do not, however, plan work well enough between Years 7 and 9 to ensure that the designing skills of students are improving from one unit of work to the next. Each topic lacks clear attainment targets to show students what they need to do to improve their design standards and to allow the teachers to structure their lessons in ways that will assist that improvement. While work at present is rigorously marked, the marks and comments relate to the tasks in hand rather than to the longer-term development of students' design capability. Students are not, for example, encouraged to research widely enough, nor to make use of that research in developing designs. In Year 9, the current arrangement of the curriculum, where classes "rotate" around different teachers for short 6-week modules of work, further limits students' experiences of the deep and involved process of research and development of design ideas at the crucial time before they start their GCSE courses. Similarly, insufficiently clear learning objectives are set in lessons in Years 10 and 11, and the students' targets for improvement are imprecise. At present, students do not relate the quality of the coursework they have done clearly to the assessment criteria set by the examining board. They are not made aware about what they need to do to get extra marks; this affects progress of the significant number of boys in particular whose management of their coursework is not effective. Teachers do, however, know their students well, and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of good monitoring and swift action when there is a cause for

concern.

135. The subject has broadly maintained standards of attainment since the previous inspection, but a significant proportion of boys underachieves, and so the rate of improvement has not been satisfactory. New courses have been introduced in an attempt to improve boys' standards and performance. The subject is, however, unsatisfactorily managed. The standards of accommodation and resources are poor; the workshops and design rooms in particular are not places to stimulate high quality modern design and do not offer adequately secure storage for students' work. Planning to develop the quality and effectiveness of resources, as well as to raise the attainment of each group of students, is also poor and does not involve all teachers sufficiently in addressing these major issues. The lack of procedures for risk assessment of activities in potentially hazardous practical areas is a further cause for concern. Training of teachers in the use of ICT has supported good quality computer work in the classroom. Teachers have developed some good industrial links to bring in resources and to offer students some challenging activities.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results continue to be above the national average with a significant percentage of students reaching the highest two grades, A*/A.
- Students' understanding of physical and urban geography is very effectively taught through good fieldwork.
- There are good working relationships between teachers and students.
- Students' have a very positive attitude to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient variety in teaching styles and techniques.
- Assessment is not used to predict accurately pupil potential, particularly for average students.
- There is insufficient analysis of the comparative progress of high, average and lower attaining students.

136. Students make good progress and, by the end of Year 9, high attainers reach well above the national average standards. Students of average attainment reach standards at least in line with the national average while lower attainers make good progress, but are below the national average.
137. By the end of Year 11, attainment is above the national average. There has been an overall rise in standards over the last three years in spite of a slight drop in the number of students achieving higher grades, A*-C, in 2001. Almost equal numbers of boys and girls achieve higher grades. Girls outperform boys at the highest two grades, A*-A.
138. Standards of work seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 are good overall. Students make very good progress in Year 7, understanding, for example, the nature of settlement patterns and the development of cities including the location of economic and residential zones within them. They are able to interpret maps and diagrams and to represent their findings through, for instance, graphs and tables. In Years 8 and 9, students begin to have a good understanding of the impact of the surroundings on the lives of people and the conflicts which exist between economic, environmental and moral issues in the exploitation of the resources of less economically developed countries.

139. By the end of Year 11 students are confident in their use of Ordnance Survey maps to identify and explain both physical and human geographical features. They have a good understanding of the way in which the earth's plates move, the geographical features associated with this movement and the impact that earthquakes and volcanoes have on population. Their knowledge of physical geography is good and is strengthened by judicious use of fieldwork. Presentation skills are good in all years.
140. Most teaching is good. Well-planned lessons, which have clearly stated purposes, provide a good framework for learning. All teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and this is augmented with effective use of text and video resources. In some lessons, students work well on their own, using personal research to find evidence to prove an idea and to write persuasively in support. However, in most lessons the pace of learning is controlled by the teacher and is sometimes too slow. This inhibits the progress of some higher and lower attainers because the teaching methods, including the use of ICT, are insufficient to engage the interest of all students and to extend the learning of the gifted and talented students. Fieldwork is good; excellent use is made, for example of the school field to examine microclimates. The local coast and urban studies extend and enhance classwork effectively. The working relationship between students and teachers is good, resulting in a working atmosphere that is conducive to learning.
141. The use of the systems for assessment that are in place is satisfactory. Books are marked regularly and end-of-topic formal assessments inform both student and teacher of progress within that module. However, insufficient use is made of these assessments to examine the progress of students relative to their prior attainment and to set targets that match their potential achievement.
142. Leadership and management are good. Departmental policies give sound guidance to all staff and schemes of work are well planned and documented. Development priorities have been identified and there is a shared commitment to continued improvement. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not tight enough. Since the previous inspection, new texts have been purchased and are renewed where necessary. Recent purchases reflect the changes in examination courses and developing schemes of work. However, the use of ICT is still unsatisfactory.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Perceptive leadership makes good decisions about how to raise standards.
- Good emphasis on literacy improves the students' knowledge and skills.
- A good focus on matching teaching methods closely to history skills provides active, rapid learning.
- The teachers' excellent knowledge and enthusiasm captures students' imagination and deepens their understanding.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring the subject's performance through analysing all results and trends; through lesson observation, sampling students' work and moderating assessments is not rigorous enough.
- Sharper focus is needed on students' special requirements such as learning difficulties or talents.
- Team meetings to design materials and evaluate good practice are too infrequent.

143. Standards of work seen during the inspection are good because the teaching is good. Imaginative use of resources and excellent teachers' knowledge also cause the quality of students' learning to be good. As a result, students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they joined the school, is good.
144. Standards in Years 7-9, according to National Curriculum assessments, have been well above average for three years. The difference between boys and girls is less than that nationally because boys have improved. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average, but not so high, justifying good decisions by the head of department to introduce new assessment procedures and plans to involve students so that they know how they are progressing. Discussions between teachers to agree standards and a portfolio of agreed exemplars should lead to more reliable assessments. Students have targets based on prior attainment, although there is no monitoring of performance overall. Most students make good progress in lessons though there are very small pockets of students, at each end of the ability range, whose progress is only satisfactory because of inconsistent setting of work suited to their needs. Students with hearing impairment are well supported by learning assistants, giving them confidence to offer answers in class discussions and to make some good progress.
145. In Years 7-9, students accurately use historical terminology and place events well in time and cultural context. They explain, for example, political, religious, social and economic change in Britain from Roman times to the 20th century. Using a variety of sources, including coins, pictures, video, eyewitness accounts, they judge the reliability of information. They use knowledge selectively for well-reasoned conclusions about the consequences of cruelty and exploitation or to re-assess the reputations of key figures. They understand the dignity and collaboration that characterise the culture of the native peoples of North America. Numeracy develops well because students use maps, diagrams, graphs, statistics, tables in presenting and interpreting knowledge. There are too few opportunities, especially bearing in mind the higher attainers, for students to plan their own lengthy enquiry and enjoy the challenge of collecting information, synthesising ideas coherently and developing alternative ways of presenting knowledge. The promising start with ICT should improve this aspect. There is also a lack of critical source analysis to explore the value of one type against another; the merits of drama or poetry alongside statistics or eyewitness accounts, for example.
146. Overall standards at GCSE have remained above average in 2000 and 2001. Girls

have reached well above average levels while boys fell below in 2001 when several failed to achieve their predicted grade, because of poor attendance and incomplete coursework. Changes to the course, revision booklets, coursework done in Year 10, and schemes of work that show students know how to gain more marks are now in place to reduce underachievement and support those at risk. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average. Well motivated, articulate students are partners in learning making very good progress. They use a range of study techniques to increase their rate of learning, through efficiency at accessing sources and gathering alternative perceptions from discussions. They organise knowledge of events and policies to throw light on the struggles for peace, economic stability and human dignity across Europe from the 1930s and America from the 1920s including the Cuban Missile Crisis and the war in Vietnam. In contrast with other subjects, English and art, for example, confident students' speaking at length skills reach a high level. Students make the best use of teachers' knowledge through searching questions; they perceive underlying implication and apply theories. Lower attaining students gain confidence from class discussions and some are strong contributors. Coursework is impressive because students know how to follow through a hypothesis. For example a student, despite some spelling problems, is able to conclude succinctly that, "Americans realised that the war in Vietnam was not a noble war but a war out of control".

147. Teaching is overall good. About half of teaching is very good, with some of it excellent. Nearly all the rest is satisfactory, with some of it good. Unsatisfactory teaching resulted from lack of helpful guidance for lower attaining students who did not therefore make enough progress. Imaginative approaches to teaching lead to good learning. Currently, higher attaining students in Year 8 are working successfully in two large single sex groups as part of a project to accelerate learning. These methods are improving teaching across all classes because they involve students more actively, demand better use of time and resources to fit shorter tasks and focus on the improvement of literacy. Students are challenged and learn well because they build up knowledge bit-by-bit and apply it in discussion sessions where they are expected to speak at length. This style makes good use of teachers' considerable subject knowledge and skill in dramatically bringing history to life through colloquialisms and modern parallels. Students are captivated and more able to express a moral view, stimulated by feelings. For example, students in Year 7, reconciled disquiet about religious sacrifice with admiration for the cultural life of Roman towns as they judged whether the Romans were civilised or brutal.
148. Good, energetic leadership and a good response to the previous inspection are improving provision. The small, highly committed team of teachers lacks regular enough opportunities to analyse teaching and evaluate the department's performance in the drive further to raise standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and give clear explanations.
- Teachers have good relationships with students.
- Students are interested in the subject and they behave well in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum organisation for students in Years 7-9 does not ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum are thoroughly covered.
- Teachers need to help students to set their own targets for improvement in Years 7-9.
- The unsatisfactory range of resources inhibits teaching methods.
- The use of ICT to extend learning in other subjects is too patchy.

149. Teachers' assessments of 14 year-olds in 2001 indicate that students are working at the levels expected for their age. GCSE results in 2001 matched national averages.
150. The standards of work seen during the inspection are satisfactory. Students in Year 8 understand cell location in spreadsheets and can insert a simple formula. Students make good use of software to manipulate scanned images. In Year 9, they are confident in their use of software and can readily find this on the network. They have satisfactory typing skills and make use of a range of appropriate fonts. Some students are creating basic 'PowerPoint' presentations using well-selected fonts, clip and word art to prepare slides.
151. There is a very wide range of attainment in the one fortnightly ICT lesson for all students in Years 10 and 11. All students make good use of their skills in using word processing, spreadsheet and database software. Some create web pages effectively, others reinforce well their work in other subjects such as GCSE ICT and English. Overall standards are about average in each of the Clait and GCSE examination courses. GCSE students complete work in line with the examination board requirements and are beginning to critically evaluate software for its appropriateness for a variety of tasks. In Year 11 GCSE, students are making more advanced use of databases and spreadsheets as they complete their final projects for their course. Higher and average attaining students have well organised work, showing evidence of work being redrafted to improve its quality. Lower attaining students' work shows both a lack of knowledge and a lack of commitment to improve and, in some cases, to complete their work.
152. In all lessons, students, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress as they learn new skills and reinforce existing ones. Even though students in Year 7 have very few discrete ICT lessons, they catch up well in Years 8 and 9 as they reach the expected levels for their age. In Years 10 and 11 students make better use of their previously learned skills, most making satisfactory progress in their completion of individual projects. There is satisfactory achievement by all students.
153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to give clear explanations, which help students. Teachers know the examination requirements well, so giving the students clear guidance how to gain higher marks. The good relationships between students and teachers lead to improved learning because the students respond well to instructions. Satisfactory lesson planning and appropriate task selection make good use of prepared information sheets, so students of different attainment work at their own rate. The sharing of a

lesson's purposes with students helps them understand what is expected of them. Recapitulations at the end of lessons consolidate learning. In lessons in Years 7-9 no use is made of National Curriculum levels to help students set personal targets. Teachers do not always make full use of data projectors and there are no interactive white boards to help students understand clearly displayed processes. In all lessons, students' behaviour is good; they are responsive in question and answer sessions, are interested and participate fully in lessons.

154. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the department, to plan for the considerable changes in the way ICT has been timetabled and the staff available to teach the subject. Provision in Years 7 - 9 does not thoroughly reflect the National Curriculum requirements, being just satisfactory. Assessment using National Curriculum levels is done at the end of topics, but too little use is made of these levels to help students understand how well they are doing and how they might improve. The accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory to meet the needs of the department to effectively teach the subject, as well as restricting the development of ICT in other subjects. However, there has been a satisfactory response to the previous inspection as the curriculum now just meets statutory requirements, and a technician now provides valuable support to teaching.
155. The provision of lap top computers and the ongoing New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training have helped teachers to become more confident in their use of computers for administration. However, there is still insufficient use of computers in the teaching of some other subjects. However, English, modern foreign languages, music and design and technology make good use of ICT. Students have access to computers in the computer rooms at lunchtime and after school, but the twenty networked computers in the learning resource centre continue to be unused because of unresolved contractual problems and technical frailties.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- There is very good communication and collaboration between teachers
- Lessons are characterised by a supportive atmosphere that encourages all to be involved.

Areas for improvement

- Expectations of what the students can achieve are much too low.
- Students do not get enough opportunities to produce and to use their own language in lessons.

156. Because the department now enters well above average proportions of students for GCSE examinations, direct comparisons with national figures are less secure. It would, however, be detrimental to the curriculum to enter fewer. Standards are, nonetheless, not as high as they could be. Results in GCSE French show a decline since 1996. The fall is much more marked in the case of boys and the gap between boys' achievement and girls' is growing. These indicators are a cause of concern. A similar overall pattern can be seen in German, but the sample is small and the picture fluctuates from year to year.

157. Some students in all age groups retain much of what they learn and are confident when using grammatical terms. However, many students, even in Years 10 and 11, experience difficulty reading aloud in French or using terms such as 'adjective'. Few students are confident enough to generate full sentences of their own. Most know their current level related to the National Curriculum and the 'self correction sheets', although still at an early stage of development, are starting to have an effect.
158. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with a supportive atmosphere provided in all lessons. All teachers consistently reinforce knowledge about the elements of language covered through suitable grammatical work. Selecting topics likely to interest them encourages boys' involvement. Examples of good or very good practice, seen in some lessons, were characterised by extensive use of the foreign language, high expectations and varied activities, enabling students to generate their own language, so engaging their interest. However, there were unsatisfactory lessons where there was insufficient variety in the teaching methods, use of French intermittent, teachers' expectations low, with praise lavished on minor achievements, even errors, and the support to practise language not withdrawn, so students had no chance to produce language of their own.
159. No creative activities were observed, such as poetry, music and drama, providing for spiritual development. However, the text of a sketch written by students in Years 10 and 11 was seen and a poem was displayed on the wall of one of the classrooms. Teachers all provide good role models for students and the work includes comparisons of cultural attitudes and it raises moral and health-related issues, such as smoking. Both French and German lessons provide extensive opportunities for students to interact and develop socially and their supportive attitudes towards each other were observed in all lessons. With hardly any exceptions, students were friendly towards adults and each other.
160. The leadership of the department is satisfactory, with a combination of good and less satisfactory elements. Members of the department communicate well and are confident enough to talk about their weaknesses as well as strengths. Relationships and collaborative work are excellent, but the opportunities these present are not being fully utilised. Teaching and learning are not evaluated closely enough. There is no common policy on, or practice in, the use of the language taught and the continual broadening of their range of lesson activities. The experience, which exists within the department, on 'thinking skills' is not built upon strongly enough. The department fails to develop the use of creative activities and to devise opportunities for students to practise and produce their own language. All students and teachers do not use the 'self correction sheets' systematically enough to drive up standards overall and to analyse the causes of boys' underachievement, developing strategies to eliminate it. Teachers do not share sufficiently their perceptions of their levels of expectation of students' attainment and reach agreement on identifying and rewarding good achievement. As a result, standards suffer.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The students attain good GCSE results.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The students' attitudes and behaviour are good.

Areas for improvement

- Methods of assessment do not identify students' needs closely enough.

161. Students come to the school with a wide range of attainment in music and by the end of Year 9, they have made satisfactory progress and their attainment is below average. However, the difference between the attainment of boys and girls is more marked than is noticeable nationally. Boys achieve unsatisfactory results in Year 9, whereas girls achieve better results than are seen nationally for girls.
162. GCSE results, over recent years, have continually improved and are consistently above those achieved by similar schools nationally. Many students achieve better results in this subject than they do in the other subjects they take. Since the previous inspection the department has increased the number of students enrolling for the course and more boys are now involved.
163. In class and in work seen, Year 11 students have particular strengths in performing and composing, where they showed sensitivity to texture and structure. The achievement of boys who start the GCSE course with relatively modest attainment is good. The achievement of girls is often good.
164. Year 9 students are particularly skilled in performing on keyboards. In class they can improvise jazz phrases, perform music with two hands and play together in time. They compose in a relatively unsophisticated way.
165. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject; they maintain discipline and make good use of resources. In a Year 7 lesson, students made good progress in practising rhythm patterns and singing because enthusiastic teaching was supported by lively backing tracks. In another Year 7 lesson on 'Love is come', learning was only satisfactory because the teacher did not make the aims of the lesson clear. In a Year 8 lesson on musical structure, students showed a good understanding of musical structure in performance because the teacher guided them carefully through demanding tasks and used a wide variety of methods. There was also a good discussion of the spiritual, moral and social issues associated with Mozart. In a Year 9 lesson, students rehearsed a challenging blues riff well and made satisfactory progress in performing and improvising around the piece.
166. Teaching and learning are consistently good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned and good use is made of resources and the very good accommodation to enable students to work independently. In a Year 10 lesson, students made good progress arranging a jazz tune and were graded highly for their work. In a Year 11 GCSE lesson, students used good quality computer-based resources to compose program music. The task was clear to them and they could analyse how their music should progress. Boys who start the course with modest attainment make good progress. Satisfactory use is made of homework to support learning. Students with special needs in each of Years 7 to 11 make similar progress to their peers.
167. The attitudes of students in all year groups are good and very good among Years 10 and 11. Students work co-operatively and enjoy listening to each other's performances. Behaviour is good and the relationships between students and with staff are good.
168. The quality of curriculum is satisfactory, but there are too few opportunities to study world music. There are lunchtime activities to help GCSE students develop their work further. Good use is made of informal assessment, but students in Years 7 to 9 are not regularly informed about their progress, so assessment overall is satisfactory. GCSE students receive regular assessments about their progress, but assessment

techniques lack sufficient precision to identify students needs closely.

169. The department makes good provision for the students' cultural education. Regular concerts feature the school band and smaller ensembles. The quality of performance is good and jazz and rock music strongly influences the work of the department. There is a full range of instrument lessons. The department has good links with partner schools and local institutions.
170. A capable teacher, with a clear idea of the place music has in the school, leads the department satisfactorily. He is well supported by youthful enthusiastic, trained colleagues. He has maintained good quality resources for the subject. The well-used accommodation has improved since the previous inspection: it is now very good. The provision for music using new technology is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the department is very good.
- The relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Students' interest and attitudes towards physical education are very good.
- The results girls obtain in GCSE are high compared with the average nationally.

Areas for improvement

- The results boys obtain in GCSE are only about average.
- National Curriculum levels are not used precisely enough as a basis for assessment.
- Schemes of work have insufficient detail to track progress in activities.
- There is insufficient sharing of good practice.

171. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained, teaching is good, and students continue to be very positive about the subject.
172. Teachers' assessments of 14 year-olds at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicate that students reach average standards, although those for girls are well above average. The Year 11 GCSE results in 2001 were well above average: girls achieved better results than boys did, with nearly two-thirds of the girls gaining A* and A grades.
173. Standards of work amongst Years 7 to 9 students seen during the inspection are average, with some higher levels of performance. In Year 7 netball, students have satisfactory passing skills, know the footwork rules but do not always play to these. In 2002, rugby students have basic passing skills and are developing correct tackling techniques. In Year 8 hockey, students work at expected levels, although some higher-attaining students start to make more effective use of reverse stick in dribbling. In Year 8 rugby, students have satisfactory passing skills: they can tackle with the correct technique and understand how to rock the ball. In Year 9 soccer, there is a very wide range of attainment, with a significant number of higher attaining students, who have good skills and knowledge of the game. They show good control and are able to keep possession under pressure and make effective passes. In Year 9 netball, there are good standards of play, with students having good performance, knowledge of the rules and patterns of play.
174. Overall, the achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is good achievement by girls who study GCSE, but boys achieve less well. In all lessons,

students of all attainment levels, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress as they learn new skills and improve and refine existing ones and increase their knowledge and understanding. Sometimes, progress is good, for example in a Year 11 trampolining lesson, when some students learned new jumps such as front and seat drops.

175. In Year 10 GCSE netball, students have good skills, being able to pass and receive with effective control: one very high attaining student had particularly good shooting skills. In theory lessons, students show good understanding of types of training, as they develop individual training programmes. In Year 11 soccer, there is a wide range of attainment. However, most students play above expected levels, with higher-level dribbling and passing skills. GCSE theory students have a good understanding of anatomy and physiology, diet and exercise and training and how this relates to sporting activities. Higher-attaining students, mostly girls, have very well organised files and do complete their set homework. Some lower-attaining students, however, have less work in their files, poor organisation and many gaps, including incomplete homework.
176. Teaching and learning are good. Some lessons are very well taught and there is occasional excellence. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they give clear explanations and demonstrations to students, helping them learn new skills and improve existing ones. Lessons are well planned, with well-selected and mainly matching practices for students of all attainment levels; sometimes, however, there is under-expectation, for instance in a Year 9-soccer lesson. Good teaching ensures the lessons' purposes are shared with the students, helping them to focus on what to achieve. Classes are well managed, students are well behaved and in all lessons good relationships contribute very well to students' good learning. Teachers make good use of question and answer, which helps students share ideas and learn effectively in both classroom and practical lessons. Good teaching leads effectively to independence in learning, for example, when students conduct warm ups, but this is not common practice. In very good and excellent lessons, similar relationships, attitudes and the teacher's very good subject knowledge are significant factors in students' very good learning. As a result of the innovative and enthusiastic teaching, that created a very good working atmosphere in an excellent GCSE theory lesson in Year 10, students made significant progress in their understanding of the skeletal system. Assessment is improving, but students are not made sufficiently aware of how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels.
177. Very good management and excellent leadership create effective provision for all. However, curriculum documentation fails to show how students' progress can be tracked. The boys' gymnasium, out of use for more than a term, has an adverse effect upon standards and the department's ability to provide a full curriculum. Its absence has led to modified work schemes, without indoor practical activities. Students enjoy many clubs, practices and school teams. Inter-school fixtures, to which the school has a strong commitment, provide routes for talented students to reach higher levels of competition. There are strengths in soccer, netball, athletics, cross country and tennis, with improvements in rugby for boys and girls' soccer. Standards in badminton and basketball are lower because there is no sports hall.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- Most students have positive attitudes towards the subject.

- Good learning materials are effective in helping students to clarify their personal responses and they provide structured support for students with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Expectations are not high enough in Years 10 and 11.
- The use of homework is unsatisfactory.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT in their work.
- There is no GCSE course.

178. Since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in the time allocation for religious education in Years 10 and 11, and all students now follow a programme of study which meets the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus.
179. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 matches the expectations set out in the Local Agreed Syllabus. Work seen during the inspection shows that most students, including those with special educational needs, achieve in a satisfactory way. They have a firm knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other major world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. For example, they can explain the link between suffering and redemption in Christian teaching and correctly interpret the different symbols of Enlightenment in Buddhism. They use key religious words and phrases with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Students also learn from religious belief as well as learning about it, and most of them express their understanding and personal opinions with confidence. Carefully planned sessions of discussion and reflection, and well-designed work sheets help students to clarify their ideas. Good quality learning materials also enable students with special educational needs to structure their writing successfully. A strength of students' written response is the wide variety of ways in which they present their knowledge and understanding for the classroom displays which play a major role in celebrating achievement and stimulating interest in the subject. High attaining students also write perceptively at considerable length, as for example in giving detailed evaluations of their progress through different topics in the course.
180. By Year 11, most students have gained a basic knowledge of different religious stances on such moral issues as the sanctity of life, and prejudice and discrimination. For instance, students in a Year 11 class showed a clear understanding of different standpoints on vegetarianism after they watched a very lively video drama on the subject. However, overall achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Writing is not sufficiently demanding, homework is not a requirement, and there is no assessment of students' attainment and progress.
181. Most students have positive attitudes to their work because they have a good rapport with their teachers. Behaviour is generally good. Students listen attentively and usually settle to work promptly. They enjoy taking part in the workshops given by visitors to the school. There are good opportunities for students to pursue independent research using the Internet and the department has plans for the introduction of ICT as a resource for learning. In Years 7 to 9, the subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development because of the importance placed on assessing how effectively students learn from religion and the way in which they are encouraged to monitor their own progress in knowledge and understanding.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject expertise. There were several examples of good and very good teaching and only one instance of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers adapt their teaching methods very effectively to students' requirements. The lessons are challenging and teachers use on-going assessment skilfully to improve basic skills and to raise the standard of collaborative working.

Large classes are well managed and relationships are very good. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 top group lesson on marriage customs. The lesson moved at a fast pace with a variety of timed learning tasks which followed logically from the initial questions about the nature of marriage and the practice of arranged marriages. The students were organised into working groups of four to ensure that everyone was actively involved in the activities which included discussion, note-taking, decision making and reporting back. Students responded very well to their teacher's high expectations. All groups worked rapidly and produced thoughtful points both for and against arranged marriages. These ranged from the importance of common interests and valuing parents' experience and advice, to the prospect of 'giving up career and friends'. Where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory it is because the lesson's purposes are unclear and the teacher's expectations of work and behaviour are too low. The range of teaching methods is, in such cases, too narrow and whole class question and answer sessions do not challenge or involve all students to make an adequate response. The pace of working is too slow, so students lose concentration and do not make sufficient progress.

183. Leadership and management are good. Staff have a shared commitment to the development of the subject and a good capacity to succeed. Visits from members of local faith communities enrich the curriculum. Laptop computers are used efficiently to store and handle assessment information. Issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have largely been resolved. Assessment in Years 7-9 now takes understanding and evaluation into account and there is better provision for students with special educational needs. Provision for Year 10 and 11 students fulfils statutory requirements. In order to improve further, the department needs to raise expectations of achievement in Years 10 and 11 through the introduction of an examination course, develop the use of ICT within the subject, and use homework effectively to extend independent learning and literacy skills.