

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BARR BEACON SCHOOL**

Aldridge, Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104264

Headteacher: Ms Hilary Sargeant

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Kearney  
18006

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2002

Inspection number: 249666

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Old Hall Lane Aldridge Walsall
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Stirling Johnson
Date of previous inspection:	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18006	S Kearney	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9649	J Smith	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values, personal development</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p>
30996	A Higginbotham	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Mathematics (Sixth form)</p>	
27201	C Ashworth	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>Citizenship</p>	
12356	R Dickason	Team Inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>Chemistry and Physics (Sixth form)</p>	
25377	L Brown	Team Inspector	Art	How well are pupils taught?
12885	J Hunt	Team Inspector	<p>Information &amp; communication technology (ICT)</p> <p>ICT (Sixth form)</p>	
32211	B Geoghegan	Team Inspector	Design and Technology	

32147	A Wallis	Team Inspector	Geography Geography (Sixth form)	
15576	D Nebesnuick	Team Inspector	History Business Studies (Sixth Form)	
23550	M Blewitt	Team Inspector	Modern Foreign Languages French and German (Sixth form)	
8360	F Peacock	Team Inspector	Music Education Inclusion Special Educational needs English as an additional language	
7602	E Milroy	Team Inspector	Religious Education Religious Education and Biology (Sixth Form)	
4335	S Masson	Team Inspector	English (Sixth form)	
3555	C Emery	Team Inspector	Design and technology (Sixth form)	
19152	R Merryfield	Team Inspector	History (Sixth form)	
10209	V Gormally	Team Inspector	Art (Sixth form)	
10739	P Hick	Team Inspector	Physical Education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Barr Beacon School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-18. It is located on the eastern edge of Walsall, on its boundaries with Sandwell and Birmingham and is in Walsall Local Education Authority. It is a much larger than average school with 1448 pupils on roll. There are more boys than girls in the school and the imbalance is mostly in Years 8 and 10. The number of students in the sixth form is 225 which is larger than average and the school is popular and oversubscribed, with a seven per cent increase in numbers since the last inspection. The school serves a wide community and takes pupils from 35 primary schools. The majority of pupils come to the school from socially advantaged families. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average and has steadily decreased since the last inspection. There are 170 pupils from minority ethnic groups who all speak English to a well developed stage. The number is much smaller than at the last inspection. These pupils come mostly from Indian and Pakistani background although there are several other cultures represented in the school. The main languages spoken in the families are Panjabi, Gujarati and Urdu. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average and involves 172 pupils of whom 21 have statements of special educational needs, which is also below average. The numbers have increased since the last inspection in line with national increases. Attendance is well above average compared to other schools and the number of pupils excluded from the school during the last year is slightly more than in similar schools. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school in years other than Year 7 and Year 11 is less than in similar schools. Pupils' standards when they enter the school in Year 7 are above average although the full range of attainment is represented in the school. A new headteacher joined the school in January 2001 and has been in post just under two years. Other characteristics of the school have not altered significantly since the previous inspection in 1997.

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

Barr Beacon is a successful school that achieves above average standards for most pupils. Teaching is good and the attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils are very good. There is good leadership from the headteacher and senior team and most subjects are well managed. Pupils are well cared for and they receive good support. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and has responded appropriately to many of the challenges it faces; it provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards are above average and improving and the achievement of the majority of pupils is good.
- The quality of teaching is good with a significant number of lessons that are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the majority of lessons are very good and pupils speak enthusiastically about their experiences in school.
- The support and guidance provided by the pastoral arrangements ensure a safe and academically challenging environment for all pupils.

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

- Standards and quality of provision in science.
- The quality of provision in information and communication technology across the school.
- The use of data about standards, pupil progress and the quality of teaching and learning so that it forms a strong base for rigorous and critical analysis of performance across all areas of the school.

*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 progress since the last inspection in 1997. Standards in Year 7 to 9 have improved in line with the national trend and examination results in GCSE have improved at a rate greater than the national trend. The popularity of the school is increasing and the quality of teaching is better. Most concerns expressed in the last report have been addressed although the school still faces

challenges in improving the standards in design and technology, raising the attainment of boys, meeting statutory requirements for all areas of information and communication technology and improving standards and the quality of provision in science. The headteacher is supported by a talented and enthusiastic senior team and governors who bring a wide range of experience to the governance of the school. The school is in a good position to sustain and further improve the standards and quality of provision across all areas.

## STANDARDS

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

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

Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 are higher than in the previous year and continue the trend of improvements that the school has achieved since 1999. Although pupils enter the school with standards that are generally above the national average, the 2002 results indicate that the progress made by pupils is above expectations. This is a direct result of the strong focus that the school has put into the development of the National Strategy for learning in Key Stage 3.

Although the school's results in the GCSE examinations in 2001 are below the average for similar schools, the standard of work observed in the current Year 11 indicates that standards are improving in many subjects. One of the most effective subjects in the school is mathematics where pupils attain standards that are above average in all years. The achievement of pupils in mathematics is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In English standards are above average and pupils make good progress in the early years although progress slows down in Years 10 and 11. One of the weakest subjects in the school is science where standards were well below that in similar schools in 2001 and have not improved since 1999. The achievement of pupils in science is unsatisfactory.

The school sets annual targets for GCSE examination results and for the national tests and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 across all subjects. The targets are detailed and based carefully on the prior attainment of pupils.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' response in lessons is very good, and pupils nearly always speak enthusiastically about the school and their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils in the majority of lessons is good although there is some disruptive behaviour in some lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 9.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships across the school are very good and reflect the very good provision for the development of pupils' personal skills.
Attendance	Attendance is well above the national average but has decreased slightly in recent years. The school works hard to improve attendance rates with regular appeals to parents for their support.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in English and mathematics. in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 in mathematics it is very good and promotes very good learning. It is unsatisfactory in science. In nearly all other subjects teaching is good. In nearly one in four lessons seen the quality of teaching was very good or excellent. In these lessons the teachers capitalised on the very good attitudes of the pupils, challenging and prompting them to engage in their own learning. Pupils in these lessons were motivated and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The relationships between pupils and their teachers are nearly always good and this encourages pupils to persevere and take risk. In more than half of the lessons seen the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were very good yet not all teachers were able to take full advantage of the pupils' enthusiasm and respect for learning. The support for pupils with special educational needs and for those pupils with English as a second language is good. They are well integrated in lessons. Literacy and numeracy are taught well in the majority of subjects particularly in Years 7 to 9 as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy. The development of pupils' skills in the use of computers is restricted because there are too few computers and a network that is often unreliable.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school offers a traditional choice of subjects but the overall quality of the curriculum is enriched by a variety of activities that take place outside lessons. Statutory requirements are not fully met in information and communication technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils make good progress, reflecting good provision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The provision is good and all pupils are well integrated into lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision is very good. The school provides well for the development of pupils' social, moral and cultural skills but is less strong on the provision for spiritual development which is good. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The support and guidance given to pupils are good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and the personal development of pupils are very good.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. The school is popular and parents have positive views about the school. The inspection agrees with parents' concerns about the weaknesses in how well the school communicates with parents.

Year Heads and tutors are very sensitive to the needs of the pupils and the personal development of pupils is very good. There are good systems for assessing pupils' progress but the information is not yet used effectively to guide learning in the curriculum.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school has a large and highly effective senior team. Many subjects are well managed and the staff responsible for the pastoral welfare of pupils are very hard-working. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well organised and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. They fulfil their roles to a satisfactory standard. They require further training to help them understand their role in the strategic development of the school and their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has good systems to collect data about different performance across the school. The evaluation of the data is satisfactory and needs further development.
The strategic use of resources	Financial control is good and the school is innovative in seeking additional funds such as the recent application for Language College status.

The range and quality of staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The library is inadequate for the demands placed on it to support learning. The school reports difficulties in recruiting staff in recent years and feels this has severely affected standards in some subjects such as science and design and technology.

The headteacher has been in post just under two years. The previous headteacher had successfully implemented most of the improvements identified in the last report. The current headteacher has taken the school forward and has a good understanding of the areas for development.

Arrangements for ensuring best value are good.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress made by pupils.</li> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework arrangements.</li> <li>• Information about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• Links with parents.</li> <li>• Range of activities.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with all of the positive views. The team judges the homework arrangements, the information about pupils' progress and the enrichment activities to be good.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The school's sixth form is larger than average, with 225 students enrolled. Approximately half of students in Year 11 continue their education at the school after the age of sixteen. The school operates an admission target of four GCSE awards at grades A\*-C but has a flexible approach with individual students and is willing to accept students that do not always meet these requirements. Nearly all students study A/AS courses although a very small number embark on a GNVQ in business studies. Recruitment into the sixth form has increased from 60 students in 1999 to 132 students in 2002. The school offers a wide range of 22 A/AS courses and there are opportunities for students to take GCSE examinations as a retake or an additional course. In 2001, 13 per cent of students left at the end of Year 12 and went into other training, a significant increase on the previous two years. Just over three-quarters of the students who completed their courses in Year 13 in 2002 went into Higher Education, which is in line with national figures and similar to previous years. Standards in the sixth form in 2001 are in line with national averages and are broadly similar to the previous two years. Unvalidated results for 2002 indicate that this trend has been maintained.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

This is an effective sixth form. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and recruitment has increased significantly. Teaching is good and often very good. The leadership and management of this area of the school are good and the sixth form coordinator has a clear vision for development. The school's provision in the sixth form gives satisfactory value for money.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching is good and often very good and there is a strong emphasis on promoting independent learning in students.
- Sixth form students play a full and very effective role in the school, taking on additional responsibilities that help to prepare them for adult life.
- Students are keen to learn and they have very good attitudes. Their behaviour is very good, and their relationships with each other, with teachers and with younger students are also very good.

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

- Not all teaching matches the high levels of commitment of the students and some lessons lack imagination and strategies to develop the learning skills of students.
- Assessment information is not used effectively in some subjects and in the overall identification of performance across the provision.
- The strategic direction of the sixth form is not based effectively enough on rigorous evaluation of information about standards, progress and classroom activity.

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

### **THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS**

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Mathematics	Very good. Teaching and learning are very good and the provision is well managed.
Chemistry	Good. Teachers provide good support to students and they respond by working hard and showing a strong commitment to their learning.
Biology	Satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and students' investigative and practical skills are a strength.
Physics	Unsatisfactory. The achievement of students in this subject has been below expectations in recent years. There is too much unsatisfactory teaching.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Teaching in product design and textiles is a strength and the overall quality of provision is improving.
Business studies	Good. This is a very popular subject. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of students. Leadership is very good.
Information and communication technology	Good. Teaching is good and standards are above average.
Art	Good. Teachers have good subject expertise and results in A-level examinations are improving.
Geography	Satisfactory. Learning is enriched by high quality fieldwork and access to a good range of resources that encourage positive attitudes in students.
History	Good. Teaching is good and students are well supported in their learning and have very good attitudes.
Religious studies	Good. Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of students, supported by very detailed planning.
English	Good. Teachers develop students' vocabulary and conceptual knowledge well and the learning is enriched by a wide range of visits.
Modern foreign languages	Very good. The quality of teaching and the leadership and management of the courses in French and German are very good.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
How well students are guided and supported	Attendance is very well monitored. Procedures for assessing students' progress are good. There are inconsistencies in how well the information is used to support students' progress.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership of the sixth form is good. The school's aims and values are reflected in the life of the sixth form. The systems for monitoring and evaluating performance across the provision are not developed enough.

#### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

<b>What students like about the sixth form</b>	<b>What they feel could be improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from and accessibility of teachers.</li> <li>• Choice of courses.</li> <li>• They enjoy being in the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers information.</li> <li>• The range of extra activities.</li> <li>• Information about how well they are doing.</li> </ul>

The response to the survey was supplemented by many interviews with students from different areas of the sixth form during the inspection. Students that were interviewed expressed very different and much more positive views than those in the survey. The inspection agrees with all the positive views. The team supports some of the concerns expressed about the information on student progress. Career guidance and information about the progress of students are not yet consistent across all subjects. Tutors are beginning to work more effectively in their role as overall coordinators of student progress.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards at Barr Beacon School are above average and improving. The school has maintained these standards and in some years has exceeded them since the last inspection. There is a shared commitment within the school to ensuring continued improvement in standards and the progress of all pupils. The school operates a fully inclusive policy that encourages pupils and staff to reach and sometimes exceed their potential. Areas of significant concern are the standards achieved by pupils in science and the unsatisfactory provision for the development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology. The school also needs to monitor carefully the standards in design and technology and the achievement of boys.
2. The transfer of data about the attainment of pupils when they enter the school is good. The school records include the results of national tests at the age of 11 in English, mathematics and science for the last six years. These are supported in the last five years by additional data on the basic skills of pupils. Both sets of information confirm that the attainment of pupils when they enter the school is above average and that the pattern since the last inspection is of a steady rise in standards. This reflects the national picture and is in line with the strong focus on literacy and numeracy in the primary schools in recent years. Information collected by the school from national tests for the current Year 7 pupils indicates a similar rise in the average points score in English and mathematics since the last inspection. However, the increase in the average points score in science is nearly double that of the other two subjects indicating a greater improvement in standards as pupils enter Barr Beacon. This reinforces the concern shared by the school and the inspection, about the under-performance of pupils in science as they move through Barr Beacon.
3. The intake is fully comprehensive and includes pupils of all abilities, although the proportion of higher attaining pupils reaching level 5 at the end of their primary education has risen significantly over the last three years in both mathematics and science. This trend is less obvious in English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those with statements is below average and while the number of pupils with English as a second language is higher than average, very few are at the early stages of language development. The school does not have reliable data about the attainment of pupils in foundation subjects before they enter the school. There are good links of a more informal nature in some subjects and communication with primary colleagues in these subjects is generally effective in identifying curriculum needs for Year 7. The model used by the special educational needs department for the transfer of pupils from primary school has some particularly good features. However, the majority of subjects have yet to develop a rigorous system for determining the prior attainment of pupils before they enter the school.
4. The results of national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 are well above the national average across all three core subjects, when compared to all schools. The average points score in English is well above the national average, it is above in mathematics and in line in science. When these results are compared with those of similar schools based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, English maintains the well above average standards, mathematics are well below and science is in the bottom five percent of similar schools. The school challenges the free school meal benchmark and reports that many pupils who are eligible for free school meals do not

take up the option. However the inspection team found limited evidence to support this view. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 compared to all schools indicate that standards have been maintained in each of the three core subjects. The value added data that considers pupils' prior attainment shows that pupils make very good progress when compared to all schools nationally. Comparisons with similar schools based on the free school meal benchmark show that the average points score in English is in line with the average, mathematics is well below and science is again in the bottom five percent of similar schools. However, value added data which considers the prior attainment of pupils when they entered Barr Beacon school shows that pupils are making progress in Years 7 to 9 in line with expectations when compared to similar schools.

5. The standards at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated since the last inspection. The overall trend is broadly in line with the national trend. In the three years around the inspection ie 1997 to 1999, the average points score in English fell significantly. In mathematics it improved during this time and in science it fell slightly. Since the appointment of the new headteacher in January 2000, the results have shown an improvement in English and mathematics and a very small drop in science. This confirms the judgement that standards are improving although the improvement currently reflects the rise in standards on entry and represents satisfactory achievement by pupils across Years 7 to 9. The strong focus on further development in line with the guidance given in the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 is reinforcing this improvement and is confirmed by the improved standards seen in Year 9 during the inspection. The small drop in standards in science does not reflect the rising trend in standards in science on entry to Year 7 and represents underachievement by some pupils.
6. The evidence from inspection is that standards at the end of Year 9 are well above expectations in information and communication technology lessons, and in art. In all other subjects they are above expectations except in science, design and technology, history and physical education where they are in line with expectations. The standards achieved by pupils in art indicate very good progress across Years 7 to 9. This high achievement is supported by a very good system of portfolios tracking pupils' individual progress, as well as exemplars of work at every level that help with accurate assessment of each pupils' progress. In the separate lessons of information and communication technology the majority of pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. They enter the school with skill levels that are mostly above expectations for their age and the well planned programme taught across Years 7-9 ensures that the majority of pupils attain well above average standards in the work that they cover. However, pupils are unable to make sufficient progress in their understanding of control systems because they have limited opportunities to learn about this part of the course during their design and technology lessons. Opportunities for them to further develop their skills in other subjects are severely limited as the school does not have sufficient computers. Pupils' achievements in all other subjects is good except in science, design and technology, history, physical education and religious education where it is satisfactory.
7. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades in 2001 is above the national average when compared to all schools and has increased slightly in 2002. There has been a significant increase since the last inspection from 34.4 per cent in 1997 to 55 per cent in 2002 although it has fluctuated in some years. The overall trend is above the national trend of improvement. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-G is well above the national average for all schools and has increased from 86 per cent in 1997 to 98 per cent in 2002. The average points score

per pupil has also increased from 32 in 1997 to 42 in 2001. The school reports a drop to 37 in 2002 because of the system of capping that does not allow credit for the total number of examinations awarded to pupils. These figures confirm that standards are improving and the trend of improvement is above that of the national trend. However, when the results are compared to those of similar schools the picture is less secure. Comparisons with schools with similar free school meals indicate the school is well below the average in 2001. If the prior attainment of pupils is taken as a comparison benchmark, then the results are below the average in 2001. There are no national benchmarks available for 2002. The school does not rigorously monitor standards against national benchmarks for similar schools so that underachievement can be clearly identified.

8. In GCSE examination in 2001 pupils performed better in business studies, religious education and information and communication technology than in their other subjects. This picture is maintained in 2002 except for results in religious education where the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C fell from 83 per cent to 70 per cent. Pupils performed less well in 2001 in science, modern languages and English than in their other subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C in English increased slightly in both English courses in 2002 but results in science continued to fall and there was a significant decrease in French. These three subjects are studied by all pupils in Barr Beacon and this represents under achievement by these pupils. Comparisons of the average points score per pupil across all subjects in the last three years show an inconsistent pattern of performance, particularly in core subjects studied by all pupils. English language shows a slow regression, English literature and mathematics results have fluctuated, science, French and design and technology have a decreasing trend. Examination results in these core subjects are not reflecting the rising standards on entry to the school or the general pattern of improvement across the school and this represents underachievement by pupils.
9. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection indicate a continuing pattern of improvement across many areas. In the majority of subjects standards reflect examination results and overall are above expectations for pupils' ages. They are well above expectations in the examination classes in information and communication technology. In design and technology, history and physical education they are in line with expectations. However, in science they are below expectations and pupils studying science are making unsatisfactory progress. The achievement of pupils in most subjects is good in Years 10 and 11. In business studies it is very good and in modern foreign languages, design and technology, history, physical education and the general course of information technology it is satisfactory.
10. There are some differences in the performance of boys and girls at the end of Year 9. Patterns over the three years 1999 to 2001 show that girls perform better than boys across the three core subjects and girls perform significantly better than boys in English and mathematics when compared with national patterns. This picture of weaker performance by boys is also found in design and technology where there is a significant difference in the attainments of girls compared to boys in 2002 and this difference is bigger than that seen in 2001. The school does not monitor the differences in the attainment and achievement of boys and girls with sufficient rigour. There is a significant imbalance in the numbers of boys and girls in Year 8 and Year 10 with a much higher proportion of boys in each year. This is likely to have an impact on future examination results if the pattern of underachievement by boys continues. The school needs to look creatively at ways of motivating and improving learning for boys, and investment in new technology across the school could be an essential part of any future strategy.

11. Some of these differences continue into Years 10 and 11 where pupils are studying for GCSE examinations and have a significant impact on standards. For example, there is and has been for several years, an issue of under-performance by boys in design and technology. This is seen most prominently in the standards of work in the resistant materials areas and the gap between the performance of girls and boys in design and technology has widened each year. In modern foreign languages the national picture of boys' underachievement is reflected more strongly in Barr Beacon because French is taught to all pupils. In 2002 in English the performance of girls was better than that of boys and this reflects the pattern in 2001 across the whole school. However, when results are compared across the previous three years 1999 to 2001 boys' results were above the national average and girls were close to the national average. Analysis of attainment data during this time indicates some issues about the achievement of higher attaining girls and girls in science. There are some gender imbalances in several subject areas with too few girls represented in business studies. Some classes were seen in information and communication technology with a small number of girls who do not always make sufficient progress in lessons as they are not fully engaged in the lesson. The school does not yet rigorously monitor the standards and achievement of boys and girls across all subjects.
12. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because effective strategies are used in many subject areas to support them. Data shows that these strategies enabled pupils in last year's Year 7 to improve their basic skills much more quickly than pupils of previous years. Learning support teachers, key workers and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution helping pupils achieve success. Pupils with special needs achieve GCSE and Entry Level Certificates and some attend linked vocational courses available at the local college. These courses have proved successful in giving students an insight into the world of work and an additional incentive to remain in education and do well. Entry Level Certificates are done in English and mathematics and could be extended to other subject areas. The majority of pupils who have English as an additional language are quite fluent and attain well: there are hardly any pupils at an early stage of learning English. The school is in the early stages of extending provision for higher attainers and gifted and talented pupils. There is a clear system for grouping pupils by ability in many subjects and while this generally works well, there are instances where pupils are taught across a wide ability range and the progress of the more able pupils is constrained. For example, in geography and mathematics this is identified by the inspection as an area for development.
13. Standards of literacy are above expectations and assist most pupils' access to the curriculum. Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar is slightly better than expectations for all but the lowest attainers in all years. Writing skills are generally good and the majority of pupils are able to establish and maintain reasonable accuracy and structure in extended writing. Reading skills are also above expectations. Most pupils are able to read for meaning and access new vocabulary using context. The majority are fluent readers though lower attainers are sometimes hesitant and unsure of meaning. The range of active vocabulary known to pupils is often wider than would be expected. Speaking and listening skills are above expectations. Most pupils, other than the lowest attaining, have the language skills and confidence to speak in varying registers in an appropriate manner.
14. Standards of numeracy of the majority of pupils are good. The school's very good response to the National Numeracy Strategy has been effective in raising standards. The development of pupils' numerical skills forms an increasing aspect of the

mathematics curriculum. The starting and finishing exercises in many mathematics lessons help pupils to show increased confidence and skill in number work.

15. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are generally good. They enter the school with above average skills using computers. The majority of pupils come from socially advantaged backgrounds and have computers at home, and most report good provision in their primary schools. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 because they have separate lessons in each of these years. They are not able to transfer and develop these skills in their work in other subjects because the school has insufficient computers.
16. The school uses prior attainment data to set targets for individual pupils. The predictions are modified as pupils move through the school to reflect their progress at each stage. The school reports the overall targets for the end of Year 9 and 11 in line with national requirements. Targets set across the whole school are broken down into subject targets but not all subjects are rigorously monitoring the targets of different groups of pupils and this leads to inconsistencies in results. Sometimes targets do not reflect sufficient challenge. For example, although there is a rising trend in standards as pupils enter the school the average point score target per pupil in 2002 is the same as that in 2001. This does not reflect sufficient challenge for these pupils based on their results at the end of Year 9. Currently, the school development plan and subject development plans do not have attainment targets securely embedded as success criteria although the recent application for language college status will provide the school with a very good model for improvement in this area.

### **Standards and achievement in the Sixth form**

17. Standards in the sixth form are in line with expectations for students nationally and recruitment is good. The inspection covered thirteen subjects including those with the highest proportion of students. Since the last inspection the sixth form has increased in size. During that time results have been maintained at around the national average. Approximately 50 per cent of the higher attaining pupils in Year 11 enter the sixth form, an increase of 26 per cent since the last inspection. The admission criteria is four GCSE grades in the range A\*-C but sometimes pupils are accepted onto courses where they have no previous qualification in that subject. This is obviously the case in new subjects such as sociology and psychology but it also occurs in other subjects. For example, in art students are accepted solely on the basis of their wish to study art, and the department attracts some students who have had no experience of art at Key Stage 4 and also students from other schools. This totally inclusive policy produces a challenging mix of students from differing backgrounds and with a wide range of prior attainment.
18. The majority of students study for AS modules in Year 12 but continue into Year 13 to complete the A2 course in the subject. The most popular courses are in English, mathematics, business studies, and sociology. Recruitment has been falling in modern foreign languages, physics and chemistry. In 2001 the most successful subjects at A level were design and technology, social studies and history. Results were below average in art, biology, English literature, music, sociology, sports studies and geography. They were well below average in fashion and fabrics and mathematics. However, the small numbers involved in many of the courses make comparisons with national figures unreliable. There has been significant under-performance in biology and physics over the last three years and also in English literature.

19. There are no national comparators available for 2002. However, provisional examination results show a high number of students entered for A levels in business studies, English literature, mathematics and sociology. Nearly all students entered achieved a grade except in Biology where 4 out of 14 students were ungraded. The number of students awarded the higher grades A-B is highest in business studies where 13 out of 35 students gained the grade. A similar proportion was awarded to students studying art, history and mathematics. There were no higher grades awarded in German, graphics or home, family and society.
20. In 2001, the last year for which there are national comparisons, the average points score for students entered for two or more A levels or AS equivalent is in line with the national average. This level of success is similar in 2002 although there has been an increase from 15.4 to 18.6. There are no clear patterns emerging showing any significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.
21. The standards of work seen in the current Year 12 and 13 are above expectations in the majority of subjects inspected. They are well above in French and German, mathematics and religious education. They are in line with expectations in art, design and technology and geography. They are below expectations in physics. This pattern mostly reflects examination results except in foreign languages where standards are much improved because of the high quality of teaching seen. In these two subjects students are making very good progress. This is also the judgement for the achievement of students studying the new courses in religious education. In the majority of subjects students' achievement is good except in geography where it is satisfactory and in physics where it is unsatisfactory. This is because of unsatisfactory teaching, sometimes by staff who are not specialist physics teachers.

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

22. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning, their very good personal development and their good behaviour have a very positive impact on their learning. Overall this constitutes an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Most pupils enjoy school and make good use of the wide range of opportunities it offers, including sports, music and other extra-curricular activities.
23. In most lessons pupils are keen to learn. They are attentive and concentrate on their work well. Very good attitudes to learning are due to factors such as good teaching, a purposeful working atmosphere in lessons, and very supportive relationships. For example, in a good religious education lesson about the symbolic significance of the key features of a church, Year 11 pupils' excellent attitudes and cooperative behaviour helped them to make good progress. Similarly, in a very good design and technology lesson about textiles, Year 10 pupils worked industriously for the whole lesson, supported each other well, showed pride in their work and made very good progress. Students with learning difficulties relate well to their teachers and support staff and feel comfortable in school. The level of input they receive contributes significantly to the positive attitudes that many students display in lessons.
24. In most lessons pupils behave well and in about half the lessons seen they behaved very well. However in a small number of lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 9, a few pupils misbehave and disrupt learning for all. This misbehaviour is often linked to inappropriate teaching. In a very few lessons the behaviour management skills of inexperienced teachers are inadequate to cope with the challenging, disrespectful and immature behaviour of a few pupils, mainly boys. Most pupils behave well outside

lessons. Despite the crowded corridors, pupils move round the one-way system between lessons in a generally sensible and patient manner. There is a good staff presence in the corridors, and when the occasional aggressive incident occurs it is dealt with by staff promptly and well. Pupils are courteous and helpful to visitors. They show respect for property in the way they handle books and equipment, and they show respect for the attractive displays; but the amount of litter around the school, particularly outside the dining room, demonstrates a lack of respect for the school environment.

25. The school is a harmonious community. Relationships, including relationships between pupils of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, are very good. Pupils show good respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. This is due not only to the supportive ethos that exists, but also to the way that pupils are taught to understand and respect other cultures and religions. In lessons pupils work well in groups and are supportive and respectful of each other. In a meeting of the school council pupils treated each other with enormous respect; all requests, whether from Year 11 representatives for soup and bread at lunch time or from Year 7 representatives for goal posts in order to save their school blazers, were treated with equal respect and seriousness. Some bullying and racist incidents do occur, but the school has very good procedures in place to deal with them and pupils and parents are confident that they are dealt with firmly and well.
26. Pupils show a very good level of responsibility and initiative. Pupils of all ages have varied opportunities to take on responsibility. They can apply to become mediators, they can help in the library and can act as year group representatives to the school council. In their extensive fund raising for charity pupils show both good initiative and responsibility. PALS (pupils always listening) is a very popular scheme. About seventy Year 11 pupils, in similar proportions of girls and boys, applied to join it last year. They perform a very useful role in the school by acting as mentors to Year 7 pupils and by helping in Year 7 form tutor time. In this way they help Year 7 pupils settle in to school and allay their fears about bullying.
27. In the last school year 57 pupils were excluded for fixed periods and five pupils were permanently excluded; this is slightly higher than average. All but five of the fixed period exclusions were given to boys. Figures show that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are no more likely to be excluded than white pupils. Most exclusions are given for serious incidents, or when pupils repeatedly offend against school rules and fail to respond to other disciplinary procedures. Exclusion procedures are carried out correctly. The school uses many different supportive strategies, including counselling and anger management techniques, to help disruptive pupils who are at risk of exclusion; but it upholds high standards of discipline and exclusion is used as one means of maintaining these standards.
28. Attendance is satisfactory. It is well above the national average but has been declining over the past few years and is less than expected in a school such as Barr Beacon, which is popular and has supportive parents. For the last school year the level of unauthorised absence was very low but attendance was only just above 92 percent; in Years 8, 9 and 10 it was below 92 percent. The irregular attendance of a minority of pupils is hampering their progress. The school has reacted to the decline in attendance by putting a number of useful strategies in place and attendance now has a much higher profile. The new attendance manager is in the process of carrying out various analyses of attendance. Punctuality is generally good and registration is taken efficiently and correctly.

## **Students' attitudes, values and personal development in the Sixth form**

29. Overall students have very positive attitudes to school and a large majority of students who completed the questionnaire said they enjoy being in the sixth form. Relationships with teachers and between students are very good. Students play an important part in the running of the school and provide very good role models for pupils. For example, sixth formers help with paired reading and as mentors to younger pupils in mathematics in the lower school. Students play a full part in extra-curricular activities and they appreciate the trips, seminars and conferences which the school arranges for them. Students display very good attitudes to their learning and rise well to the challenges of A level work. They are very appreciative of the good teaching they receive and the helpfulness of their teachers. The majority of students feel that the school listens and responds to their views and treats them as responsible adults, though a significant minority disagree.
30. Students' personal development and relationships are very good. Young Enterprise, a business simulation activity, is popular and successful and provides plenty of opportunities for students to exercise initiative and responsibility. Students play an important part in running the school council and also have their own sixth form committee in which they make decisions about the running of the common room. Trained sixth form mediators supervise pupil mediators at break time and now help to train new pupil mediators. In addition to their service within school Year 12 students now do a period of voluntary service in the community on two afternoons a week. Last year students organised a minibus to take elderly residents to Asda and students are also very active in various fund raising initiatives.
31. Students are developing the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning very well. For example in Young Enterprise they learn a great deal about group dynamics in a business setting. A large majority of students agree that the school helps and encourages them to study. The school provides a two day induction conference as well as courses on study skills at the beginning of Years 12 and 13. There is a pleasant quiet study room that is supervised and fairly well used, but there is no timetable of private study and students are allowed to work in their common room if they prefer. This is one of the ways in which the school treats students as young adults. Students are encouraged to evaluate themselves. For example in a lesson on the subject "Why go to university?" Year 12 students had to describe the qualities you need for university and then assess themselves on these. They did this honestly and confidently and many admitted that they thought they would find time-management and self-motivation difficult at university.
32. Sixth form attendance is very good. In the last school year the attendance of Year 13 was 95 per cent and the overall attendance of the sixth form was significantly higher than the main school. The school is strict about attendance and there are procedures for ensuring that students who fail to turn up for a lesson are referred to the head of sixth form. Punctuality is less good but overall is satisfactory.

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

33. The quality of teaching is good in all years and is matched by the quality of learning. It is at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of all lessons, and of these, 44 per cent are good while a further 25 per cent are either very good or excellent. The proportion of very good or excellent lessons is slightly higher in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The quality of teaching is less than satisfactory in four per cent of lessons in Years 7 to 9 and seven per cent of lessons in Years 10 and 11. This represents 12

lessons observed where there was unsatisfactory or poor teaching and many of these were in science. The quality of teaching has improved since the last report when it was unsatisfactory in almost 10 per cent of lessons, and only 50 per cent of lessons were considered to be good or very good with none considered excellent. In nearly three quarters of all lessons seen the response of pupils was very good, an unusually high proportion. Some of the very good response is directly related to the very good quality of the teaching. The challenge for the school is to capitalise on these very good attitudes and bring the overall proportion of very good teaching closer to that of the pupils' response.

34. In English, teaching is good in all years. In mathematics the quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 but very good in Years 10 and 11. In science, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 where there is too much unsatisfactory teaching.
35. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good in the majority of subjects. It is satisfactory in history and personal and social education but very good in art, music and modern languages where teaching is challenging and pupils are encouraged to work independently. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is satisfactory in design and technology, information and communication technology, geography and personal and social education. In all other foundation subjects the quality of teaching is good.
36. The teaching of pupils with special needs is good overall and pupils make progress in their learning. Individual education plans give a workable profile and include effective strategies to enable students to reach their targets. Where teaching is well-matched to students' needs, progress is often better. This was seen in an English lesson where pupils could understand the need to adopt a specific narrative voice in their writing because of the teacher's careful planning and step-by-step explanation. In a mathematics lesson where the majority of the pupils were on the special needs register, pupils improved their learning about fractions because the teaching moved on at an appropriate yet challenging pace. Where lesson planning is less effective learning slows down and little progress is made. This was seen in a science lesson where tasks were too repetitive and not matched to pupils' needs. Learning support teachers and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress of pupils with statements of educational need including those pupils with medical and specific learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They have a good input into the classroom and are involved in the planning of lessons. A good example of this occurred in a geography lesson where the teaching assistant worked in tandem with the teacher to ensure that all students were on task and ready for each change of activity. This helped to sustain pupils' focus on their learning throughout the lesson. However, the withdrawal of pupils for 12.5 per cent of their monthly time allocation in a subject such as art inhibits their own progress and that of others when they arrive half way through a double lesson.
37. The quality of learning reflects the quality of teaching at all stages. With the exception of information and communication technology and religious education where there is some lack of subject expertise, teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and teach with confidence encouraging their pupils to question and explore intellectual possibilities within the tasks set. For example, in religious education where ethical issues are debated vigorously. A climate of learning is established through the good relationships which exist between teachers and pupils and which are maintained through the good control and management of classes. Lessons are well planned and based upon a prior learning and strategy that ensures that pupils have clearly understood objectives for each lesson. Effective questioning

at the start of lessons sets the framework for the lessons and tests pupils' recollections of previous learning. Clear expositions with explanations of key words and concepts enable pupils to understand what is expected of them and to assimilate new knowledge, ideas and processes. The pace of activities within the lesson is lively and the ends of lessons are ordered involving a process of questioning and evaluation giving pupils the opportunity to reinforce their learning objectives and assess the progress which they have made. Activities and tasks are well structured with a range of interesting resources, as for instance, where pupils learning how to make a clay figure examine photographs, sculptures at various stages of the creative process as well as a video tape of an artist at work talking about her sculptures of sea life.

38. However, despite the good teaching seen during the inspection, there are some weaknesses that result in a significant number of pupils failing to reach their potential by the end of Year 11. The level of absenteeism, while not huge, does have a significant negative impact upon the rate of progress of individual pupils. The poor behaviour of a few pupils in some classes mean that other pupils' learning is adversely affected when the pace of lessons is held up while pupils are disciplined or lessons themselves are actively disrupted. The pace of learning is also affected when objectives are not clearly outlined and there are no timed targets so that pupils adopt a leisurely approach to their work. Pupils also fail to maximise their learning when teachers are too prescriptive or labour their explanations which result in pupils being insufficiently challenged to think for themselves or work independently. When teaching capitalises on, and releases the talent of the pupils, it is then at its most successful. The school has pockets of excellence, particularly in mathematics, which could serve as a model to other subjects.
39. Inconsistent use is made of information and communication technology because access to computers is limited and the network is not always operating reliably. While most subjects have access to some computers, the small number of computers in the school inhibits the range of strategies that can be used by teachers and so prevent pupils from developing independent learning. Time is also wasted in travelling to computer suites. The limited number of already heavily used suites means that the planning of subject schemes of work is dictated by computer availability rather than the demands of the subject.
40. Assessment of pupils' work is good. Teachers know their pupils well and provide consistent formative assessment throughout regular lessons. There is a good dialogue with pupils individually and in groups and they are made aware of what they need to improve further. Classwork and homework is marked regularly.
41. Homework is regularly set and marked. Pupils have a varied range of tasks and often make use of computer facilities at home and in the community to do their research. Homework tasks are effective in developing, consolidating and extending the learning done during the lesson.

#### **How well are students taught in the sixth form?**

42. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good overall and matches the quality of learning. Of the 93 per cent of lessons that are satisfactory, 47 per cent are good, 30 per cent are very good and six per cent are excellent. There is seven per cent of unsatisfactory or poor teaching, the equivalent of only four lessons, almost all of which can be found in one area of science. This shows an improvement since the

last report when 10 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory, there was no excellent teaching and only 60 per cent of lessons were good or very good.

43. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good in English and very good in Mathematics. In science it is inconsistent with chemistry being good and biology satisfactory while the teaching of physics is unsatisfactory. The teaching of geography and design and technology are both satisfactory. All other areas of sixth form teaching are good.
44. The majority of students benefit from teachers with a large degree of expertise in their subjects and in these lessons students are able to debate issues energetically and articulately as they do in religious education. Relationships between staff and students are good which encourages and motivates students. In subjects such as art, which some students are taking for the first time since they were fourteen, teachers show a willingness to provide additional time and help to make up for lost ground rapidly developing skills and extending their knowledge. Resources are well used and lessons are imaginative and well structured to enable students to develop critical skills. Key skills are well developed.
45. However, the limited number of computers and the frequent unreliability of the network militates against sustained development of progress in some subjects. Not all teaching matches the very strong commitment of the students and in some lessons teaching lacks the imaginative strategies that would stimulate and develop more independent learning. Homework is not always used to its greatest effect in some subjects. Although all departments have procedures for assessment, they are not always used effectively to identify and raise levels of individual performance, partly because subject coordinators are not always able to monitor teaching.
46. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall. Teachers structure their lessons carefully to ensure success and students have access to technology where it is needed. Gifted and talented students are stimulated and encouraged within the framework of the lessons and given opportunities to participate in community events and in broadening their horizons whenever possible.

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

47. The teaching week consists of 40 periods with a total pupil contact time of 25 hours that meets national recommendations. There are many double periods that last for 75 minutes. Single lessons are of either 40 or 35 minutes. Some double periods are split by mid-morning break. This creates a problem in some physical education lessons on two mornings each week. Some lessons begin late because of the time taken to traverse the large site.
48. Pupils enter from a large number of primary schools. There is satisfactory curriculum liaison with the main schools sending pupils to Barr Beacon. Primary school reports and national test results are used to place pupils on entry into broad ability bands for teaching purposes, and into mixed ability tutor groups in which they are taught for personal and social education. Setting is introduced in mathematics in Year 8 and in English and science in Year 9. Setting based on physical ability has been introduced recently in physical education. The transfer of data about pupils' competency in different subjects is not yet fully effective and many foundation subjects do not have sufficient awareness about the prior attainment of pupils before they enter the school.

49. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and meets the needs of all pupils. It includes religious education and all national curriculum subjects. Allocation of time is in line with national guidance in the majority of subjects. In Year 9, 60 higher attaining pupils, predominantly girls, are selected to study German as a second foreign language. These pupils have a reduced allocation of French and fewer periods of physical education. Some pupils and parents expressed disappointment that the school does not teach drama to GCSE standard. The inspection agrees that it is unusual for a school of this size not to offer drama and if there is to be a curriculum review in the future, it would support the introduction of drama, particularly since the subject is known to have a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour of boys. The standards attained by boys is an area of concern since boys' attainment in recent years is lower than expectations and there are two year groups with a significantly greater proportion of boys than girls in Year 10 and Year 8.
50. In Years 10 and 11 setting in each subject is, as far as possible, by ability. However the spread of ability in some of the groups in modern foreign languages makes it difficult for teachers to focus on the specific learning needs of all pupils. All pupils study a wide range of compulsory subjects including a modern foreign language. There are two further options chosen from a wide selection of subjects although there are few vocationally based courses. The school does endeavour to grant each pupil his/her chosen options.
51. There is good provision for personal and social education. The programme for personal social and health education covers all the statutory areas. There is good use of outside agencies, for example for drugs education for older pupils. From Years 9 to 11 lessons are taught by teachers with specialist training. The positive impact of this was seen in the very skilled lesson given to Year 11 pupils on stress management, as part of their preparation for mock exams. A weakness in the coordination is the lack of monitoring of teaching, in order to check that teaching and learning is effective. Eleven lessons were observed overall including seven for Years 8 and 9 pupils on drugs, citizenship and careers. Although teaching was predominantly satisfactory, in many of the lessons a significant number of pupils displayed negative attitudes and immature behaviour that impeded learning. There is a well planned programme for the use of form tutor time on the days when year groups do not have assembly. On some days pupils do silent reading or other curriculum work; on other days tutors lead a discussion, usually around the thought for the day. These are well led sessions which set a good tone for the day and enable tutors to get to know pupils well.
52. The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of extra curricular activities that are well supported by pupils. Provision for sports is very good except for the outdoor hard surface area that is in poor condition. There are regular music and drama productions, visits to a variety of venues at home and overseas and several lunch time clubs and revision groups. Although there is extra-curricular drama it is not offered as a timetabled subject. The school does offer a broad range of worthwhile opportunities. There is a desire to offer more vocational courses but this has not reached fruition. There are effective strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.
53. This is a socially inclusive school. Thirteen per cent of its pupils come from different cultural backgrounds and are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. Pupils gain insight into different values and beliefs and learn to appreciate their own and other cultures. There is good provision for pupils with special needs to have access to a satisfactory curriculum in mainstream classes. Some pupils are withdrawn from a different lesson each week for booster sessions to improve their basic skills using

commercial computer programmes in literacy and numeracy. Pupils with a statement of need get good support and there is a close working relationship with local authority agencies. Those pupils with disabilities benefit from the school's inclusive policy and this enables them to access the curriculum. Pupils who display challenging behaviour and have sporadic or poor attendance have a designated teaching assistant who organises anger and stress management sessions as well as talking through strategies that could help pupils cope better in the classroom. There is a 'time out' card for a few challenging pupils to come to the learning support department when they feel that they need to cool off. However, rewards are given if they manage to continue in the lesson without disrupting their education and that of the other pupils. The reading club meets before school every Monday and Friday morning and this gives pupils another opportunity to practice their reading skills with senior pupils. To prevent older pupils on the special needs register from becoming disaffected there are linked courses with the local college. Those pupils who have English as an additional language make good progress and the majority are fluent in English. Those in need of extra help are well-supported in lessons. The school's good practice in this work and its policy for the integration of asylum seekers has been recognised and applications have been made for beacon status in this area.

54. There is strong parental support for the manner in which pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility. There is a school council. Many senior pupils are involved in mentoring youngsters and in assisting with paired reading. There are good links with the local community. Speakers from a variety of backgrounds accept invitations to talk to pupils. Being a community school provides many benefits. Before entry a large proportion of new pupils have become familiar with the school through involvement in community activities.

### **Curriculum in the sixth form**

55. The curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory. Approximately half of Year 11 pupils progress to the sixth form. Students normally study up to four subjects to AS level in Year 12. In Year 13 they focus on their 3 main A levels plus general studies if they wish. Entry into the sixth form is open to all but is not offered indiscriminately or unconditionally. A minimum of four GCSE passes at grade C or above is normally required. Additionally, a one year GNVQ Intermediate course in business and finance is offered. The entry requirement is normally four GCSE passes at grade D or above. The school recognises the narrow provision in vocational courses and is negotiating with other local providers to extend the options available to students. The traditional range of A/AS level courses is one that the school feels best equipped to provide and that is supported by parents and students.
56. There is no separate careers programme in the sixth form. Advice is incorporated into subject lessons and there are frequent visits from the careers advisor. Provision across the range of subjects is not consistent. There are some links with local businesses and occasional use of facilities at Birmingham University has been arranged. This is an area of concern for students that is supported by the inspection findings. The school does not provide a satisfactory programme for religious education in the sixth form.

### **Spiritual, moral social and cultural development**

57. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school; this constitutes an improvement since the last inspection. The strong

ethos of mutual respect, in which pupils are valued and learn to value each other, is the basis of the school's very good provision. Departments have identified the aspects of their subjects which deliver spiritual, social, moral or cultural education and provision is monitored by the senior management team.

58. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Religious education makes an excellent contribution to pupils' understanding, not only of religious values and beliefs, but also of issues such as the response of the human spirit to adversity. Good opportunities for reflection on experience and emotion are provided in English lessons, for example through the study of poetry. In an art lesson which included a video about Goldsworthy, pupils marvelled at the way he created sculptures using natural materials and the environment. There are planned opportunities for reflection and discussion within form tutor time. In one Year 8 tutor group pupils listened attentively while a pupil talked about her christening bracelet and the teacher then led a good discussion on christening and naming ceremonies in other faiths.
59. Assemblies contribute to pupils' personal development although they do not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of worship. In some assemblies pupils are guided to reflect on important moral issues, as for example in the assembly for Year 9 pupils on the theme of remembrance.
60. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is a clear moral code which is consistently promoted at all times. Adults set a good example in the respect and concern they show for others. Regular fund raising organised through the school council prompts pupils to think about those less fortunate than themselves. Displays, for example one that compares the earnings of Posh Spice with those of a girl in India, encourage pupils to think about equality and justice. The school works vigorously to counteract racism. Opportunities to discuss moral issues are taken up in many subjects, particularly in religious education and in English. The learning support team are good role models for pupils with special educational needs and contribute to pupils' moral and social awareness by setting high standards of cooperation and concern for others.
61. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development, both within the curriculum and through the wide range of extra-curricular activities that are available. Most subjects include opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or groups and there are many opportunities for corporate experiences, for example school productions. A particular strength of the school is its very good provision of opportunities to exercise responsibility. Pupils have a genuine stake in their community because they help to make it work. The vibrant school council, which is made up of representatives of year councils, is a prime example of this. It gives responsibility and a voice to pupils and the school listens and responds to its well-considered and well-discussed requests. PALS (pupils always listening) is a very well established scheme which has grown and developed. Year 11 pupils train as mentors and are linked to Year 7 forms or to individuals; they help to reassure Year 7 pupils about problems like bullying. Pupils of any age can apply for training to become mediators and, with the assistance of sixth-formers, are at hand at break times to help to mediate between pupils. Pupils also have jobs as monitors and the library runs a good training scheme for volunteer helpers.
62. Provision for pupils' cultural development is also very good. Religious education, geography, art, music, and design and technology contribute well by encouraging pupils to appreciate other cultures and cultural artefacts as well as their own. For example in the textiles component of design and technology Year 10 pupils research

a culture of their choice and use their findings to inform their designs. Displays around the school have a multi-cultural flavour and the excellent religious education displays are regularly changed depending on what religious festival is being celebrated. An assembly during the inspection week respectfully celebrated the beginning of Ramadan. Extra curricular clubs such as various music groups, a drama club and numerous sporting activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Trips made to art galleries, theatres, poetry events, historic sites such as Ironbridge and Tamworth Castle, as well as trips abroad and an annual exchange to Germany help to broaden pupils' horizons.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form**

63. The sixth form provides students with a very rich variety of opportunities to further their personal development. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good.
64. The newly introduced religious education course in philosophy and ethics is helping students to think in depth about moral issues and is helping to promote both their moral and spiritual development. Students learn about issues related to the concept of justice, both in religious education lessons and in history, for example the civil rights struggle. Teaching styles in the sixth form encourage students to make links between aspects of their learning. For example, in a very good general studies lesson, students were challenged to think about the kind of aesthetic criteria which a model agency might use to distinguish between the beauty of different faces, and to compare these with criteria which could be used to judge different paintings.
65. There are very good opportunities for moral and social development. Young Enterprise is very popular and successful and makes a significant contribution to students' social development. Students give oral presentations to a sympathetic audience of their peers, both in assemblies and in some lessons, and these help to boost their confidence and speaking skills. The school arranges several conferences for sixth formers, including "Challenge of Management", and one known as "Chocolate and Trainers" which explores issues of exploitation in the third world. These conferences, given by expert speakers, introduce students to a more adult style of presentation and learning.
66. The tradition of service is well established in the sixth form. Students help to run the mediation service, they help younger pupils with paired reading, and in their role as prefects they help to manage the school at lunch time. Students play a prominent role in the school council and they chair year councils. They come up with imaginative ways to raise funds for charity; for example they have arranged a "Teacher as Weakest Link" event to raise money for "Children in Need". The new initiative of Community Service for Year 12 students builds on this tradition of service within the school and takes it beyond the school boundary. The very good opportunities for cultural development are similar to those described for the main school. In addition students have the opportunity to visit France and Germany. The trip which nine students took to Borneo last year, following more than a year of planning and fund raising, clearly had a great impact on them.
67. There is effective provision for personal and social education. This is delivered through two short courses which cover topics such as smoking, drugs and alcohol. This is supplemented by a one day health education conference covering topics such as stress management, sex education and first aid.

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

68. The school provides very good care and support for its pupils. A committed and experienced team of heads of years remains with their teams of form tutors and their pupils as they move up the school. In this way strong relationships are built up, not only with pupils, but also in many cases with their families. Very good communication between heads of year and parents is one of the strengths of the pastoral system. Heads of year are ably led by a deputy head who ensures that the pastoral system develops to meet pupils' needs and who oversees the very good pastoral procedures. Improvements since the last inspection include the appointment of an extra head of year. This system helps to share the work load and is working very effectively.
69. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare, including health and safety, are good. A fire assessment has recently been completed which confirms that the school's fire procedures are satisfactory. Evacuation procedures are practised at regular intervals. There are good risk assessment procedures for visits outside school. Medical and accident procedures and recording systems are effective. Staff in the reception office as well as several teachers have first aid qualifications. Child protection is the responsibility of the deputy head, but a head of year has also undertaken training in order to provide back-up if necessary. Teachers who are new to the school are briefed on child protection issues. There is good involvement of outside agencies, and the school nurse and education welfare officer make a valuable contribution to the school's pastoral provision. The school shows its commitment to supporting disturbed pupils, many of whom have difficult backgrounds, by employing a school counsellor one day a week to provide individual counselling.
70. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. In addition to close monitoring by heads of year and the education welfare officer, the school uses a number of other strategies to improve attendance. These include first day calls and raising the profile of attendance through the giving of rewards for individuals and forms. The education welfare officer gives very good support to the school and a member of staff has recently been appointed as attendance manager to develop further strategies to combat absenteeism. The school regularly appeals to parents to support their efforts particularly when parents choose to take their annual holidays during term time. In a few cases in years 10 and 11 the examination results of pupils have been lower because absenteeism has had a negative impact on the standards of their coursework.
71. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Staff have consistently high expectations of good behaviour. Pupils are motivated by the new reward system and regard the system of sanctions for misbehaviour as fair. The school has a good range of strategies for supporting pupils who, because of persistent misbehaviour, are at risk of exclusion. These strategies include behaviour contracts, counselling, and the close involvement of parents. A recent introduction is a social skills course for selected pupils who need help with anger management; there are early indications that this is helping pupils. There are very good procedures for dealing with bullying and racist incidents. Pupils are confident that they have someone to whom they can turn in need, whether a member of staff or a peer mentor or mediator. The school works hard to counteract bullying and racism through its guidance programme. It takes all incidents seriously and the good records kept indicate that it deals with them appropriately.

72. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Attainment and progress are clearly recorded for all pupils and methods of assessment are accurate and applied consistently. Teachers, key workers and teaching assistants know individual pupils very well and are fully aware of their physical, emotional and academic needs. There are good systems in place for monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs and effective strategies which identify how well pupils on the special needs register are making progress. Good records are kept and students' individual programmes are reviewed regularly with new targets set and planned strategies for improvement. Those pupils with a statement of special need have an annual review to see how their needs have changed over time and what new strategies need to be put in place to support them. Pupils with disabilities are catered for and there is close liaison with the local agencies but the school has yet to begin its audit for access to buildings as required by new government regulations.
73. The use of assessment to inform learning and guide planning is very variable and overall is unsatisfactory. It is good in English, art, religious education, information and communication technology and special educational needs and very good in mathematics and art. In other departments it is satisfactory, apart from science, and design and technology where it is unsatisfactory. In all departments National Curriculum levels are recorded at the end of Years 7 to 9 and are reported to parents at the end of Year 9. Mathematics has a particularly refined system that enables regular standardised assessments to be electronically converted to National Curriculum levels. Pupils have target sheets in the front of their books and are very aware of their progress against targets set. Graduated assessment in the GCSE course is based on a similar principle. This very good system is helping to raise standards. Good target setting and tracking in some other subjects also supports pupils' achievement well. In science and in design and technology assessment information is not properly used to track pupils' progress or to guide the planning of teaching. This is unsatisfactory.
74. The quality of marking is variable. In art it is very good, in religious education, mathematics, information technology and geography it is good; in most other subjects it is satisfactory. Whole school procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils academic progress are satisfactory. Effort grades are collected for all pupils three times a year and are reported to parents. Heads of year identify pupils who have done particularly well and also those who give cause for concern. In each case parents are informed by letter and in the latter case parents are invited into school for consultation. On review days at the end of each year pupils record their effort and attainment grades and set themselves targets which are discussed in interviews with their form tutors. This system is helpful in so far as it encourages pupils to reflect on their progress, but the assessment information used for reviews is not refined enough to set meaningful academic targets.
75. The school collects a range of assessment data centrally which enables it to compare pupils' actual performance with their predicted performance and thus monitor progress. All staff have access to this assessment system and some subject heads use it effectively to monitor pupils' progress in their subject. However the degree to which it is shared and used by subject teachers and subject heads is uneven. The data is also used effectively for different analyses, for example to compare the performance of different subjects.
76. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. The school has developed a very positive and supportive culture and the pastoral team has a clear idea of the importance of removing barriers to learning,

such as misbehaviour and poor attendance. On a daily basis form tutors are responsible for monitoring pupils. The new homework diaries as well as the good commendations system are both useful monitoring tools. The senior management team makes thorough checks at intervals to check that homework diaries are properly maintained. Good pastoral procedures, good lines of communication and regular meetings both within the pastoral system and between the pastoral system and school management ensure that causes for concern are identified and acted upon.

### **Assessment in the sixth form**

77. Overall procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress in the sixth form are very good. The school database uses students' average GCSE points scores and Advanced Level Information System data to set predicted grades and departments then use these predicted grades to negotiate individual target grades jointly with students. Sixth form tutors monitor progress during two review days in Year 12 and a further one in Year 13. On completion of their two-year courses students' actual grades are compared to their predicted ones in order to ascertain the degree of 'value added'.
78. Assessment procedures are good in the majority of sixth form subjects. They are very good in business studies, religious education and mathematics. However, the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning and to inform students of how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve is less secure in several subjects. It is particularly weak in physics.

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

79. The current provision for the support of students is good. The senior team have recently had a thorough review of the sixth form tutor system and the new system was introduced in September 2002. Previously tutors moved through the school with their year group. From September 2002 there is a specialist team of tutors with responsibility for the sixth form students. There is a programme of training planned and the school intends to improve the role of the tutors to make better use of assessment data across all subjects in order to diagnose student needs more regularly and provide a more effective support system. There have been some good improvements in this area since the last inspection. The review days involve students more closely in the identification of their own targets. The programme of extension studies has been expanded to include one day conferences on a range of issues and better provision for the development of study skills. The private study facilities for exclusive use by sixth form students have been improved.

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

80. Parents hold positive views about the school and it is popular and oversubscribed. The parents' questionnaire was only returned by about 20 per cent of parents, but the results demonstrate parents' approval of the work of the school. The qualities that parents particularly like are the good teaching, and the way the school is helping their children to make good progress and to become mature. Parents at the parents' meeting expressed generally positive views. Parents of students in the sixth form are very satisfied with the school's provision for their children.
81. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory overall, having both strengths and weaknesses. Parents find the school approachable. They value the good communication between them and pastoral staff, both when problems arise and when

there is cause for celebration. Parents and pupils also value the good quality homework diaries that parents can use for communication. The school has efficient arrangements for monitoring diaries to check that they are properly maintained. However a significant minority of parents do not think that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress. Although the school sends out effort grades on a termly basis, these do not provide parents with sufficient information about children's academic progress and the school should consider ways in which it can keep parents better informed. Parents also express concern about the way parents' evenings are organised. The school admits that in large sets it is sometimes difficult for parents to see their child's teacher and agrees that it needs to improve the organisation of these evenings. Although the school has many informal channels of communication with parents, it does not consult with them on a formal basis. The questionnaire reveals that a significant minority of parents do not think that the school works in close partnership with them and this is an area that the school should seek to develop.

82. Parents are informed when the school's screening processes reveal that a student has special needs and their views are taken into account. Key workers have close contact with parents to keep them informed of all support programmes that are available. Both the views of the pupil and the parent or carer are taken into account during the process of identification and assessment and particularly when statements of educational need are reviewed.
83. The school provides parents with a good range of information about the school including a well presented prospectus and an informative governors' annual report. Parents are provided with very good information about the curriculum, including individual booklets on the curriculum from Years 7 to 9 and one for Years 10 and 11. The interesting termly newsletters keep parents up to date with school news. Parents appreciate the information evenings held for parents of Year 9 and 11 pupils; the Year 11 evening, which is combined with a careers service event, is particularly well attended. Annual reports on pupils' progress are full and informative. They are based on good teacher knowledge and phrased in an encouraging manner. Suggestions on how pupils can improve their achievement are usually included, but they often describe attitudes and are not consistently specific to the subject.
84. The level of parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. Most parents support their children's homework well and regularly check and sign homework diaries. Parents are keen to serve the school as governors, and the school highly values the help of community association members, many of whom are parents, in their preparation of the bid for language college status. Although the school does not have a Parent Teacher Association parents help the school in various ways, for example by supporting extra-curricular activities and by serving refreshments at school events. However, despite a vigorously worded letter about the importance of good attendance, a significant minority of parents fail to support the school by ensuring that their children attend school on a regular basis.

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

85. Barr Beacon school was last inspected in 1997. At that time the judgement on leadership and management of the school was very positive. The previous headteacher remained in post for nearly three years after the inspection and the position was filled by the current headteacher in January 2001. Several of the key issues identified in the previous report were implemented by governors and the school during the time of the last headteacher.

86. The overall quality of leadership and management is good. In the relatively short period of time that she has been in post the current headteacher has acquired a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Her immediate vision included far-ranging consultation with primary colleagues and other agents in the local community to secure a firm foundation to the school's application to government to become a specialist language college. In support of this bid she carried out a thorough review of the quality of teaching and provision in the modern foreign languages department and this has had a positive impact as this inspection report confirms. The management structure in the school was strengthened creating clearer lines of communication between subject coordinators and the senior team and forming the basis of a more rigorous system for monitoring areas of performance across the school. Several key posts were initiated to extend the senior team to include responsibilities for each key stage, special educational needs and the community. This new line management structure has been the vehicle for new ways of analysing information about performance. For example, GCSE results were evaluated formally by departments for the first time in September 2001 and extended to include A level results in September 2002. The performance management policy is the main way in which information about classroom activity is collected. There is currently no formal policy for the improvement of teaching and learning. However, the headteacher can articulate very clearly her vision for building on the guidance and experience gained from the application of the National Strategy for Key Stage 3. This has been a strong focus in the school and is having a positive impact on the standards and the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. The decision to appoint an additional head of year to support the pastoral provision in the school has had a positive impact and this area is now a very strong aspect of what the school does well.
87. The contribution of the governing body to the leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the governance of the school. They are very supportive, attendance at meetings is very good and the formal committee structure is well organised and appropriate. There is a good balance of backgrounds and several new parent governors have recently been elected to the group. Some governors are linked to specific areas of the school in line with national guidance but there is no formal system by which they are linked to subjects. This means that their main lines of communication into specific areas of concern such as the science department are limited and this is a restriction on how effectively they carry out their roles. Personal targets have been negotiated with the headteacher and these reflect priorities such as raising standards overall. They do not specifically focus on key priorities such as the decline in standards in science. A good deal of governor time in the last year has been spent on disciplinary hearings on pupil exclusions. Although questions about standards in science were raised at two curriculum meetings during that time there has been limited debate and governors have failed to follow up their concerns with enough rigour. Minutes of meetings do not include effective action points with a clear time scale and governors are not sufficiently aware of their role in helping to prioritise the strategic direction of Barr Beacon school. The majority of issues from the last inspection report have been dealt with but the most important one about standards and the quality of provision in design and technology is only just beginning to show signs of improvement, five years after the last inspection. This subject remains an area of concern and requires very careful monitoring. The problem of underachievement by boys has not been tackled effectively and is likely to have a more serious impact on standards across the school in the future. In addition the statutory requirements that were identified in the last inspection as not being met are still areas of non-compliance. There is still no daily

act of collective worship for all pupils, the provision for religious education in the sixth form is still weak and the requirements for information and communication technology across the school cannot be met fully with the unsatisfactory provision in place currently. The governors, headteacher and the senior team have failed to identify these as key priorities in the development of the school.

88. There have been several new appointments to the senior leadership team since the last inspection although the structure is much the same. It consists of the headteacher, two deputies and six other members each with line management responsibility for several subject areas. There is a great deal of talent and enthusiasm within this group and they are beginning to act as an effective conduit for information from subjects about performance across the school. It is a relatively newly formed group and the systems that have been put in place, such as the analysis of examination results and monitoring of lessons and pupil work, are not yet fully embedded in all areas so there is inconsistency on the ground at subject level. For example, some subjects report regular and effective support and monitoring by the senior team while others feel less secure about how well they are consulted and listened to. There has been a strong focus in the last twelve months on the National Strategy in Key Stage 3, support for special educational needs, the application for language college status, the introduction of citizenship and review of the sixth form. The group meets frequently although not all meetings are reported fully and the minutes of the formal meeting do not include action points or time targets. It is difficult to see how this group identifies the priorities for the school and then monitors them. There is an appropriate cycle for development planning and most department plans reflect the school development plan. However, there is limited evidence of rigorous critical analysis of performance across different areas of the school based on the evaluation of data collected in classrooms, from the scrutiny of pupils' work, from interviews with pupils and parents or from surveys of pupil and parent views. There are good systems in place that could be used more effectively for this purpose such as the school and year councils, parent governors, and some good systems of monitoring in some subjects. The school has invested heavily in this senior team. The proportion of time they spend teaching is very small and in order that the governors can be sure of value for money this team needs to take a much more strategic role in the school in the future. There needs to be a clear policy for monitoring teaching and learning and standards, rigorously implemented, with data collected and analysed not only through subjects but also across the school at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. This will ensure that patterns of performance and areas of weakness will be identified for all groups of pupils and can be monitored more effectively leading to a more strategic approach. The priority for the next few years must be to improve the quality of provision in the scientific and technological areas of the curriculum and to use data more effectively to support the performance of different groups of pupils, particularly boys and the highest attaining pupils.
89. The middle management structure in the school involves subject heads and heads of year. The quality of leadership and management of this group varies from excellent in mathematics and religious education to unsatisfactory in science. It is very good in art and modern foreign languages and at least satisfactory in all others. The management of information and communication technology is good although the leadership is less secure with significant concerns about the quality of the overall provision and some non-compliance of statutory requirements. This is also the situation in religious education where day-to-day leadership and management is excellent but long term leadership is less secure because of concerns about the statutory requirements for collective worship, time allocation in Years 10 and 11 and the provision in the sixth form. The majority of subjects have made satisfactory

improvement since the last inspection. Mathematics and religious education in particular have shown significant improvement. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in science and design and technology although the latter is on the cusp of change with a newly appointed head of department already showing clear vision for the subject. In art, modern foreign languages, mathematics and religious education there is very good monitoring and evaluation of standards and classroom activity. This aspect is unsatisfactory in science and design and technology, and less secure in information and communication technology where a very hard working head of department finds it impossible to monitor across the very large team of mainly non-specialist teachers. The leadership and management of the pastoral system are very good and are reflected in the very good personal development of pupils' and their very good attitudes and relationships.

90. There is good leadership and management of the learning support department by a recently appointed manager who has put an entirely new team in place. New systems ensure that all teachers are responsible for the identification, assessment and provision for pupils with special needs. This means planning an inclusive curriculum and acting as a primary source of support as set out in the Code of Practice. Four of the teaching assistants are key workers and they take responsibility for liaising with all interested parties, preparing individual education plans monitoring progress, conducting assessments and reviewing progress. The work of the learning support staff is characterised by teamwork, sharing of good practice and effective monitoring and evaluation. All school policies are in place and the improvement plan has achievable targets but is very detailed. The designated school governor is knowledgeable and supports the new developments taking place in the school. There has been good improvement since the last full inspection particularly with the school's inclusive policy of mainstream education for all and the reorganisation of support. With regard to the needs of gifted and talented pupils a few departments have made a tentative start but the policy is still in its infancy. Support for those pupils with English as a second language is good.
91. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Most of the issues identified have been addressed. Standards are improving and the school is very popular with pupils and parents. There are clear opportunities for further improvement under the leadership of the headteacher, governing body and senior team.

### **The strategic use of resources**

92. The school is in a strong position financially with a healthy surplus and a clear plan to reduce this to reflect spending needs in the school. The school's strategic financial planning is satisfactory and there are some exciting initiatives planned for the future such as the application for language college status that will bring in additional funds. Day-to-day financial control is sound and the school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. The development plans in departments and the school improvement plans are not as detailed as the language college application and the experience of writing such a bid will strengthen the process and future outcomes in the school. Technology is used well to record pupil progress and contracts are regularly reviewed. For example, when the catering contract was due for renewal discussions were held about the possibility of introducing a 'cashless' system. The school provides satisfactory value for money when the quality of teaching, improving standards and the leadership and management are considered.

### **Staffing**

93. There is a good match of teachers and support staff in the school to the curriculum in almost all subjects. Staff are well qualified and there is a good balance between recently appointed teachers and those with more experience. In a number of subjects including mathematics, art and modern foreign languages the staff are of very high quality. In information and communication technology and in religious education there is a shortage of specialist staff. Currently there is a relatively high number of non-specialist staff teaching these subjects for a few hours each week and this makes effective co-ordination of the work very difficult. The school has attempted to make suitable appointments but has been so far unsuccessful. The school reports serious problems in recruiting specialist staff to several subjects such as science, design and technology and information and communication technology. However, as a popular school, with a large sixth form, Barr Beacon is in a more fortunate position than many schools and needs to find more imaginative ways of solving the recruitment and retention problems in staffing.
94. Teachers undertake a very good range of staff development activities and this enables them to keep abreast of new developments including those relating to the curriculum. However in science in particular there is a need for the staff to undertake further development in order to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in this department. Teachers new to the school are briefed well. Newly qualified teachers are very well supported. They undertake a planned and well devised programme and have assigned mentors to whom they can refer. Performance management procedures are well developed in the school. There is a system of target setting with individual staff and routine observations of teaching and learning. Procedures are well understood by the staff.

### **Accommodation**

95. Accommodation is satisfactory. The school roll has risen since the last inspection which has led to eating areas and some thoroughfares being crowded at breaks and lunchtimes. Most subjects benefit from having sufficient and closely grouped classrooms. In music and geography accommodation is good and provides a stimulating environment in which pupils can learn effectively but in science there is a shortage of laboratories. Indoor facilities for physical education are good. For example, there is a sports hall and swimming pool but there is a shortage of outdoor hard surfaces for netball and for pupils to play on.

### **Resources**

96. Resources for learning overall are unsatisfactory because there are not enough computers available for use by pupils and the number and range of books in the school library are unsatisfactory. Resources are very good in mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and in religious education which has a good range of texts, videos, CD's and uses visits and visitors most effectively. They are good in art, English, science, physical education and geography. Geography also organise regular fieldtrips for all groups and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Resources are satisfactory in design and technology, and history. Library resources are good for science and English which has a good range of poetry, novels and fictional stock. They are well organised and identify easy reading and short stories. The school library is not sufficient to support pupils' learning in a school of this size and is often unavailable to pupils and staff because lessons have to be timetabled in it because of an overall shortage of space across the school. Library resources are satisfactory for geography and religious education but require development for modern foreign languages and for design and technology. Pupils can find books

using the computer and borrowing is also computerised. The facility is well managed. Access to computers is very good in modern foreign languages and good in the science and music departments. But access to information and communication technology is difficult in English, religious education, design and technology, mathematics and business studies. Access is difficult because the school has half the number of computers that is seen in similar schools nationally. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection.

### **Leadership and management in the sixth form**

97. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good overall. The school's aims and values are reflected in the life of the sixth form. Student numbers have increased significantly since the last inspection. The prospectus is informative. There is an active sixth form council that meets regularly. The head boy, head girl and their deputies have lunch regularly with the headteacher and the head of sixth form in order to discuss issues on an informal basis. Sixth form assemblies are held regularly and students' achievements are celebrated. Attendance in the sixth form was 93.79 per cent in 2001-2002 (92.75 per cent in October 2002). A wide range of courses is offered to students, courses that the students and their parents like and the school is best at teaching. Possibilities of expansion in this area are being considered with other schools. The sixth form improvement plan is integrated in the whole school improvement plan.
98. Leadership in subjects of the curriculum is variable. It is very good in business studies and good in mathematics, art, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology, history, religious education and English. It is satisfactory in geography, chemistry and biology and unsatisfactory in physics. Although the school has a system of monitoring and evaluation, not all subjects undergo this process regularly. Teachers are observed in the main by their heads of department and less frequently by members of the senior management team. The head of sixth form has played a key role in initiating discussions, for example, on the role of specialist tutors, at senior management meetings. Day-to-day operational management hampers him from focusing on issues of strategic importance. Members of the senior management team including the head of sixth form could contribute to monitoring and evaluation on a more systematic basis. The minutes of senior management meetings do not show action points emerging from discussions and the links with key documents such as the school improvement plan. Unless these issues are addressed, it is difficult to gauge progress in implementing sixth form priorities.

### **Resources**

99. Resources in the sixth form are generally adequate and are used effectively. In modern foreign languages, for example, good use is made of texts, videos, magazines, and interactive white boards. However, more equipment is needed in physics to teach it effectively. In all subject areas, more computers are needed to make teaching and learning more effective. In Business Studies, for example, there are six machines for a group of 20 - 25 students.
100. Accommodation is satisfactory. The size of the sixth form has increased considerably in recent years and the common room is now overcrowded. A supervised sixth form area with five computers and a small library is well used and has a positive impact on learning. Four new teaching rooms have been added recently but study space and access to computers is still limited. Accommodation in the sixth form is pleasant but

inadequate for some subject areas. In business studies a proportion of lessons is taught in computer rooms, outside the department or in the library. There is a shortage of laboratories for teaching science. In music and geography accommodation is good and provides a stimulating environment for students.

101. Teaching staff in the sixth form are generally well qualified and their expertise matches the requirements of the curriculum. The only exception is physics where one teacher does not have a specialist qualification.
102. The sixth form is broadly cost effective though staffing costs are slightly higher than income. Governors have a watching brief for expenditure of whole school including the sixth form. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities and the principles of best value are applied. As already stated, the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons, attendance is satisfactory, and the results are broadly in line with national averages. The sixth form is therefore giving satisfactory value for money. There should, however, be clear budget planning for the sixth form with listings of income and expenditure. Governors should consider the outcomes of the sixth form against expenditure and track value for money.

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

103. In order to maintain and develop further the standards of attainment and achievement, the governors, headteacher and senior staff should:

1. Raise the standards and improve the quality of provision in science so that it more closely matches that of mathematics and English by:
  - Improving the quality of teaching and learning through regular monitoring of lessons and pupils' work.
  - Sharing the best practices across all three subjects by identifying a close mentoring programme of support to the science department by the highly successful mathematics and English departments.
  - Improving the quality of the leadership and management of science so that it more closely matches the outstanding example in mathematics.
  - Rigorously monitoring all areas of performance in the science department to ensure a high quality programme of learning for all groups of pupils.

Paragraphs 131 – 139

2. Improve the provision for information and communication technology across all areas of the school by:
  - Increasing the number of high quality computers so that it more closely resembles that seen in similar schools nationally.
  - Improving the quality of teaching and learning by recruiting more specialist teachers or providing more training and support for non-specialist staff.
  - Ensuring that all pupils have an equal entitlement to the statutory requirements in information and communication technology across all subjects, at all stages.
  - Rigorously monitoring all areas of performance in the subject to ensure a high quality programme of learning for all groups of pupils at all stages.

Paragraphs 168 - 177

3. Improve systems for monitoring and evaluating all areas of school performance particularly;

- Teaching and learning in all subjects so that the overall quality rises to that of the very best in the school;
- The inconsistencies of pupils' experiences particularly in science and information and communication technology;

and link the information gained to further develop a more strategic approach to development planning;

- With clearer links between whole-school and departmental plans.
- Ensuring that plans show clearly how future improvements will be implemented by explicit indications of targets, costs, time-scales, responsibilities, success criteria and staff development needs.
- Improving the rigour of review by collecting a wider range of information from all areas of school performance.
- Placing the school development priorities securely within the framework of a financial budget that continues to support educational priorities.
  
- Providing training for governors to ensure they fully understand their statutory duties and their role in monitoring and evaluating performance across all areas of the school.

Paragraphs 85 – 96

### **Sixth form**

104. In order to maintain and develop further the standards of attainment and achievement, the governors, headteacher and senior staff should:

1. Monitor teaching and learning regularly in subjects where monitoring is less frequent so that patterns of performance can be identified and training needs planned more effectively.

Paragraph 45

2. Increase the number of computers in the sixth form and provide regular and frequent access to them for all students.

Paragraph 45

3. Improve the quality and raise standards in physics by recruiting specialist staff and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

Paragraph 231 – 234

4. Address accommodation needs in the sixth form so that all subjects can be taught in appropriate rooms.

Paragraph 100

5. List action points in senior team minutes and cross reference them to key documents such as Sixth Form Improvement Plan so that strategic plans can be more closely monitored and effective action taken.

Paragraph 98

6. Provide a clear budget statement for the sixth form showing income and expenditure with a view to tracking value for money.

Paragraph 102

7. Improve the guidance provided to students based on rigorous analysis of attainment data across all subjects.

Paragraphs 77 - 79

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	228
	Sixth form	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		99

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 6 – 11</b>							
Number	5	52	104	55	10	2	0
Percentage	2	23	46	24	4	1	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	16	26	6	3	1	0
Percentage	5	30	47	11	5	2	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y6 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1237	225
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	43	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y6 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	172	1

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	170

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	124	121	245

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	97	83	87
	Girls	115	96	97
	Total	212	179	184
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (76)	73 (75)	75 (72)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	67 (34)	50 (50)	28 (40)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65	83	91
	Girls	104	91	97
	Total	169	174	188
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (70)	71 (68)	77 (72)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (28)	39 (25)	35 (38)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	108	130	238

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	47	101	105
	Girls	82	129	130
	Total	129	230	235
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	54 (57)	97 (97)	99 (98)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.1
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	39	45	84

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	Average point score per candidate	9.8	11.4	10.6

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	39	45	84	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	15.5	15.2	15.4	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

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

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

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	1257	46	5
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	3		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background	14		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	138	3	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	22	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean	21	1	0
Black or Black British – African	1	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded	3		

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

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

### ***Financial information***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	85
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.44

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

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	513

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.7
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.12
Key Stage 4	22.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	4,975,517
Total expenditure	4,084,269
Expenditure per pupil	2,784
Balance brought forward from previous year	209,514
Balance carried forward to next year	200,762

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	29
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	49
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

1462

Number of questionnaires returned

288

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	57	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	51	2	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	55	9	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	52	11	3	1
The teaching is good.	31	59	3	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	46	18	3	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	42	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	42	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	24	52	15	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	28	56	5	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	56	5	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	47	15	1	10

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

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and often very good
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average
- Leadership and management of the department are good

### Areas for improvement

- Standards, especially in Years 10 and 11, by ensuring that improvements in provision are continued
- The monitoring of teaching in the department
- Marking procedures across the department

105. The results of the 2001 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above average both nationally and also in relation to similar schools. In 2001 87 per cent of pupils achieved Level 5 and above and, even more significantly, the percentage achieving the higher levels, 6+, was well above the national average. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, both of whom were more than five points ahead of their expected levels by age. These were the best results since 1998 and were better than those achieved in mathematics and science. In 2002 76 per cent of pupils achieved results well above national averages and above average for similar schools. They are similar to results from 1999 and 2000 and help to confirm the school's belief that the 2001 results in English were substantially over-inflated. In 2002 girls' performance was better than boys' overall.
106. Results of the GCSE English examination in 2001 were in line with national averages for the subject, with 56.2 per cent of pupils achieving grades A\*-C and 100 per cent achieving grades A\*-G. Girls were just above the average for their gender whilst boys were just below their average. The highest grades, A\*-A, were in line with national averages for the subject. In 2002 results were improved and 60 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\*-C, though a slightly lower proportion achieved grades A\*-A than in 2001. At the present time there are no national benchmarks available with which to compare these results for 2002; this applies also to the results for English literature. The percentage trend over four years has been maintained, with the exception of 2001 when results dipped, mainly because of the nature of the cohort.
107. Results in the GCSE English literature examination in 2001 were in line with national averages; 64 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\*-C against a national average of 60.8 per cent. The achievement of the highest grades of A\*-A was, however, well above average with over 25 per cent attaining these highest grades against a national average of 13 per cent. 100 per cent of pupils achieved grades A\*-G. Girls achieved above their gender average whilst boys were in line with figures for their sex. These results were an improvement on those of 2000. In 2002 there was another slight improvement as 65 per cent reached grades A\*-C, although fewer pupils achieved the highest grades of A\*-A than in 2001. The trend across four years of pupils achieving A\*-C has been relatively steady, with a few percentage points difference in each year relating to the quality of the cohort. In all but one of the years, results in English literature have been very slightly higher than those in English language.

108. Standards seen in the inspection were above expectations overall across the three attainment targets of speaking and listening, reading and writing at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11.
109. Standards of speaking and listening are above expectations overall. Pupils speak clearly with a good command of language that is appropriate to the speech situation. They can increasingly manipulate language to suit different situations. By the end of Year 9 higher and middle attainers articulate quite complex ideas and sustain thought orally. By Year 11 average attainers role play with conviction and adopt appropriate language features, as when they adopt the style of Curley, Slim and other characters from *Of Mice and Men*. There is no significant difference in standards between boys and girls, though boys are sometimes more confident speakers. Lower attainers usually speak more briefly with less confidence in extended responses, but with a wider range of active vocabulary than would be expected for their level. Listening skills are good across all years.
110. Reading standards are above expectation by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Many pupils read a wide range of books from Year 7 onwards and enjoy good classical and modern literature early. Many are keen readers and effectively interpret texts, as when Year 7 looked in detail at the interpretation of 'The Highwayman'. Most average and above average pupils can explore a text for character, theme and style with confidence. This is further developed in Years 10 and 11 as pupils study texts in substantial detail for their GCSE courses. Some lower attainers read hesitantly and lack expression, but can usually interpret meaning from the context.
111. Writing standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils undertake a wide range of written exercises, including letters, narratives, diaries and poetry. Higher attainers write with fluency and are generally accurate in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Average attainers write well and their work is generally structured appropriately. Work is well presented and demonstrates effort and thought at all attainment levels.
112. Progress is now good by the ends of Year 9 and Year 11. Higher attainers achieve particularly well because the level of challenge in lessons is generally high. Pupils with special educational needs, who are sometimes well supported in lessons by learning support assistants, and those for whom English is an additional language also make good progress relative to their prior attainment.
113. Teaching is good overall. During the inspection the majority of lessons seen were good or very good, with one excellent lesson. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. There was no significant difference between the quality of teaching in different years. Pupils' learning is helped by the good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils in the classroom. They work hard, show interest in the work set and most are prepared to ask questions and volunteer thoughts and opinions. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language take full part in lessons and their learning is equal to that of their peers.
114. Pupils maintain interest and learn well because teaching has good pace and is well planned. Teachers share objectives with classes and the overall structure of planning is such that teachers teach and pupils learn in a logical, sequential manner so that each step makes sense and develops what has gone before. There are good pupil-teacher relationships in most classes; there is an especially good level of help offered to individuals as teachers circulate around classes during lessons. This makes pupils feel valued and increases their confidence so that they learn well.

Questioning skills are good; teachers draw out pupils' latent knowledge and understanding by thoughtful and incisive questioning. Pupils learn in an orderly and motivated environment because teachers have good classroom management skills. The National Literacy Strategy has been incorporated well into many lessons: introductory and final sessions are used to good effect, the plenary usually to summarise and re-emphasise learning from the lesson. Homework is used effectively to develop issues from lessons and pupils take it seriously. Marking is variable. Often it is very good, being both encouraging and diagnostic. Sometimes, however, it is either too brief or merely gives general comment rather than telling the pupil what to do in order to improve. Levels and grades are not always given.

115. Occasionally, some lessons are controlled too much by the teacher and do not give pupils enough opportunity to engage in independent learning. In these lessons, the objectives are not adequately clarified at the planning stage so that the learning focus is not as clear as it should be, and activities go on for too long so that pupils lose interest and the pace of learning slackens.
116. Leadership and management of the department are good. The department has clear aims that focus appropriately on maintaining and improving standards. The members of the department are hard working and committed and work together very well as a team. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Issues mentioned in the previous report have been dealt with effectively. Standards at the end of Year 9 have been maintained and sometimes slightly improved upon. Standards at the end of Year 11, whilst remaining lower than those in Year 9, nevertheless show that value has been added to pupils' achievements. Teaching is now better than at the time of the previous inspection. In addition, a variety of improvements are in place to strengthen provision. These include the teaching of examination and study skills, special support for GCSE pupils on the C/D borderline and the implementation of strategies to improve the performance of boys. Several good appointments have been made to strengthen staffing in the department. As a result, the department is well placed to improve further.
117. Systems of assessment are effective. Assessment information and other data are used well to target individual pupils and to predict and track progress. Monitoring of learning is good: the head of department analyses exercise books, folders and other material regularly across all years. Monitoring of teaching requires further systematic development to be a valuable tool for quality assurance. Schemes of work are sound and all necessary policies are in place.
118. Extra-curricular activities offered by the department are valuable in helping pupils' social and personal development. They include theatre visits, a drama club, a school production jointly with the music department, poetry presentations and competitions, and a newspaper day for Year 10.

## **LITERACY**

119. Standards of literacy are, overall, above expectations. Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar is slightly better than expectations for all but the lowest attainers in all years. Writing skills are generally good and the majority of pupils establish and maintain reasonable accuracy and structure in extended writing. Reading skills are also above expectations. Most pupils read for meaning and access new vocabulary using context. The majority are fluent readers though lower attainers are sometimes hesitant and unsure of meaning.. Speaking and listening skills are above expectations, overall. Most pupils, other than the lowest attaining,

have the language skills and confidence to speak in varying registers in an appropriate manner.

120. Provision for literacy is good. There is a well considered literacy policy and much new work has been done in the last eighteen months, making use of the National Literacy Strategy. Most departments have their own policies. Provision is not yet consistent across all departments; some, for example, do not consistently correct errors of spelling and grammar and there is some variation in the amount of extended writing and reading beyond the immediate information needs of the subject. However, the planning and evaluation of the provision is good. Key words are displayed in departments to encourage pupils to use technical vocabulary. Pupils practice silent reading in tutor time and there is good use of progress units and catch-up sessions for lower attainers. Literacy booklets for parents and children are available and there are literacy activity booklets for use in tutor time. Drafting for accuracy is encouraged by most departments as are speaking and listening opportunities through such activities as role play, discussions and question and answer sessions.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good
- The leadership and management of the department are outstanding and the teachers work well as a team
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good
- The development of the National Numeracy Strategy
- Standardised assessment throughout the school, which is closely monitored and communicated to pupils

### Areas for improvement

- Better and more regular use of computers
- Development of work for the gifted and talented pupils

121. Pupils enter the school with results above the national average. At the end of Year 9 in 2001 standards of attainment were above the national average for all schools. Test results at the end of Year 9 show that 73 per cent of pupils reached level 5 or above in mathematics. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. In 2002 these results showed a considerable increase and 81 per cent of pupils achieved level 5 or above and 53 per cent reached level 6 or above. This is well above the national average for all schools. Boys and girls performed equally well. Pupils' achievement and progress at the end of Year 9 are good. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

122. By the age of 16 in 2001 standards of attainment were above the national average. Fifty five per cent of the GCSE candidates achieved grades A\*-C and 98 per cent achieved grades A\*-G. Girls performed better than boys at this stage. In 2002 the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C showed a considerable increase and was 65 per cent, the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-G was 99 per cent. There has been an increase in the number of pupils gaining A\* and A grades at GCSE in the last two years. These results represent a great improvement since the last inspection. All pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11 demonstrate good achievement and good progress, including the pupils who have special educational needs.

123. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the expected level for pupils nationally, reflecting the pupils' standards on entry to the school. Pupils work well in lessons because of their positive attitude to work. Pupils with special educational needs are mainly taught in sets composing of lower attainers. The extra support they receive from classroom assistants and in Years 7 and 8 the use of specialised computer programmes contribute to the good provision and progress.
124. Literacy skills are improved by the displays of key words, the use of correct mathematical language and good oral work in lessons. The information and communication technology component of the mathematics curriculum complies with statutory requirements. There is a lack of regular access to computers to enable the pupils to have more "hands on" experience to enrich their work in mathematics. There is good expertise and experience in the staff that is currently not well used.
125. Standards of numeracy of the majority of pupils are good. The department's very good response to the National Numeracy Strategy has been effective in raising standards. The development of pupils' numerical skills forms an increasing aspect of the mathematics curriculum.
126. Teaching is good. It is better in Years 10 and 11. It is nearly always good or very good with some excellent lessons seen. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen. All lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives that are usually shared with pupils. In the best lessons teachers' expectations are high, the good pace is maintained and a variety of tasks are prepared. Staff make good use of the interactive whiteboard, though no lessons were seen with pupils using computers. In a Year 7 lesson pupils used graphs to work out fractions competently. The teacher used the interactive whiteboard successfully in another Year 7 lesson to help pupils to understand equivalent fractions. In a low attaining Year 8 lesson pupils looked for patterns and worked out a rule in an investigation on square patterns. Two Year 9 groups were using one centimetre cubes to investigate volume and learnt to appreciate the concept of volume more fully. A high attaining Year 11 group used graphical and algebraic methods to solve simultaneous equations competently.
127. The development of the three part lesson which is a feature of the National Numeracy Strategy is becoming normal practice and some good starter exercises were seen particularly using the mini whiteboards and number sticks. A Year 8 group calculated perimeters and then went on to use algebra in one whiteboard exercise. The number stick was used effectively in a Year 7 lesson to work out the connection between fractions and percentages. Mental arithmetic skills are good. Teachers make regular use of questioning during group work and pupils are encouraged and able to explain their answers and solutions to the rest of the class. Good support is given to the pupils when they are undertaking work on an individual basis. The pace of work is well-matched to the needs of the pupils. Homework is set regularly and assessment is used well to inform teachers' planning. Pupils have real understanding of their targets and progress in terms of the National Curriculum levels.
128. As a result of effective teaching most pupils acquire knowledge of basic skills and concepts that enable them to work on their own to improve their understanding. The pupils have a positive attitude to their work in mathematics, they settle to work quickly and behave well. Pupils answer fully the frequent questions they are asked during group work. Relationships between pupils and with the teacher are very good.
129. The leadership and management of the department are outstanding. The department is a forward looking, enthusiastic, hard working and committed team of

teachers. Teachers are well qualified and have a secure grasp of the subject and its requirements. Much work has been done to encourage the pupils to develop their potential and enjoy mathematics. Very good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the National Numeracy Strategy in particular have made teachers aware of good practice and have raised standards. The mathematics curriculum is satisfactory and meets the statutory requirements providing equal access and opportunity for all pupils. The department development plan is a detailed and practical document that outlines areas for development clearly. It is closely linked to the school development plan. Links with feeder primary schools are well- developed and productive.

130. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Results in both national tests have improved significantly and are now well above national averages. The impact of the National Numeracy Strategy has been considerable in improving teacher confidence and standards. The department now uses a variety of resources and the schemes of work have been re-written to incorporate a variety of teaching strategies. Regular standardised assessment is now in place in Years 10 and 11. Structures for monitoring progress of pupils have been improved. Pupils are encouraged to monitor their own progress and set their own targets. The department handbook has been re-written with clear guidelines for new staff, teaching strategies and details of resources. The stock of textbooks and resources has been evaluated and replenished. The length of lessons and accommodation still present problems but these are whole school issues. Pupils' work would be further enriched by more work done on computers. The work for gifted and talented students needs further development. The National Numeracy Strategy needs to be developed in Year 9.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- The best teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good
- Relationships in classrooms are often very good
- Test results in Year 9 have improved

### Areas for improvement

- The standards achieved by pupils in Years 10 and 11
- The quality of the management of the department
- The range and effectiveness of teaching methods to prevent unsatisfactory teaching

131. Standards improved markedly in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002. The number of pupils gaining level 5 or more was above the national average and the number gaining level 6 or more was close to the national average. In comparison with similar schools the numbers at level 5 are above and those at level 6 are below average. The average points score in science was below that in English and mathematics in both 2001 and 2002 and in particular fewer gained the highest grades. When compared with their attainment before entry to the school the number gaining level 5 or more in Year 9 reflects satisfactory progress, although the number gaining level 6 is below expectations. Although results overall are above average the more able pupils do not do well enough. There is no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.

132. In GCSE examinations in 2001 the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was below the national average and well below the number gained in similar schools. These results are significantly worse than those gained by the pupils in their other

subjects. Comparison with these pupils' standards on entry to the school shows that their progress and the standards they achieve are unsatisfactory. Fewer pupils gain grades A\* and A than in other subjects and the proportion gaining these grades is less than half the national figure. It is lower in 2002 and has declined since 1999. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in 2002 is very similar to 2001.

133. Standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books, including pupils with special educational needs, are generally in line with the national expectation in Years 7 to 9 and below in Years 10 and 11. The standards vary from well above to well below average and there is no difference between the achievements of boys and girls. In a lesson in Year 9 about chemical reactions standards were well above average. Pupils understood what they were doing when they carried out these reactions and their practical skills were well above average. Similar standards were achieved in a lesson in Year 7 in which teaching materials from a commercial project were used. In other lessons standards were lower. For example, in a different lesson about reactions pupils' understanding of the equations they were learning was very limited and many were very uncertain about what an equation represented.
134. By the end of Year 11 higher achievers have a very good understanding of energy release by living things and of the procedures used to measure it. They can identify the limitations of these methods and suggest ways of improving them. Many pupils have a good understanding of the reactions between acids and bases and practical skills used to measure reaction times are above average. In other lessons standards were below expectations. Many could not select a suitable circuit in a lesson about electrical resistance and they had a limited understanding of how to measure it. Understanding of how chemical bonds are formed was below expectation in a lesson for lower achievers. Pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy in science are above expectations reflecting the quality of their standards when they enter the school. They write fluently, use scientific terms accurately, and graphs and calculations are done well.
135. In a significant number of lessons, about one fifth, teaching is unsatisfactory and for this reason teaching overall is unsatisfactory. It is better in Years 7 to 9 where about one third of lessons are good or very good. The good or better teaching is well organised and attention is paid to improving pupils' literacy. Teaching is challenging and demanding and pupils learn difficult ideas about energy release. They develop their thinking skills during lessons that provide a sense of achievement, raising morale and interest amongst the pupils. Lesson plans are good so that teaching is purposeful. Relationships are often very good, pupils are encouraged and listened to so that they are willing answer questions and try hard. Interesting teaching about chemical reactions stimulates interest and clear instructions with demonstrations ensure that pupils learn about electrical circuits. Pupils make good, often very good, progress in these lessons; they are interested in achieving understanding and work hard to do so. In a lesson about respiration information and communication technology was used skilfully and pupils' learning was good because measurements of oxygen consumption were quick and accurate.
136. Less successful aspects of teaching seen in the unsatisfactory lessons include explanations that are not clear enough so that pupils are not sure what to do or how to do it. Sometimes pupils spend too long copying information and are not provided with opportunities to find things out for themselves. When explanations are unclear pupils are uncertain and uninterested in science. The pace of lessons can be slow and as a result pupils learn much less than they should. Pupils' understanding is not assessed, summaries are not used to consolidate what has been learned and in

these lessons pupils do not achieve the levels of understanding of which they are capable: their motivation and attention decline and the progress they make is unsatisfactory.

137. There is no difference in the progress made by boys and girls which is unsatisfactory overall because of the unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress during Years 7 to 9 where the better teaching occurs, but their progress is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Learning support assistants provide good support to these pupils.
138. The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. Teaching is very variable and although the department has a paired teaching programme, its policies for sharing good teaching methods are not effective. There is no clear view about what effective teaching is and as a result pupils' progress suffers particularly during Year 10 and 11. The department's teaching plans do not provide sufficient guidance about teaching methods and in particular there is no comprehensive plan for teaching investigative science although course work preparation is well organised. There is no training programme to improve the consistency of teaching although teaching materials from a commercial project are used well. Teaching is not monitored and there are no records of agreed targets for improvement with methods for doing so.
139. Improvement made by the science department since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Although results in Year 9 have improved, GCSE results have not and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching has increased. Progress made by pupils in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is now unsatisfactory but much better use is made of computers. Storage space in some areas is still very limited. The department has a good supply of computers and in some lessons they are used very effectively but there is no planned coverage or assessment of the National Curriculum requirements for information and communication technology in science. Good progress has been made in introducing systems to record pupils' progress and to set targets for them but the department does not use this information to evaluate the curriculum. Some marking is informative and thorough, sometimes it is superficial and occasionally mistakes are marked as being correct. The national strategy for science is being introduced but no plans exist to provide support for gifted and talented pupils.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Lessons are well planned and well managed
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and make good progress
- Teachers use very good assessment with exemplar portfolios of work

### Areas for improvement

- Standards and opportunity for ceramics and 3D work at Key Stage 4
- The quality of the accommodation

140. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above expectations. Teacher assessments show that in 2001, 94 per cent of pupils reached level 5 or above which is well above the national average. These standards were reflected in the lessons seen and show a good improvement since the last report.
141. Standards at the end of Year 11 are good. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations is comfortably above the national average and has risen since the last inspection when it only just reached the national level. In 2001, 70 per cent of pupils gained A\*-C grades with over 20 per cent gaining A\* or A. Although the percentage of A\*-C grades fell in 2002, pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. The girls outperform boys but not significantly so. Art is an optional subject in Years 10 and 11 and takes pupils at all levels of ability. While it is a very popular subject in Years 7 to 9, academic aspirations often means that many talented pupils are guided towards more academic subjects so that the numbers and abilities of pupils taking GCSE varies from year to year. Pupils with special educational needs achieve results in line with other mainstream pupils in the class that represent good progress.
142. Achievement is very good across Years 7 to 9. During this stage, pupils practise their skills in art and study a broad range of artists and artistic styles. Younger pupils learn to use pencil, paint and collage very effectively in creating self portraits based on well known artists. They use card and paper sculpture to develop environmental themes. They learn to model clay in their creation of realistic animals developed from three different photographic views of wild creatures or in a response to exploring the Egyptian attitude to the cat. Pupils extend their range of skills by shaping wire sculptures or make lino prints. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve well though some are disadvantaged by their withdrawal from art to attend extra literacy and numeracy classes. The learning of gifted and talented pupils is enriched by their work with visiting artists in the creation of a mural for the quadrangle.
143. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. They extend their knowledge of processes to include some very good examples of batik work and of screen and lino printing. They use their experience of computerised digital manipulation well in their studies of Thomas Sully to make comparisons between photograph techniques and portrait painting or to place modern day monuments which they have created into the local environment. However, they still lack sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in a broad range of three dimensional work. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to work with ceramics. Teachers have considerable expertise in this area but there is a lack of accommodation and storage space. This issue was raised at the last inspection but has not yet been fully addressed by the school and there has been no improvement.

144. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are very good so that pupils enjoy art and look forward to their lessons. The very strong level of subject knowledge that teachers have enables pupils to draw on a very wide range of interesting information about artists or techniques that engross them, as in the case of some pupils examining a model of a Spanish matador on a prancing horse. Classes are very well managed and a professional working climate is established in the art rooms that enable pupils to work well together to select and work with a range of different materials. Behaviour is good but on occasions a few pupils find it difficult to remain on task without constant reminders, particularly when the lesson is disturbed by others returning from withdrawal lessons. The environment in which pupils work is stimulating, displaying pupils' work and celebrating achievement. This sense of achievement is taken beyond the art rooms into the school as a whole, where work is on display and creates a sense of pride. Lessons are very well planned and taught using a range of resources as, for instance when pupils examined the costume and history of Russian dolls to create a set of modern day figures which could be made in the style of the Russian dolls nestling one inside the other.
145. Teaching and learning in Year 10 and 11 are good with teachers having a good knowledge of information and computer technology to stimulate and engage the pupils. Unfortunately, limited access to the computers inhibits the development of some pupils. The good management and sound teaching enable the pupils to develop greater independence in their response to art, and their knowledge of art history helps them to explore ideas. They remain focussed on their work and are highly motivated, willing to engage with the materials and taking a pride in their work. However, the lack of opportunities for more three dimensional work limits their creativity and enthusiasm, particularly amongst those pupils whose drawing skills are not so strong.
146. Art makes a good contribution to the social, moral and cultural development of all pupils. They share materials and equipment harmoniously, learn to work together and collaborate well. Through their art history they gain insight into such diverse cultures as those of the Aborigines, the Egyptians and the Aztecs. Year 11 pupils use contemporary cultures such as Thai, Chinese or Indian Mehendi henna painting to provide a focus for their GCSE portfolios of work.
147. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Teachers work together very harmoniously in crowded conditions and are committed to constantly improving standards. A very good system of portfolios tracking pupils' individual progress, as well as exemplars of work at every level, help with accurate assessment. Work is monitored closely and has led to an improvement since the last inspection. The whole school focus on literacy is very well supported in the department in every lesson. Art has made a good contribution to pupils' cultural development both through the curriculum where Asian, Aboriginal and Thai cultures are explored and visits to art galleries. The department is closely involved in links with the university and the training of teachers which ensures that ideas are constantly fresh and benefit the pupils.
148. The head of department works very hard to try and ensure that pupils have as broad a curriculum as possible, but has reached an impasse. Computer facilities in the department are limited to two computers. Time is wasted in taking pupils to the most distant computer suite in the school so that they can all have access. The lack of another art room has undoubtedly prevented more three dimensional work being done as there is already considerable overcrowding. There has been a good

improvement in this subject since the last inspection but the scope for further improvement is limited without addressing accommodation and staffing. The issues of accommodation are compounded by the lack of any departmental structure that could help to retain experienced staff.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Enthusiastic and creative teaching
- Good attitudes of pupils
- Well above average test results in textiles
- Significant capacity to improve

### Areas for improvement

- Develop the sharing of good teaching practice
- Raise the attainment of boys
- Clearly identify learning outcomes with assessment criteria
- Develop the use of marking and assessment to inform teaching and improve learning
- Develop systems and control work to use electrical and electronic methods
- Identify and make provision for gifted and talented pupils

149. Test results for GCSE examinations in 2001 are well above those achieved nationally. In 2002 results are below those for 2001. GCSE results have declined over the last three years. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can choose to study in one of four material areas for GCSE: textiles, food, graphics or resistant materials. Results for resistant materials are much lower than those of graphics, food and textiles in 2001. In 2002 results in resistant materials are still much lower. Boys' results are lower than those achieved by girls. The difference between the attainments of boys and girls is significant for 2001 and in 2002 the gap has widened further.
150. In 2002 the pupils' attainment at the age of 14 is well above the national average, as judged by teachers' assessments. This is also the case for 2001. Boys' attainments are lower than girls. There is a significant difference in the attainments of girls compared to boys in 2002 and is bigger than that seen in 2001.
151. Standards of work seen during the inspection for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are in line with expectations. However, the attainment of some Year 9 pupils in resistant materials is below the expected level for pupils of similar age. Achievement by Year 9 is generally satisfactory, but unsatisfactory for pupils in the resistant materials area given the pupils' broadly average design and technology capability on entry to the school. This is because staffing difficulties have restricted teaching and learning in specialised workshops. The situation is now improved and following a clear session on the design and use of a plane in a Year 7 lesson, pupils skilfully improved the edges of pencil boxes that they had already made. Although there were not enough planes for one each, the teacher had planned who would use them first and also organised appropriate activities on a rotation basis for the group. Pupils could confidently talk about and demonstrate their use of the correct tools in the making of a lap joint. They could also talk about a range of materials. Pupils show a proper respect and a sense of responsibility for the workshops and the equipment they use. In a Year 9 textiles lesson pupils used computers to very good effect in the design of decorations for sofas. Systems and control work with mechanical and pneumatic systems require development to include electrical and electronic means.

152. In Years 10 and 11 standards seen are in line with expectations in graphics and food, below in resistant materials and above in textiles. Achievement is satisfactory for pupils in graphics and food, unsatisfactory for pupils in resistant materials and good for pupils in textiles. In a very good Year 10 textiles lesson pupils used research on other cultures to help them to formulate ideas for the designs of 'legs of jeans'. The original idea came from a school visit by pupils to 'the clothes show live'. Pupils created beautiful designs that incorporated various techniques. In a good Year 11 textiles lesson pupils confidently used the digital camera to take pictures of their projects at various stages of making. They then confidently loaded the pictures into the computer and printed them for inclusion in their folders. However, overall access to computers in design and technology is difficult and opportunities are missed in school to speed up and enhance the quality of folder work in food, graphics, resistant materials and some textiles lessons. Attitudes and behaviour seen during the inspection in design and technology lessons are good.
153. The department makes a clear contribution to developing literacy skills through the use of word walls of technical terms in all material areas, and good examples of pupils speaking and listening were seen in the evaluation of products in graphics and textiles. Pupils were also invited to spell key technological terms during a question and answer session to find out what pupils had learned in resistant materials.
154. Teaching and learning are good in design and technology lessons. Good teaching is seen in all material areas. Where teaching is good, teachers have good classroom routines and management practices. They have good subject knowledge which is used to support pupils well in design and make activities. Objectives were made clear to pupils at the start of most lessons and good use was made of white boards to illustrate key points. In a well managed Year 7 resistant materials lesson pupils made a big circle close to the tool cupboard and around the workbench. This gave all pupils the chance to see and be seen. The teacher then conducted a very effective 'question and answer' session about tools and learning in the 'design and make' activity so far. In resistant materials some aspects of teaching is unsatisfactory. There is no consideration of what the pupils have learned before and whole class teaching is used when small group teaching is required to ensure that all pupils make appropriate progress. Teachers know which of their pupils have special educational needs and what their difficulties with learning are. These pupils are supported well in lessons and they generally make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are not identified so no account is taken of this group in the organisation of classroom activities. Marking is variable in quality, but at its best is encouraging and provides clear direction on how pupils should improve their work. Homework is used effectively within design and technology to both prepare for and extend the work in lessons.
155. Leadership of the design and technology department has been unsatisfactory. Items identified at the previous inspection as important issues for attention, along with boys' underachievement identified within the department in 1999, have still not been addressed. Management of the department, however, is now good. There is a new head of department in place who is currently on maternity leave. Under her leadership, the department is now functioning as a unit with some standard systems in place for the management of learning and information booklets have been produced to guide and support pupils. There is a very detailed handbook and improvement plans that clearly identify appropriate priorities for the department. The schemes of work, however, do not yet include learning outcomes with quality measures. Procedures to collect and use information on the progress of pupils are not yet fully useful to inform teaching and improve learning.

156. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Different abilities are still not fully considered in planning and boys are still under-performing. The difference between the achievement of boys and girls is getting wider. There is also still some unsatisfactory teaching in resistant materials. Following some staffing difficulties there is now a full complement of enthusiastic and creative staff in place who are keen to share good practice and raise attainment of pupils. The new head of department, the well-qualified staff and the good overall teaching represent significant capacity for improvement.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The attitudes of pupils to their learning is very positive
- Teachers work well together to ensure the sharing of best practice
- Teaching and pupils' learning are enhanced by high quality teaching resources

### Areas for improvement

- The integration of information and communication technology into lesson planning
- The provision for gifted and talented pupils

157. Overall pupils at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations attain standards that are above national averages. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that both boys' and girls' attainment was above average, with more girls achieving the highest levels. This attainment represents only satisfactory progress because pupils' attainment when they enter the school is also above average. Teachers' assessments in 2002 show a significant improvement in pupils' attainment from the previous year. Teachers have a good awareness of level descriptors, which results in reliable assessments. In the GCSE examinations in 2001 the proportion of pupils gaining the higher A\* to C grades is above average. The percentage of pupils achieving the highest A\* and A grades is in line with national averages. Girls' results are slightly better than boys. All pupils achieved a grade in the A\* to G range. In 2002, school data indicates that the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-G grades increased and almost all pupils gained an A\* to G grade. Pupils' performance in GCSE geography is slightly above that of most other subjects they took. The results pupils' gained in the GCSE examinations, when compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9, are in line with expectations.

158. In the work seen during the inspection pupils' attainment in Year 9 is above national expectations. Geographical mapping skills are put in place in Year 7 and pupils are then introduced to the geography of the United Kingdom. Pupils can differentiate between the United Kingdom and Great Britain and can label maps with titles and keys to show countries and capital cities. Pupils in Year 8 understand the 'push' and 'pull' factors associated with migration and are aware of the social and cultural difficulties experienced by many migrants. In Year 9 pupils understand the causes and consequences of earthquakes. Their good attitudes towards their work and their good behaviour in lessons helps to ensure they make good progress. Work in pupils' books is well organised and presented in the form of notes, maps, graphs and diagrams. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are above national expectations. In a Year 10 lesson both boys and girls showed a good understanding of global warming and used specialist vocabulary e.g. 'greenhouse effect' with accuracy. In a Year 11 lesson pupils developed their speaking and listening skills by reporting back

confidently to the rest of the class on their solutions to the question of 'Why is Kip moving from the village?' In work seen during the inspection pupils' work in Year 11 is above national expectations. Pupils make some use of computers for word processing and researching geographical topics but this is an area which needs further development.

159. Overall the standard of teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory. Teachers' planning is very thorough and they use a variety of high quality resources and teaching methods to stimulate pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 9 lesson the teacher presented the topic as a 'mystery' and engaged pupils in card sorting and sequencing activities to find a solution. Pupils worked well together in pairs and in groups. In some lessons seen during the inspection teachers used video extracts and slides to enliven teaching but computer technology was not used. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use interesting examples and analogies to illustrate the topics taught. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good. In a Year 8 lesson this provision was considerably enhanced by 'partnership teaching' where an additional teacher concentrated very successfully on developing pupils' literacy skills. At present there is limited specific provision for gifted and talented pupils within the department.
160. The leadership and management of the department are good. A strength of the department is the collaborative working of a team of very committed teachers. Teaching is effectively monitored. The standard of pupils' work is monitored by the inspection of books and homework. Good use is made of national and school data to set targets for pupils. Departmental documentation is thorough and extensive. A large number of areas have been identified for development but these have not, as yet, been prioritised. Departmental meetings take place regularly and action is taken on the issues raised.
161. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The teachers in the department are highly committed and there is the capacity for the department to improve further.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Good improvement in standards at GCSE over four years
- Teachers have good subject knowledge
- Pupils are involved with their own learning in Years 10 and 11
- Good use of historical evidence in lessons
- Pupils work well together in Years 10 and 11

### Areas for improvement

- Development of wider teaching and learning strategies in Years 7 to 9
- Further reference to information and communication technology in the schemes of work, particularly Year 8
- Marking to be more consistent and to inform pupils' learning
- More systematic monitoring of teaching
- Improve the recruitment to the GCSE course

162. At the end of Year 11 GCSE results in 2001 were above average, although a much smaller percentage of the cohort takes history than nationally. The results in 2002 showed a further improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades. The GCSE results have improved steadily for four years. History has the highest improvement rate of all subjects during this period. Taking into account the work in the earlier years and both the take-up rate and the pupils' prior above-average ability, the current pattern of achievement at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. There is no significant difference in progress for those who are gifted and talented, those with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language.
163. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 were comparable to the national expectation and the achievement of all the pupils in these years is satisfactory. However, the teacher assessments for Year 9 in 2001 were well above average indicating some unreliability in assessment procedures. In Years 7 to 9 pupils develop a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of appropriate historical evidence and data, the analysis of complex historical issues and the understanding of chronology. Pupils use a range of learning materials including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, writing frames, videos and a range of primary and secondary source material. The handling of different forms of historical data is good. In Year 8 pupils can analyse the different reasons for The English Civil War, although too much time is taken in one class in using colours to shade in the different themes. By Year 9 pupils are able to discuss effectively what conditions are like on the Western Front during the First World War. Pupils are able to identify where the main war casualties came from. The standard of written work in Years 7 to 9 ranges from average to below average.
164. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with expectations. The achievement of pupils is also satisfactory when the prior attainment of the pupils choosing to study history is considered. In Year 10 pupils make good progress and work enthusiastically in groups of four to produce their analysis of the Great Power positions at Versailles. Confident class presentations are made on the differing positions. In Year 11 pupils are able to effectively interpret video evidence on the role of government in the development of nineteenth century public health care. Effective teamwork is seen with pupils working well together.

165. Teaching is satisfactory overall but varies from good to poor. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 where all teaching is good. One poor lesson in Year 9 was seen, the result of inappropriate planning and poor management of disruptive pupil behaviour. In the best lessons learning aims are shared with the pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson, so that the teacher can judge how much progress has taken place. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and in many lessons key historical words and phrases are stressed and are noted in the pupils' books. The teaching and learning are more successful in the higher banded classes than the lower banded classes. In three of the lower classes pupils' attitudes were unsatisfactory and this impeded the rate of learning. The majority of these lessons are teacher controlled offering limited opportunities for independent learning by pupils. There is some evidence of good-paired work but teachers make little use of effective group activities.
166. In Years 7 to 9 a few pupils find it hard to work co-operatively and as a result progress is slow. There is inconsistency in the quality of teachers' planning and the overall structure of lessons. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to begin most lessons with structured question and answer sessions. However, occasionally, teachers rely too much on a few pupils volunteering to answer the questions. For example, in a Year 9 class one boy answered six questions with very little participation from other pupils. Good examples of pupils listening carefully to each other were observed, particularly in Year 11, and co-operation amongst pupils in most years is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 it is good. However the range of teaching strategies observed is relatively narrow, especially in Years 7 to 9 and this restricts pupils' ability to learn on their own. Teachers give good individual support to pupils, but this mostly maintains confidence and good order rather than developing historical understanding. Pupils' learning strategies are not systematically developed in Years 7 to 9. There are few opportunities for collaborative group work and for pupils to use computers for research, particularly in Year 8 where there are currently no opportunities in the scheme of work.
167. Leadership and management of history in the main school are satisfactory. The history classrooms are spacious, well decorated and support an effective learning environment with good displays of pupils' work. However, one room is next to the music suite and sound insulation is inadequate. Resources are good with a wide range of books, videos and worksheets. Access to computers is inadequate at present, available mainly at the end of the summer term. This does not allow for the necessary information and communication technology component in each year to be adequately covered. The current scheme of work is incomplete as it does not make sufficient reference to all periods. Some areas highlighted in the last report have not yet been adequately addressed especially the quality of the marking. Marking is still not consistent throughout the department and it does not currently support learning. The quality of teaching is not rigorously monitored and there is no effective system for staff to share good ideas. This is particularly necessary in lessons in Years 8 and 9 where there is often disruptive behaviour from pupils. The major improvement since the last inspection has been the higher standards achieved in the GCSE examinations; however there are still several areas to be developed and therefore progress is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the history are both considered to be only satisfactory because there is more to be achieved in teaching consistency, in improving the attitudes of some pupils and in curriculum opportunities.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **barely satisfactory. It is good in GCSE examination classes.**

#### Strengths

- Standards at the age of 14 are well above the national average
- Progress of pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 is good
- GCSE results are well above average
- teaching is mainly of good quality
- attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good

#### Areas for improvement

- Limited computer resources leading to poor access for some pupils in the majority of subjects
- Limited specialist staff
- Unsatisfactory monitoring of the entitlement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 to ensure full compliance with statutory requirements
- Unsatisfactory monitoring of the quality of provision in the personal and social education course for the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 to ensure full compliance with statutory requirements

168. All pupils study information and communication technology for one lesson per week in Years 7 to 9. This course is supplemented in design and technology and science where pupils are taught aspects of systems and control. Skills are further developed in subjects across the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11 approximately 20 per cent of pupils study for a GCSE course. The majority are taught modules of information and communication technology as part of the personal and social education programme. This is supplemented by work in other subjects with a particular focus on systems and control in design and technology and science.
169. GCSE results in recent years have been well above the national average. In 2001 above three-quarters of the candidates for the GCSE in Information Studies examination achieved grades in the range A\* to C, which was 20 per cent more than the national average. The proportion awarded the highest grades A\*-A is nearly twice the national figure. The percentage of pupils achieving grades in the range A\* to C in this examination in 2002 rose further and was the highest of any subject in the school. Improvement in this subject over the previous four years as measured by GCSE results has been greater than in any other in the school with the exception of history. Although in most years girls' performance in GCSE is better than the boys, in 2002 both performed equally well. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils.
170. In 2001 the percentage of pupils achieving the expected grade in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 was approaching 90 per cent, over 20 percent above the national average. In 2002 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level was equally high. Similarly the percentage of pupils achieving higher grades has also been well above the national average in recent years. Girls' performance in the assessments is usually better than the boys but in 2002 both performed equally well. Pupils enter the school with above average standards of attainment. When interviewed many pupils reported having good quality computers at home and good facilities in their primary schools. Their progress is good in the subject between the ages of 11 and 14. Progress is also good at this stage for pupils with special educational needs and for those of high attainment. The regular and well planned programme across Years 7 to 9 ensures that all pupils have access to good skill development within that programme. For example, pupils in a high attaining Year 9 class were undertaking work that required them to produce three different identity

badges. After producing these using a range of software and different forms of information the pupils were required to evaluate the different badges that they had produced. Most pupils in the class used the software confidently and searched the internet for appropriate images to use as part of their identity cards. Although some pupils required support from the teacher most were able to make good progress with the tasks set for them to undertake.

171. Pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 in developing the necessary knowledge and understanding of control systems is significantly constrained by unsatisfactory teaching of this aspect in design and technology and in science. Currently the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 do not take this lack of progress into account. A further constraint to pupils' progress is the lack of sufficient specialist teachers to deliver the programme. While most of the teaching is sound, the lack of subject expertise, coupled with unreliable equipment, reduced the rate of learning in some lessons.
172. Standards of work seen in the GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11 are well above expectations. For example, in a Year 11 class pupils were working towards the GCSE examination in information and communication technology. Pupils in the group were discussing aspects relating to the storage of data including the associated legal issues. Although the range in terms of attainment was wide most pupils showed a good understanding of the issues involved. They were able to share these during discussions that took place during the class. Skills relating to the manipulation and presentation of information are better developed than other aspects of the requirements. Those relating to control in particular require further development and standards in this area of the subject are less secure because of the limited teaching in previous years.
173. Standards of work seen in the general course within the personal and social education modules are in line with expectations. This applies to the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11. There is a limited amount of unsatisfactory teaching. In one lesson, the teacher had insufficient knowledge of the prior attainment of the pupils in the class. Work was not well matched to the varying needs of the pupils in the group and in particular the higher attaining pupils in the class were not sufficiently challenged.
174. Teaching and learning are mainly good, particularly in the examination classes. All lessons are well planned and contain a good range of learning approaches. During the group work teachers give good, clear explanations and make significant use of questioning of the pupils to check on their level of understanding and to consolidate their learning. Many teachers make good use of handouts to support aspects of the work. In most classes teachers manage the pupils well and high standards of discipline are maintained. During several lessons pupils are encouraged and able to work collaboratively in small groups. Teachers provide good support when pupils are working on an individual or small group basis usually at computers.
175. Teaching and learning are sometimes adversely affected because the equipment the class uses is unreliable. Additionally pupils in the larger classes pupils have to share computers. This inhibits learning and in particular the progress of some pupils towards becoming autonomous computer users. The pace with which the work progresses in a few classes is affected by the need for the teacher to ensure acceptable levels of discipline. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their work in information and communication technology. Most pupils behave well and contribute effectively to aspects of the lessons. Only in a few classes does the poor behaviour

of a restricted number of pupils disrupt the learning for other pupils in the group. Several classes in Years 10 and 11 consist of significantly more boys than girls and in some classes the teaching did not encourage the girls to engage sufficiently in the lesson and their learning was impeded.

176. Management of the department is good. Leadership is less secure and progress since the last inspection is barely satisfactory. There are significant numbers of non-specialist staff currently being used to deliver the separate information and communication technology aspects of the curriculum throughout each of the years in the lower school and on the general course in Years 10 and 11. The head of department works very hard to ensure that the quality of provision is maintained by providing significant support to these staff including detailed teaching notes. The curriculum relating to the separate aspects of information and communication technology provision is appropriate. Detailed schemes of work have been developed. Although many of the staff have major teaching responsibilities within other subjects in the school they are working well as a team. The specialist staff in the department meet on a regular basis. Monitoring and evaluation procedures include written reviews of the provision and specialist staff are regularly observed teaching. Although the school has attempted to recruit further specialist staff it has been unsuccessful. The large number of teachers currently involved makes effective coordination very difficult so that the head of department has significant additional work. The school currently has about half the number of computers that it requires to properly support the current work in information and communication technology. Pupils as a result have to share computers in some of the classes and access is difficult for some pupils outside normal classes particularly at peak times. The school has recognised this and is currently inviting tenders for the provision of additional computer equipment.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

177. Overall the use of information and communication technology across subjects is unsatisfactory. There was very little use of computers seen in subjects during the inspection week, most unusual in a school of this size and type. Statutory requirements in respect of data-logging are not being met. Although pupils undertake some data-logging work as part of the science curriculum the work is not assessed and does not contribute to the teacher assessments carried out towards the end of Year 9. Pupils undertake some work relating to control as part of the design and technology syllabus. However this is very restricted and requires further development. Schemes of work in some subjects do not contain references to the appropriate use of information and communication technology. For several other subjects there is satisfactory use and in a few subjects there is good use of information and communication technology. Music makes particularly good use of the technology. However overall use is significantly constrained by poor access to appropriate resources. The school requires double the number of computers that it currently has if it is to satisfactorily support the current work.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Leadership and management are very good
- Staff expertise and teamwork is good
- Literacy strategies are good

Areas for improvement

- To develop strategies to target C/D borderline candidates at GCSE. level
- To continue to address underachievement in boys
- To provide wider opportunities for pupils to use the foreign language spontaneously

178. French, Spanish and German are taught in Years 7 to 11. French is the main modern foreign language studied and since 2000, all pupils have been entered for the GCSE full course, whereas previously, the short course was also an option for some of the pupils. In 2000 and 2001, the number of pupils gaining A\* - C grades, has been above the national average, with pupils performing broadly in line with their ability. In 2001, 9 per cent of the cohort gained A\* - A grades, which was the highest the school has had. Results in 2002, which are as yet provisional, are considerably lower and a disappointment, as many pupils who gained a grade D were very close to being awarded the higher grade C. Contributory factors affecting the results include staffing problems, which have now been resolved and the cohort for that year, which had a high proportion of boys. Nationally girls tend to perform better than boys in languages. The department has completed a detailed analysis and strategies are fully in place to raise standards.
179. German results over a number of years have been consistently well above the national average and the trend continues in 2002. German is studied by the higher attaining students, which contributes to the good results. The numbers of pupils studying German are relatively low and the department is keen to encourage more pupils to study two languages. This is a strong focus in the school's recent application for specialist status as a Language College. Spanish has been introduced in Year 10. Pupils are enjoying the challenge and realise the need to cover new ground quickly on this two year course.
180. By the end of Year 9, the teacher assessments show that pupils make good progress in French. In 2001, the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 and above was above the national average. Level 5 now the national benchmark, whereas previously it was level 4. In 2002, the proportion of pupils reaching level 5 was slightly lower. These results represent good achievement, because French is a new subject for pupils when they first enter the secondary school.
181. The evidence from inspection is that standards are in line with expectations. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils enjoy languages. They demonstrate good understanding in listening and reading skills and respond readily in French or German. Class repetition ensures good pronunciation and is taken seriously. The higher attaining pupils show good use of more difficult vocabulary and phrases and speak fluently, with good intonation.
182. Pupils are encouraged to work out grammar rules for themselves. Courses are chosen to suit the ability of the pupils. Teachers adapt worksheets to enable everyone to be able to work confidently, so that there is help available, particularly in the case of pupils with special educational needs and opportunities to extend work as much as a pupil wishes. The literacy strategy is firmly embedded in language lessons and pupils have excellent guidance on how to develop written assignments, which can be adapted for oral tasks. A very good example of the numeracy strategy was seen in a Year 9 French class where the teacher fired mental arithmetic sums in French at the group. This involved very large numbers and was a challenge enjoyed by all. Although no lessons were seen where the pupils used computers, teachers made effective use of the interactive whiteboard. There were many examples of

pupils' computer work on display or in exercise books. Programmes to help motivate underachievers, boys in particular, are used regularly.

183. In Years 10 and 11, overall standards are in line with expectations. Much emphasis is on examination techniques. In German, pupils would benefit from starting the language earlier. German grammar can be extremely difficult, but pupils in a Year 11 German lesson had few problems using conjunctions, which change word order. They clearly understood what they were doing and found many ways of making a written passage more interesting. Speaking skills were good and pupils read with understanding. Pupils in a lower ability Year 11 group by contrast lacked confidence in oral work. They were self-conscious and the teacher tried to encourage them to answer in detail. Pupils in all years would benefit from more opportunities to work in pairs and act out role plays. By doing this, they do not feel as restricted and are not as unhappy if a mistake is made.
184. Teaching is good. In all years teaching was good and some very good teaching was seen. Some of the real strengths are:
- the use of the foreign language by the teacher throughout the lesson, which provides a role model for the pupils;
  - shared objectives, which involve the pupils from the start, with a whole class session to check learning;
  - the planning and sequencing of lessons, which enable pupils to understand what they are doing;
  - challenges which motivate pupils and make them want to learn more;
  - a wide variety of stimulating methodology;
  - worksheets which help consolidate learning and provide opportunities for all.
- Although teaching was always good, in some lessons too much English was used and the pace lapsed at times in some lessons which led to a loss of interest. Two Year 8 lessons saw no time lost. The pace was breathtaking. Effective learning was a result of very good teaching. French was used throughout.
185. The teachers are well qualified and work together as a team, with skills complementing one another. There are two native speakers and a French and German assistant. The latter are involved in lesson planning and play an active part in the department. Teachers are role models in the use of the foreign language. The pupils are not always as keen, though in a Year 7 French class, pupils did make requests and ask questions in French. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are attentive. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis.
186. Leadership and management are very good. The bid for language college status has involved all staff in a close scrutiny of the department and full consultation about the vision for the subject. Departmental documentation is detailed and schemes of work are up to date. Teaching is regularly monitored, with written feedback and points for improvement. Resources have been chosen to suit interests and abilities. Good links with primary schools have been established. There are clear priorities for development, to further improve standards in an already successful department. Since the last inspection good improvement has been made. All teaching is now good or better and German examination results are now well above national standards. The current system of grouping pupils has merits but does not always enable the teaching to focus closely on the needs of pupils of different abilities.

## MUSIC

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and planning is very good
- GCSE results at grades A\* - G are well above average
- Use of information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 is good

#### Areas for improvement

- GCSE results at grades A\* - C
- Greater use of information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9 and recording of pupils' work
- Homework in Years 7 to 9

187. The 2001 teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 were above the national average with girls doing better than boys. The attainment of pupils at the age of 16 was well above average with all six candidates gaining the higher grades in the GCSE examination. Although the numbers were small, trends over the past three years were rising. In 2002 all 32 candidates passed the examination and the A\* - C grades were just above average. This represents good progress over time considering that all ability groups, including pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, are accepted for the music option.
188. The evidence from inspection is that standards of work for pupils aged 14 are above expectation. Pupils improvise, compose, sing and discuss their work in ways that show that learning is improving because of the department's emphasis on co-operation, good speaking skills and attentive listening. Improved learning is particularly noticeable in the regular assessment and evaluation of pupils' work that takes place in all lessons. As pupils enter the school in Year 7 with varying musical experiences from many different primary schools, the progress seen represents good achievement overall. Standards for pupils aged 16 are above average. Good achievement and progress occur because of inspirational teaching and high levels of commitment by pupils. Pupils compose well in a given style using instruments and voices because of the teacher's good planning and high expectations.
189. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are well-planned. The aims and objectives are clearly set out at the beginning so that pupils know what they have to do. In the most successful lessons, varied activities and confident teaching ensure that pupils are kept on task and remain interested. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson working on Chinese music. The teacher's careful explanation prepared pupils for singing a Chinese song which was then reinforced by the keyboard work on the same theme. The lesson made a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All abilities make progress and enjoy the work due to the teacher's good management of the lesson. Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of musical language. They describe sequence and use simple minor triads to create musical interest. Challenging extension work enabled one more capable pupil working on the electric piano to experiment with different chord patterns to support his melodic variations. All abilities including talented pupils, pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language are well catered for, underlining the inclusive nature of the department's work. Very good planning and management of pupils' encourage positive relationships to be developed. There are some areas that can be improved, however. Very little homework is set and whilst keyboards are used regularly in lessons, pupils have very little access to information and communication technology. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and appraised at the time of performance. Marks are discussed and

moderated by the three music teachers at their departmental meetings but the performances are not recorded.

190. Good teaching and learning takes place in Years 10 and 11 because the teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm leads to gradual improvement by all abilities. Year 10 pupils build up their knowledge of cadences and chord progressions and then play them on instruments and computers to reinforce their learning. This type of activity is an improvement on the last inspection. Although there is a wide range of musical understanding in this large class all abilities make progress. Year 11 pupils learn about salsa music and clap intricate rhythms in small groups before attempting the work on instruments. A pupil danced the salsa to the rhythms performed by her peers and the inspired suggestion by the teacher to link music and dance together gave pupils a better understanding of this South American art form. A more capable pupil composed a toccata in the baroque style and competently performed it, demonstrating that good teaching had taken place over time. The inclusive nature of the subject becomes apparent through the high standard of work being done by pupils of all abilities. The system of assessment in Years 10 and 11 is effective and pupils' work is recorded so that it can be retrieved when it is required.
  
191. There is good leadership of the department with the continued promotion of high standards and inclusiveness being priorities. There are positive working relationships both in lessons and in the extra-curricular activities that take place at lunchtime and after school. The staffing of the department is good and the line manager monitors the teaching formally. The head of department gives good support to his two colleagues, both of whom have recently qualified as teachers. The scheme of work is sound and is reviewed regularly in the light of curriculum changes. The development plan has achievable targets. Computer hardware and software are now available and all pupils from Year 10 onwards use information and communication technology competently to improve their composing and arranging skills. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the accommodation and resources are much better. There are not enough library books to support music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- High standards of behaviour are set through a consistent policy applied by all staff
- The very good performance in gymnastics and swimming
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities, well supported by pupils

### Areas for improvement

- Establish short and long term goals and maintain continuity
- Define management priorities and delegate effectively
- In staff training, use current individual strengths to improve overall expertise
- Monitor lessons on a regular basis
- Improve outdoor hard surface areas and storage facilities for netball

192. Standards achieved in GCSE examinations in recent years have been variable, depending upon the ability of pupils opting for the subject. In 2002, 63 per cent of pupils entered obtained grades A\* to C, a similar proportion to the last four years where standards have been broadly in line with the national average. Considerably more boys than girls take this option. However, in the samples of work seen, girls appear to be more conscientious with theoretical work. Teachers do use practical examples in maintaining pupils' interest in this aspect of the subject. A lesson involving a competition to identify muscle groups was particularly successful.
193. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 suggest a very high standard, but the evidence from inspection in the current year 10 indicates that some of the grades given were rather generous. Currently, standards in Years 7 to 9 are consistently satisfactory, sometimes better. Boys in a Year 9 soccer lesson showed good ball control and ability to make good use of space. Girls in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson revealed excellent control and fluency in a variety of movements. They were particularly adept at analysing and developing their own work. In this lesson, and in Year 7 netball and Year 8 fitness, pupils' attitude and behaviour was excellent and this ensured that their learning progressed at a good pace.
194. In Year 10 and 11 standards are satisfactory. There are very good performers in Year 10 girls' life saving and in Year 11 swimming, where some girls demonstrated excellent technique matched by determined competitiveness by the boys. Good class management and insistence upon good behaviour is leading to improved standards in Year 10 basketball. Standards of achievement tend to be highest when the teacher has a particularly good knowledge of the activity. Very good demonstrations enabled pupils to make quick progress in a Year 10 badminton lesson and in Year 8 dance.
195. The department's programme is fully inclusive. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated, as are those from different cultural backgrounds. The department has a published literacy policy and supports school policies for numeracy and the use of information and communication technology. In four aerobics and fitness lessons there was some use of mental arithmetic. In a gymnastics lesson there was a very good example of the use of a digital camcorder to give feedback on performance.
196. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, sometimes better. In a gymnastics lesson, preparation, subject knowledge and pupil management was bordering on excellence. There is a need to disseminate this type of good practice within the department to

promote even higher standards. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is consistently satisfactory, sometimes good or very good. Early in the inspection some lessons lacked pace and vigour but this improved as the week progressed. In all years teachers exercise good discipline and pupil management. They are very good role models in terms of attitude and appearance. This produces a positive response from the pupils.

197. Learning in lessons in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory with good or very good examples. Very good standards of behaviour, the product of consistent departmental policies and skilful pupil management, provide a pleasant working environment. This is also true in Years 10 and 11. Throughout the school there is good support for a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
198. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained with some areas of improvement, notably the pace of lessons. Relationships between teachers and pupils have become mostly very good, Pupils respond willingly and promptly. Safety is still emphasised. Risk assessments have been conducted where appropriate but do not appear to have been documented.
199. The department has good facilities in the sports hall and swimming pool block. In the main building, the gymnasium and hall are used for other purposes with associated problems of cleanliness. There is no satisfactory storage area in the gymnasium. Facilities for outdoor netball are poor with no suitable storage area.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Well qualified specialist teachers with very good subject knowledge
- Very well planned curriculum
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 for all pupils
- Very good assessment procedures
- Rising standards

### Areas for improvement

- Insufficient time to meet examination requirements for the short course GCSE

200. Pupils enter the school with above average standards of literacy and numeracy but widely varying standards in religious education. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average. In 2002 teachers assessed their pupils using the new nationally recommended levels, and three-quarters of pupils achieved the expected level 5 or above. This is the first time such formal assessment has been made but the results confirm the above average standards seen in lessons and pupils' work.
201. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average. Of the 24 candidates who took the full course in 2001 83 per cent gained grades A\*-C compared to 55 per cent nationally and 37 per cent gained the higher grades of A\*- A compared to 17 per cent nationally. All gained a grade in the A\*-E range. In 2002 of the 30 pupils entering the examination 70 per cent achieved grades A\* -C and all gained a grade A\*-F. The trend over three years is an improving one. The subject has become increasingly popular. In the first entry for the short course in 2002, 34 pupils took the examination and a high proportion, almost four fifths achieved the grades A\*-C and all achieved A\*-F. A significant proportion of pupils were awarded the higher grades A\*-A.

202. Only the full course GCSE pupils, approximately 12 per cent of the year group, are given adequate time to complete examination requirements. For all other pupils who follow the short course only one 35 minute period is available within the taught school day. Those who wish to take the certificate volunteer to attend after school for an extra period to help them cover the ground. The standards in these Year 11 lessons are above average in skills of discussion and debate and tackling difficult ideas, but most pupils lack the opportunity to cover enough topics in sufficient depth to enter for the examination.
203. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. They lay down a very good foundation in knowing about Christianity as the major religious heritage in Britain and gain a good introductory understanding of major world faiths including Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. Literacy skills are developed well. At the start of a new topic pupils receive glossaries of key words which they research for homework. The new technical language is then used with precision in the new learning. Pupils make succinct notes to support oral presentations in class. Some very good pieces of extended personal writing were seen, for example in adopting the perspective of a bystander at the crucifixion of Jesus. Pupils' numeracy skills are employed effectively, for example in considering wealth and poverty in today's world. There is good evidence of the use of computers for word processing, retrieval of information and research using the internet.
204. Good progress continues In Years 10 and 11 and standards are above average by the end of Year 11. Pupils increase their understanding of belief systems and discuss and debate issues with increasing maturity. They develop the ability to think hard and challenge weak arguments. These features were seen in a lesson on the existence of God as designer of the world. In another lesson pupils accurately appraised the classic moral arguments for the just war and considered whether such moral arguments can apply in today's world.
205. Teaching in Years 7-9 is satisfactory and in a third of lessons observed it is good. Clear objectives are set for each lesson. Good questioning opens many lessons. A variety of activities well matched to pupils' learning needs build up knowledge and understanding step by step. In a Year 7 lesson a card game helped pupils to link the names of the major world faiths with their founders and dates and places of origin. Pupils are encouraged to express their ideas and their answers are always treated with respect. Asked why some religions had lasted to 2002 a Year 7 boy in a low attaining group answered 'because the founders die it doesn't mean God does!' In a small number of classes in Years 8 and 9 taught by inexperienced teachers, restless and impulsive behaviour reduces the amount of learning because too many discipline checks have to be made. Teaching is still satisfactory as the new teachers are well supported. Their work is monitored carefully.
206. All teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Expectations are high. As a result pupils learn to organise themselves and their thinking well. All resources are produced to a high standard. In a lesson revising the features of Coventry Cathedral, pupils were provided with beautiful photographs and texts to sort out. Each pair of pupils was able to link the features of the architecture with its symbolic and doctrinal significance. Good oral presentations were then made so that learning was shared. Pupils learn to express themselves thoughtfully and articulately. Teachers have very good subject knowledge inspiring confidence in their pupils. A very good feature of the lessons is the use of pupils' own experience. Pupils from different religious

heritages can comment from their own faith perspectives. For example a Muslim pupil shared insights evaluating classic arguments for the morality of the just war.

207. In all years, pupils' work is carefully assessed. Assessment procedures are very good. In Years 7 to 9 teachers build in a level of challenge to the units of work using the national guidelines. Pupils are clear about their level gradings and how to improve. In all years work is marked regularly and teachers write helpful comments and set targets to help pupils improve. Generally work is intellectually and spiritually demanding but those pupils with special educational needs or of low prior attainment are nonetheless included well. In Years 7 to 9 modified teaching materials and clear writing plans help pupils to structure their responses effectively.
208. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and citizenship. In lessons special exercises help to promote reflection and spiritual development. Good use is made of visits such as an Easter school in Durham. Strong links with Coventry Cathedral have included pupils in the work of reconciliation, peace and justice world-wide. Good opportunities for moral development occur as pupils consider moral codes in several religions. Moral dilemmas such as the disparities between rich and poor, abortion, and the sanctity of life are considered sensitively. Pupils learn about different societies, the expectations of different communities and the applicability of human rights across the world. A good contribution is made to pupils' cultural development through the study of world religions and the cultures in which they evolved. Aesthetic understanding is enhanced by the work on the architecture of Coventry Cathedral which has to be compared with that of a local church based on a visit which the pupils have direct responsibility for arranging.
209. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Accommodation is good with three main teaching rooms all with a clear subject identity, attractive colourful displays of pupils' work and religious artefacts. The improvement since the last inspection has been very good. At the last inspection there was a substantial proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. All teaching is now at least satisfactory. The subject is now well established in the curriculum and staffed by three subject specialists. The non-specialists who teach in Years 7 to 9 are well supported by the very detailed curriculum planning. Two new examination courses have been established and results are good. Standards are rising. For the majority of pupils who do not take the GCSE courses the quality of the experience is good, but not enough time is available for them to achieve the examination level within the single lesson each week.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall the provision for citizenship is **good**.

### Strengths

- The course is well planned across several departments and in a whole school context
- Leadership and management are very good

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching in some Year 9 lessons

210. Citizenship is a new subject that has become statutory in August 2002. It was therefore possible to see only a small number of lessons and to examine the school's planning for the delivery of the subject.
211. Standards in citizenship are satisfactory. Three specific citizenship lessons were seen in Year 9 and lessons in personal, social and health education and religious education that had a citizenship element in them. In addition, year and school council meetings were attended.
212. Pupils in Year 9 were learning about human rights and discussed, the idea of rights as related to concepts such as justice, equality and law with varying degrees of understanding and involvement. These lessons form part of a block within the personal and social education curriculum. A second block later in the year will deal with issues of government, local government, making decisions, elections and democracy. Other lessons seen in Year 8 deal with issues such as 'becoming an adult', equality and justice. In a Year 7 registration Year 11 'Pals' help pupils to see the value of team work and collaboration through game playing.
213. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The teaching observed ranged from good to unsatisfactory. In the lesson where good teaching was seen good gains were made in understanding the ideas which underpin human rights. In the unsatisfactory lesson attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory and little learning took place.
214. Leadership and management of citizenship are very good. There has been a detailed and extensive planning process that has involved auditing each department to establish what each subject area can contribute. Departments have been briefed on the requirements for the subject and there has been a careful consideration of impact on the curriculum. The three strands of the subject have been very well considered so that, in addition to formal lessons there will be contributions from a variety of other activities, year and school councils, paired reading schemes, in tutor and assembly time. In Years 10 and 11 the subject will be taught separately on specific days; a day on crime and young people is planned for Year 10 and another on Europe and European union is planned for Year 11. There are good plans in place to monitor and evaluate progress. Given the very good management and the meticulous planning, the subject is well placed to further improve.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

215. Business studies was not inspected in Years 10 and 11, but two lessons were sampled. The 2001 GCSE results were well above the national average, representing very good achievement over the two years. All pupils achieved a higher grade than would be expected of them when compared to national statistics. Business studies is a very popular subject with 41 per cent of the cohort studying the subject compared to 16 per cent nationally. Within the school the subject is the most popular of all the optional subjects. The GCSE results have been consistently well above average with a range of 70 to 73 per cent achieving an A\* to C grade over the last four years.
216. In the two lessons observed the teaching was good and very good, with pupils having very good attitudes to the subject in both classes. These lessons were successful because of the very good planning and the very good subject knowledge of the teachers and they caught the pupils' interest because they were firmly based on local case study material. In both lessons pupils were highly involved in their own learning with examples of effective paired work and discussion. The pupils worked with great concentration and with obvious enjoyment of the subject. Pupils were challenged and inspired to further their learning and as a result very good progress was made. The pupils indicated a good knowledge of the importance of stakeholders to the development of a company and showed a comprehensive understanding of the range of the possible different stakeholders. The pupils were active learners in both lessons and there was good evidence of strong peer support and encouragement. Business studies is a new subject for all pupils in Year 10 and the development of the key skills is impressive. The quality of the folder work reviewed is above average.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects were inspected and are reported on in detail.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

### *GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	1	0	52	0	2	0	0.79
Chemistry	1	0	43	0	5	0	0.77
Mathematics	1	0	62	0	15	0	1.51
Physics	2	0	52	0	4	0	0.90

### *GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	11	100	96	9	46	5.64	6.57
Biology	13	100	88	23	34	4.31	5.25
Chemistry	6	100	90	33	43	5.67	5.90
Economics	35	97	89	31	36	5.77	5.52
English Literature	41	88	95	17	37	4.63	5.91
French	6	100	89	17	38	5.0	5.59
Full Design and Technology	8	100	91	50	30	6.75	5.38
General Studies	31	94	85	26	30	5.03	4.91
Geography	29	93	92	24	38	4.76	5.74
History	8	100	88	38	35	6.25	5.45
Home Economics	12	58	83	0	28	2.33	4.73
Mathematics	15	80	87	13	43	3.20	5.80
Music	8	88	93	38	35	4.75	5.74
Other Social Studies	10	100	87	70	34	7.20	5.30
Physics	3	100	88	0	40	4.0	5.67
Sociology	18	78	86	22	35	3.67	5.32
Sports/PE Studies	14	100	92	14	25	4.0	5.09

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### MATHEMATICS

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

##### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good
- Students are well motivated and work hard
- The provision is well managed and shared effectively

##### Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology
- Improvement in the AS results

217. The inspection covered the AS, A level and the further mathematics course.
218. For the last four years there has been a 100 per cent pass rate in A level mathematics. In 2001 around 20 per cent gained an A or B grade. These results are well below the national average but were in line with students' prior attainment. In 2002 the results improved considerably, more students took the examination and around half gained an A or B grade. This is in line with national averages. Boys have performed better than girls but more boys study A level mathematics than girls. Three students took the A level examination after just one year and two achieved a grade A. In the past two years there has been a full spread of AS results. Larger numbers than were expected had results which were unclassified, but this is part of a national picture. The students with unclassified results who went on to A level all achieved a grade.
219. Standards of work seen in the inspection in the sixth form are above average, reflecting the high prior attainment of many of the students now following the A level course. Students are making good progress because of the effective and challenging teaching.
220. Teaching is a strength. Teaching is mostly very good and occasionally excellent and students learn well as a result. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a great deal of experience and expertise. They give clear explanations and relevant examples where appropriate. For example, in an excellent Year 12 lesson the students were practising their graph drawing skills on mini whiteboards and using these and their knowledge of integration to work out the area between two curves. A further mathematics lesson with one pupil was sensitively managed. By skilful questioning the student made very good progress in his understanding of the use of polar co-ordinates to draw graphs. Lessons are very well planned. The pace at which the work is undertaken is well matched to the students' needs. Teachers question the students skilfully and students answer questions confidently showing a good level of understanding. The students work hard and are committed to achieving high standards. They co-operate with their teachers. Much of the written work demanded of students takes the form of questions which test the students' understanding. These questions challenge the students to think about what they are doing and help them to work independently. Homework and tests are set regularly and marked in a sufficiently detailed way to help the students make progress in their understanding. Graphical calculators are used confidently and competently by all the students. No other use of information and communication technology was seen.

221. The sixth form work is very well managed. The head of department monitors and evaluates the teaching and learning and this process is well documented. The teachers work well together to deliver the different parts of the course and support teachers new to teaching A level. Teachers know the individual strengths and weaknesses of the students well. The curriculum is appropriate and meets the needs of the students. Students find the course interesting and challenging. They are aware of their progress and predicted grades and recognise and appreciate the support given by the teachers. Relationships between the students and with the teachers are very good. The choice of applied mathematics units on the course allows good flexibility. Since the last inspection the number studying A level mathematics has increased.

## SCIENCE

### BIOLOGY

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall
- Teachers care for the academic progress and personal development of pupils
- Good investigative and practical work takes place
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge

#### Areas for improvement

- Examination results have declined over three years
- Analysis of subject performance and of student progress is not properly developed
- ICT is not used sufficiently
- Some laboratories are in poor condition

222. Since the last inspection results have fluctuated but there has been a slight decline in results over the last three years. Girls have performed better than boys. Recruitment has increased from six candidates in 1998 to 14 in 2002. These small numbers make national comparisons unreliable. Better results were obtained in the AS level examinations in 2002.

223. The school has analysed the work and results of individual students and has identified what to change in its teaching and provision so that students are better supported to achieve better. Many students find the statistical techniques needed for work in genetics and ecology very difficult. More direct teaching of statistics is being given. More regular modular tests are given to help students consolidate work over time. More practice in the writing of synoptic essays is being introduced to improve standards in this component of the course.

224. Teaching and learning are good overall. Very detailed planning produces a variety of good, well-sequenced activities that challenge and develop students' theoretical understanding and increase their practical skills. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and pose good questions. In the best lessons quick pre-tests help teachers to pitch new topics at a level that builds on previous learning successfully. Good, closely directed practical work heightens investigative skills. A productive pace and very good relationships help students to cover a good quality and quantity of work in lessons. Not much work in information and communication technology was seen. When interviewed students stated that they had sufficient access to computers

to support their work. Lower attaining students are not always sufficiently involved in personal target setting and planning actions for improvements.

225. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. Teaching is monitored and clear feedback given. The subject is now appealing to many more students from a much wider range of attainment and background. Resources are adequate but the condition of some laboratories is care-worn and dispiriting. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The newly established AS level course is making a good contribution to pupils' general education and personal development.

## CHEMISTRY

Provision for chemistry is **good**.

### Strengths

- The very good quality of the best teaching
- The standard of students' work in lessons has improved
- Students work hard and are interested in learning
- Teachers provide good support for students

### Areas for improvement

- Reducing inconsistency in the quality of teaching
- Better preparation of teaching materials in some lessons

226. In A level examinations in 2001 students' results were about average in comparison with national figures and since 1998 results have either been better than or similar to the results gained by the students in other subjects. In the AS and A level examinations in 2001 and 2002 students overall gained the grades that were predicted using their performance in GCSE examinations. In 2002, a significant number did better than was predicted in the A level examination. In recent years all students have gained a pass grade at least and boys and girls do equally well. Almost all of the students complete their courses successfully so that retention and completion rates are good.

227. Students' achievements in lessons are good. In Year 13 they understand why standard conditions are important when measuring energy changes and the higher achievers, particularly boys, have an excellent understanding of how to calculate these changes. In Year 12 many have an understanding of hydrogen bonding that is equivalent to the highest grades at AS level, others, particularly some of the girls were less certain. Overall, standards were above average. In another lesson pupils were well able to explain differences in reaction rates. Students' standards of achievement in lessons are better than those in examinations because teaching has improved.

228. Teaching overall is good. The lessons seen were very good, good or satisfactory, and students make good progress during them. No lessons were unsatisfactory. In the best lessons objectives are clear and students understand exactly what the lesson is about. Question and answer sessions are used very effectively, for example to build successfully on previous learning during a Year 12 lesson. These sessions make good use of student's ideas, raising their morale and generating interest so that they are willing to offer explanatory answers to difficult questions. Clear explanations and high expectations of understanding ensured that progress was good in a Year 13 lesson about energy and very good in a Year 12 lesson about hydrogen bonds. In these lessons planning is good and students have opportunities to learn to work independently producing, for example, explanations of the properties of water. Very

good use was made of computers to measure the viscosity of liquids. The accuracy and reliability of measurements were discussed and students learned how to use light gates and about the limitations of their use. They made very good progress in this lesson.

229. In a minority of lessons teaching can be improved by better planning to ensure that all students are occupied throughout the lesson. When time targets are not set and summaries at the end of lessons are not provided students learn less than they should. In these lessons expectations of hard work and learning are not high enough, but students' progress is satisfactory. Students are interested in learning and cooperate well with each other during practical activities. Students are critical, are willing to use their knowledge to explain what they see or hear about, and many give very articulate explanations. Motivation is good because teaching is interesting and challenging.
230. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards are better and much more use is made of information and communication technology. Leadership of the department is also good. The target setting and monitoring system for recording pupils' progress is very good and new teaching plans have been introduced although the detail in the plans is not sufficient to be fully effective. Teaching is not monitored within the department and there is no strategy for improving teaching. However, performance in examinations is evaluated using the grades achieved by students and extra revision sessions are provided to help students to meet their targets. Teachers provide very good support to students, who clearly appreciate it. Marking gives detailed and helpful advice and provides accurate information about progress.

## PHYSICS

Provision for physics is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The monitoring and target setting process
- Many students work hard, they cooperate well and show initiative

### Areas for improvement

- Improving results in examinations
- Supporting unqualified teachers of physics
- Improving teaching methods to prevent unsatisfactory teaching

231. In 2001 the number of students taking the A level examination was too small for a valid comparison with national figures to be made. However, in the three years from 1998 to 2000 results were significantly worse in physics than in other subjects taken by the students. In 1998 and in 2000 they were well below the national average and in 1999 at the national average. In 2002 the students, overall did not gain the grades that were predicted using their GCSE scores. These students underachieved in some cases by several grades. Few students received an AS level grade and comparison with national performance in AS level examinations is not possible.
232. Standards of work seen in the classroom are below what should be expected. In a Year 13 lesson about capacitors students were confused. They did not fully understand the implications of the effect of electrical charge and were not confident in their knowledge of the topic. In a Year 12 lesson about loads on bridges pupils worked well and identified fixed variables and selected and assembled equipment needed to test elasticity. The level of their work was a little above GCSE standard so that progress was being made but standards were not high enough to achieve good

AS level grades. In another Year 12 lesson about electrical energy the higher achievers reached a standard equivalent to the higher grades at AS level but others, particularly some of the girls, had difficulty in understanding the equations they were using to carry out calculations about electric cells.

233. Teaching and the progress made by students in lessons are unsatisfactory. In the lessons seen teaching was either satisfactory or poor. In some cases the teacher's subject knowledge is inadequate, repeated references to a textbook are needed during the lesson and students made sceptical comments throughout the lesson. Question and answer sessions are minimal and do not offer opportunities for students to hypothesise or make predictions. Important ideas about potential difference are covered too quickly and lower attaining students do not fully understand this work, although higher attaining pupils do well. The results of practical work about voltage and current were not discussed and surprising results were not explained so that students make less progress than they should. Equipment for practical work is not fully prepared and students begin to make sarcastic comments about this situation. The quantity of work in some students' folders was barely satisfactory and only two pieces of work had been marked in six weeks. Higher achieving students' numerical skills are very good, and graphs and stress/strain calculations were done well. In some cases numerical skills were limited and mistakes were made in calculations. Relationships in lessons are generally good and students cooperate well during practical work. They work persistently and show initiative when using a computer to plot graphs of the data they obtain but attention wanes when teaching is not satisfactory.
234. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Examination results are not improving, no improvements in teaching methods are planned but much better use is made of information and communication technology. Leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. Although comprehensive information about examination results is received the head of the department apparently remains unaware of it and of the underachievement of students over a period of years. No plans exist to remedy this underachievement by reviewing teaching methods. Teaching of A level physics by a non-specialist in physics is an unsatisfactory situation and the new teaching plans do not provide the guidance about day to day practice that is needed. These features of the department adversely affect students' progress. The monitoring and target setting processes for students are very effective and provide them with good support. There are good links with a university that allow students access to specialised physics equipment but some of the equipment in the school, power packs for example, is not reliable.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

### DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

#### Strengths

- Attitudes of students to the subject are good
- Teaching in product design and textiles is good
- Relationships between staff and students are good

#### Areas for improvement

- Improve attainment in food technology
- Develop further the individual student review process to record targets for improvement and check progress
- Increase the range of teaching strategies and resources to enable students to take more responsibility for their learning

235. Standards in the GCE A and AS level examination results for 2001 were above the national average in product design but below in food technology and textiles. However the results for 2002 in textiles show a significant improvement with many students in both textiles and product design obtaining A and B grades. The standards in food technology are still below average but the department has experienced staffing difficulties that have contributed to this situation. These issues have now been resolved and strategies are being developed to raise standards. The numbers of students choosing to follow an AS design and technology course are good with many students continuing into Year 13 to do the full A level courses.
236. Attainment in lessons is good with many students achieving at or above their predicted grades. This is due in part to the very good relationships between teachers and students and to the positive attitudes students have to their work. Teaching observed is good and enables students to consolidate and extend their knowledge. Students are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching.
237. Work by Year 12 in all material areas shows students are developing a range of research skills and starting to apply the design process well to their coursework. In product design and textiles students use a range of drawing skills and use light and shade well to produce their initial and developing designs. Progress from Year 12 to Year 13 in product design and textiles is good with clear improvements in analysis, research of existing products and the development of prototypes for testing and evaluation. This was seen in coursework and also in a Year 13 product design lesson where students demonstrated good research and representation of research findings in a variety of visual forms. In food technology progress is sound but there is sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding and experimental and investigative work to enable students to obtain high grades in their examinations. In all material areas the use of annotation and explanation of design work to support product analysis and modifications are underdeveloped.
238. Teaching is good with well-planned and organised lessons. The good relationships between teachers and students and between students themselves create a positive and respectful learning environment. Teachers give good opportunities for students to discuss ideas and to raise and explore issues relevant to their coursework. Teachers regularly review work with students and set targets for improvements. These targets are not, however, formally recorded by teachers and students, which

makes it difficult to monitor progress effectively. However, students value these reviews and are generally aware of their overall target grades.

239. The range of resources available to students is limited. This hinders students' ability to take more responsibility for their learning and develop a more independent approach to their coursework.
240. The department has experienced significant staffing difficulties at head of department and teaching level. These have now been resolved. However, the management of the material areas during this time has been good with subject teachers aware of the strengths and areas for development. There is a strong commitment by members of the department for improvement and this is evident in the team approach to developments despite the difficulties encountered.

## **BUSINESS**

### **BUSINESS STUDIES**

Overall the provision for business studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Business is a very popular subject that is still growing
- The teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of the students
- Students are very well motivated to learn and work well together in lessons
- Relationships are very good, sometimes excellent
- The students are highly involved in their own learning and their attitudes to the subject are excellent
- Good links with industry

#### Areas for improvement

- Greater access to information and communication technology, particularly for the GNVQ course
- Improve the learning environment in the business rooms
- The group sizes are larger than usual and cause problems in monitoring students' progress effectively

241. The A level results in 2001 were comparable to the national average, but when the value added data is analysed they show that students gained an additional half a grade over their expected outcome. Over the last four years the subject has grown in popularity and the number of students taking A level has doubled in that time. More students are now studying business than any other subject within the sixth form. The AS examination has been successfully introduced and 85 per cent of candidates obtained an A to E grade in 2002. Currently there are two groups of over 20 students each in Year 12.
242. Standards observed in lessons and in written work are above average in both Year 12 and Year 13 and achievement overall is good. These standards are consistent with the examination successes of the last few years. The understanding of business concepts of the Year 13 students is impressive, in particular where they showed their full understanding of the theory of critical path analysis through a practical exercise of making a cup of tea. The students are skilful in making group presentations of their own research into the impact of management gurus, and in developing their arguments in response to skilful questioning by the teacher. They have also developed real responsibility for their own learning by this time, despite having very limited access to information and communication technology within the department.

Attitudes to the subject are excellent and relationships within the groups are of a similar high standard.

243. Teaching is good overall with some very good features and all students learn quickly as a result. They respond very positively to the teachers' very good subject knowledge and they ask thoughtful questions to ensure that their understanding is firmly based. The lessons are well organised and students are expected to work hard and the pace is challenging, although in one Year 12 lesson there was too much teacher led discussion and students were not encouraged to develop their own technical vocabulary. The teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject and shared their enthusiasm readily with the students. In addition, they use their expertise to provide a wide variety of different learning experiences for the students. This variety is welcomed by the students and is seen by them as a strength of the department. Planning is good and the lessons objectives are shared with the students so that they can assess their own progress throughout the lesson. Assessment is very good with work marked carefully and thoroughly according to exam criteria, and all students have a very clear idea of their progress and what they have to do to strengthen their understanding and overall performance. The students respond very well to the teacher's high expectations and they work with great enthusiasm and purpose.
244. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The students are thoroughly prepared for the examination by regular testing and case study reviews. The key skills of business studies are carefully and systematically taught. Students are very positive about the subject and many of them take a business and management course at university. The department is very well organised and the head of department carefully monitors both the performance of both students and teachers. There is very good team work and staff plan future developments in the subject together. Since the last inspection good progress has been made particularly in increasing the numbers taking the subject. This expansion has been managed very well. Students now have a choice of syllabus and whether to do coursework or an additional examination. There are good links with industry and many students use the links to produce coursework of a high quality. However there is very limited access to computers within the department and the two business rooms lack any real business environment. In addition most of the teaching groups are now larger than 20, making individual diagnosis of students more difficult. A high proportion of lessons have to be taught away from the base owing to insufficient space. Despite these issues the students speak very highly of the care that they receive and the encouragement from the teachers to achieve well. Apart from access to computers the resources are good with a wide variety of additional books and a good selection of business videos, in addition students attend business conferences each year and are actively encouraged to read newspapers and business magazines.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average
- Teaching is of good quality
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject

### Areas for improvement

- Computer resources are limited and sometimes unreliable

245. Standards in information and communication technology in the sixth form are above average. In the last two years the pass rate for the AS level has been both below and above the national average. In 2002 the school entered its first candidates for A level in information and communication technology. Grades achieved by the eight candidates covered the whole range and one failed to achieve a pass grade. However the results were better than predicted from the candidates' GCSE grades. Progress for the majority of students is good.
246. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Most students enter the sixth form having completed a GCSE in Information Studies. Skills and knowledge developed as a result of this course, however, do not always prepare the students well for all aspects of AS and A level study in information and communication technology. Nonetheless, most students quickly acquire the necessary skills and knowledge and make good progress. For example students in a Year 12 AS level class showed a good understanding of the social impact of the use of computers. In a further Year 13 class working towards A level the students showed a good understanding of the procedures involved in updating and querying a data-base. However, the current Year 13 students were having some difficulties in satisfying the coursework requirements of the course in the time that was available to them.
247. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Teachers are aware of the need to promote student's skills relating to co-operative working with others and of independent study. Lessons frequently involve students in working in pairs or in small groups. Students in their own time are expected to consider further issues that have been raised during the lessons. All lessons are well planned and group work involves the significant questioning of students. In some lessons good quality discussions result both between the students and with the teacher. Relationships between the students themselves, and between students and teachers are very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of individual students and good records of their progress are kept by the teachers. In a few lessons not all of the students make sufficient contributions to the discussions that take place. All the students have a positive attitude to their work. They are well motivated, take an interest in the work and enjoy some aspects.
248. The management of the sixth form work is good. The staff involved meet regularly and work well as a team. Monitoring and evaluation procedures include a review of the work and as part of this examination results are analysed. Teaching and learning are monitored by lesson observations which are carried out on a routine basis. Departmental policies have been developed and agreed. Satisfactory schemes of work are in place. The curriculum is satisfactory with students having the opportunity to undertake AS level information and communication technology during Year 12 and to continue this to A level in Year 13. Progress since the last inspection has been

good with standards now above the expected level. However there is a continuing need to improve the level and reliability of the computer resources available to the sixth form students.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### ART

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

#### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and high level of commitment
- Good teacher subject expertise
- Very good teacher-student relationships
- Results in A-level GCE examinations

#### Areas for improvement:

- Provision of accommodation for the sixth form
- Monitoring of project choices for AS and A-level

249. The scope of provision for sixth form students is limited to just one syllabus. This, however, allows for a wide choice of emphasis and creative activity within the art curriculum. Students are accepted solely on the basis of their wish to study art, and the department attracts some students who have had no experience of art in Years 10 and 11 and also students from other schools where selection for the sixth form is dependent upon success in GCSE at the earlier stage. This totally inclusive policy produces a challenging mix of students from differing backgrounds and with a wide range of prior attainment.
250. In 2001 A-level results, 9 per cent of students were awarded the highest grades A-B which is below average. The average points scores for students in 2001 represent consistent performance by middle attainers. In the previous year, students gained a significantly higher number of grades A-B at 60 per cent and a higher than average points score of 7. The number of students taking A-level over these two years has remained virtually static and no student failed to gain a grade. In line with school policy, targets are set for retention and performance at both AS and A-level.
251. Standards in work seen are good overall. There are well-developed drawing skills and students are able to use colour effectively as an aid to self-expression. Art history is integrated with individual work in projects and the work of contemporary artists, Francis Bacon for example, is used to stimulate student progress.
252. Information and communication technology is used effectively as a creative medium. Portrait distortion, for example, is generated by a computer program and used as a basis for strongly expressive work in pastel. Profitable use is made of sketchbooks, which provide very good evidence of the development of students' ideas.
253. Given the wide range of students' prior attainment, achievement overall is good. Purposeful progress is evident in lessons and students show creative independence. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers show a very good level of subject expertise and enthusiasm for the subject. In lesson planning, art historical material is used as a means of introducing ideas for work in projects. Discussion of work at the beginning of lessons and during one-to-one individual tuition is mature and demands an appropriately critical approach from students. Very good relationships within groups and between teacher and student promote a pleasant working atmosphere in studios.

Students show an excellent attitude to their work. They are very supportive of the way in which their work is supervised and show a high level of interest and commitment.

254. Students' work is carefully monitored and assessment is used to help planning. In some instances, students' ideas outstrip their technical abilities and there is a need for more intensive monitoring of students' project choice to avoid over ambitious intentions leading to frustration.
255. The management of the department is good and staff share a commitment to the continuing development of the subject. Relationships between the teachers in the department are very good, providing a secure and united impetus for learning.
256. A comparative weakness in the accommodation is the inadequate provision for sixth form study. The area designated is much too small and lacking in privacy. The absence of a suitable study base limits the independence of the sixth form as a group. A further constraint is caused by the lack of technical support in ceramics. This limits the use of an otherwise valuable resource.

## HUMANITIES

### GEOGRAPHY

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

#### Strengths

- The range and quality of fieldwork opportunities are good
- The attitudes of students are very good
- The high quality teaching resources

#### Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of students' progress
- Increase lesson opportunities for students to develop and explain their ideas in depth
- Continue to integrate the use of information and communication technology into lesson planning

257. In the 2001 'A' Level examination most students gained a grade in the A-E range. A quarter of students gained the higher A/B grades which is below the national figure. Overall the results attained by students in 2001 are below national expectations. These results show a downward trend between 1999 and 2001. Students' performance in 'A' Level geography in 2001 was in line with that of other subjects they studied. School data for 2002 indicates that all students gained a grade in the A-E range but few students gained the higher A/B grades. There are no consistent differences in the attainment of males and females. School value added data indicates that students' grades were in line with expectations in 2001 and broadly in line with expectations in 2002. This data represents satisfactory achievement and progress. Course completion rates are good.

258. In work seen during the inspection students' attainment was in line with national expectations. Students in a Year 12 lesson had a sound understanding of the population patterns and could explain the causes and consequences of rising and falling birth rates. In a Year 13 lesson students were shown a range of very good resources to illustrate glacial erosion features and were able to identify these with confidence. Students in Year 13 have clearly been motivated by a recent field visit to Yorkshire that had stimulated their interest in physical geography. The higher attaining students use specialist vocabulary with accuracy and show understanding of more complex geographical concepts. For example, in a Year 13 lesson some students understood the links between urban sprawl, greenbelt policies and the development of brownfield sites. In the majority of lessons students had few opportunities to develop and explain their ideas in depth. Students make some use of information and communication technology for researching geographical issues and in producing coursework but the planned use of information and communication technology is not, as yet, integrated into lessons. In lessons seen during the inspection all students were making satisfactory progress. Students' attitudes towards geography are very good. They show trust and confidence in their teachers and are attentive in lessons. They respond well to the demands made upon them which helps to maximise their progress.
259. Overall the standard of teaching is satisfactory and some teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly but the learning objectives are not always shared explicitly with students to enable them to focus on the central issues. Teachers produce high quality resources that enliven lessons and help to motivate students. Teachers used carefully chosen slides, video, photographs, articles and varied numerical data to stimulate students' interest. In the best lessons teachers had high expectations of higher, middle and lower attaining students and asked demanding and challenging questions. In some lessons the closed nature of questioning gave students few opportunities to give extended answer and the pace of the lesson was slower.
260. The leadership and management of the course are good. Departmental documentation is thorough and well organised. The 'A' Level handbook and 'AS' Level skills booklet are particularly helpful to students. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place within the department and during team teaching on fieldwork visits. Good use is made of prior attainment data to set targets for students. The tracking of student progress could be further developed to ensure students reach their potential.
261. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The teachers in the department have the enthusiasm for their subject and the commitment to make further improvements.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good
- Support for students' learning is good
- Attitudes to the subject are very good

### Areas for improvement

- The use of chronology in students' work
- Students' breadth of reading
- Monitoring procedures

262. The proportion of students obtaining a pass grade at A level has been consistently above the national average over recent years, as has, with the exception of 2000, the average points score per candidate. The performance of boys and girls compared to their counterparts nationally has also fluctuated in recent years, with girls significantly under-performing in 2000, but doing very well the following year. At grades A-B, attainment has usually been above the national average, although in 2000 it fell to less than half the national figure. In 2002 well over half of history candidates gained grades A-B which represented very good achievement. Retention is satisfactory with approximately three-quarters of last year's Year 12 group continuing to the full A level.
263. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Year 13 attainment is above national expectations. Students accept considerable responsibility for their own learning; they undertake research, both individually and in groups, before presenting their findings in class seminars. They demonstrate well-developed independent study skills including making comprehensive and detailed notes, and using diagrams, tables, spidergraphs and highlighters very effectively to secure their own learning. There is some scope for greater use of dates and wider reading on the part of many students, and for improving the technical accuracy of written English for lower attaining ones. Apart from word processing students also make use of information and communication technology for research purposes but are not always sufficiently discriminating or critical in their use of such material.
264. The quality of teaching is always good and sometimes better than that. Teachers have high expectations and use question and answer well to explore, challenge and extend students' knowledge and understanding. Students' learning is well supported by ready access to examination mark schemes, study guides and support booklets such as the one produced for AS students who have not taken history at GCSE level. In an excellent lesson on aims and images of Cromwell, students learned extremely well because of very detailed planning, explicit links to examination requirements and skills, the variety of activities expected of them, and the opportunity to handle and transcribe a seventeenth century letter. Opportunities to correct spelling errors or omissions in chronology are occasionally missed and there is sometimes a tendency to tell rather than ask. On occasion there is a mismatch between the evaluative comments made on students' work and the grades awarded, and in these cases students would benefit from more detailed advice on how to improve. A significant contribution to the quality of learning results from students' very positive attitudes to the subject. They approach and organise their work in a mature and responsible way and are active participants in lessons. Oral presentations, sometimes supported by overhead transparencies or flip charts, are common features of history lessons and afford students valuable practice in the acquisition of communication skills.

265. The quality of leadership and management in the sixth form is good. Students benefit from staff experience as examiners and from the close collaborative working relationships in the subject. The head of department has a clear focus on raising attainment. Individual target grades are set and subject tutors regularly review progress. Examination results are carefully analysed and the evaluation used to inform curriculum planning, as for example, in the production of the recent study guide to votes for women. There is scope for more formal monitoring of the development of teaching and learning. A number of concerns from the previous inspection have been addressed, including the quality of departmental documentation, the range of resources and active participation in lessons and overall improvement has been good.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision or religious education is **good**

### Strengths

- Very good teaching based on excellent subject knowledge and high expectations
- Newly introduced short course and full A level
- Very detailed planning to support students' skills of independent study

### Areas for improvement

- Increase the amount of time available for all students' general religious education
- Develop clearer guidance procedures for students opting for the course at the age of sixteen

266. The newly introduced course was first examined at AS level in 2002. Twenty six candidates took the course, of whom 85% gained a pass grade. The students who did not achieve a pass grade found the course too difficult and were not well matched to the course requirements. Nevertheless they had a very worthwhile educational experience and received much support from the teachers. One pupil gained an A with no previous background other than the general religious education of one period of 35 minutes per week in Years 10 and 11. Good value is added to previous learning.
267. Of these 26 first year students who completed the AS course, 13 have opted to continue to the full A level course.
268. The standards of work seen in current Year 13 are above average and sometimes well above. In a lesson on the nature of the soul and questions of life after death, the students had analysed four scholarly articles critically and presented their personal summaries succinctly to the group. Standards of work seen in Year 12 are above average in lessons. At this early stage in the course very good teaching brings pupils to the threshold of new learning well. Three quarters of the teaching is very good, a quarter is outstanding. Very good research skills and essay techniques are directly taught with great clarity to support independent study effectively. Good use is made of ICT for research. Students learn how to assess the credibility of sources on the internet and the dangers of over-dependency on limited sources. Lists of useful web sites speed their research.
269. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They share their enthusiasm, emit confidence and generate confidence in the students. Students learn that they stand in a tradition of great minds and on the shoulders of great scholarship. The climate of

high expectations and support helps them to wrestle with moral and philosophical problems effectively. Oral presentations with good discussion and debate show that students develop their own judgements supported by logical argument. The seminar environment created by both teachers promotes the sharing of complex ideas successfully. Very clear exposition of new and difficult ideas enables students to get to grips with the issues they encounter such as aspects of world justice or the teaching of Plato. Relationships are excellent.

270. Written and other work is very thoroughly assessed with lengthy, careful comments. Difficulties are analysed so that students re-direct their studies through precise targets. Several students commented on the great support they had been given to help them improve. They achieve and learn well. Good well-focused mini-tutorials help students to take responsibility and evaluate their own progress realistically.
271. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
272. A programme of religious education for all in the sixth form has been established through exciting conference days, for example 'Chocolate and trainers' by Christian Aid. These episodes stir pupils to consider issues of global justice, but the time given to these events is very limited.
273. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection when there was no A or AS level teaching in the sixth form.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### ENGLISH LITERATURE

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge
- Teachers develop students' vocabulary and conceptual knowledge well
- Students understand examination requirements and this supports their learning

#### Areas for improvement

- Raise standards further, using value added information and prior attainment data
- Monitoring and evaluation are not sufficiently rigorous
- There are too few opportunities to use information and communication technology in lessons

274. English literature is a very popular course among sixth form students. This year, 90 students are studying it. GCE AS and A2 courses are offered in English literature. There is also a GCSE course available for students who wish to improve their existing grades.
275. Standards achieved in GCE AS and A-level examinations have fluctuated over the last three years (1999-2001) and remained below the national averages particularly in the case of higher grades A and B. However, value added analysis shows that the school adds appropriate value to students' education in English literature. In 2001, 75 per cent of students performed at or above the expected level. Although 2002 results are provisional at this stage, there was 100 per cent pass rate in AS and A-level examinations. At AS level, 25 per cent of students achieved grades A-B and at A-level 17.9 per cent achieved grades A-B. These results largely reflect students' attainment at GCSE.

276. Work seen during the inspection confirms these standards. Higher attaining students write with knowledge and understanding using coherent sentences. They show good understanding of the background of authors, use insights and support their arguments with a sound use of quotations. They make effective use of the language of literary criticism. The work of average attaining students shows some of these features but is less clear in terms of personal ideas and responses. Low attaining students show a developing style with occasional spelling errors. They could be more adventurous in developing knowledge of the context and the language of literary criticism. Overall, however, all students show knowledge of symbolism, imagery and other stylistic devices. Marking of students' work is satisfactory.
277. There is no significant gender difference in results. Students work hard to improve their skills. Students interviewed expressed satisfaction with the course and said that the course was helping them to develop their own ideas and analytical skills.
278. The teaching of English literature is good overall. Teachers plan their lessons with care. The pace of lessons is good. Teachers attempt to extend students' knowledge, develop their vocabulary and understanding of literary concepts. Lessons are introduced in a lively and interesting manner showing a secure knowledge of the subject. Wherever appropriate, the context of literary works is explained outlining the social and historical background of the period.
279. Students show positive attitudes to the study of literature. They listen attentively to their teachers and stay on task. In one class, students had worked in pairs or small groups and written about characters in 'Howards End'. They read their work to the rest of the class and answered questions about them. As a result of exercises like this one, teachers are able to promote co-operation among students and develop their independence. This kind of work needs to become more widespread on the course and students' involvement in lessons could be extended.
280. Curriculum enrichment visits are made to places of literary heritage to develop students' interest in English literature. For example, following a visit to Haworth where the novelist Emile Brontë lived and died, a student wrote a powerful poem 'The Grave Yard' which reads:
- ...
- Black feathers scatter the overgrown paths.  
Nothing is allowed to live here.  
The faded writing once told a story,  
Of life ... of death.
- I enter the church for the last time,  
The story fades and so do I.
- Here lies Emile Brontë*  
Silhouettes slip in and out of my ghostly kingdom.
281. Activities such as these develop students' ideas and written expression. Most students read widely though the reading of some students is not widely enough developed. The use of computers in lessons is minimal.
282. Teachers make students aware of assessment criteria by taking them through examination scripts of previous students and showing how criteria are applied and how pitfalls can be avoided.

283. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Teaching is accommodated in dedicated rooms though one room offers a limited space. Learning resources are adequate except computers.
284. The leadership and management of English are good. Teachers co-operate and share ideas and resources. The team has produced good quality documentation, such as the departmental handbook and scheme of work. All teachers are specialists with good subject knowledge. They keep themselves up to date by attending professional development courses. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are limited. The team has managed changes successfully and has the capacity to improve further.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### GERMAN

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

#### Strengths

- Staff expertise is good
- Leadership in the subject is very good
- Marking of work is thorough and diagnostic
- Literacy is well supported in teaching

#### Areas for improvement

- To set up work experience abroad

285. At GCE level in 2001 all students gained a pass at AS and A levels, with the majority surpassing expectations. National comparisons for 2002 are not yet available, but again students performed better than in their other subjects.
286. The evidence from inspection is that standards in German are good. In the Year 13 lesson observed, students coped well in the discussion about the German press, which was quite a challenge. Their preparation was good and each spoke confidently and convincingly about their findings. Sophisticated language was used and each case was argued well. Initial apprehension was allayed and everyone was supportive of each other.
287. Year 12 students made very good use of cue cards to promote thoughts on conflicting viewpoints between parents and children. Grammar was used correctly in the ensuing debate. A challenging task was completed in record time, helped by the thoroughness of the homework learning. Attitudes to learning are very positive. There is a thirst for learning and independent research. Thoughtful and effective planning by the teachers and very good teaching ensures that the transition from GCSE level work is smooth. Students are accustomed to working independently and a weekly task is designed to build up a wealth of vocabulary and grammar, using a purpose made spreadsheet.
288. Topics are well researched and planned. Students are fully aware of the course requirements. Homework is regularly set and marked in depth, so that all know how to improve. Files are well ordered. A particular strength is the literacy strategy. A template for essay planning is excellent and can be used for any written or oral topic. It is designed so that students can put together ideas, use their imagination, and use it as a checklist. For example, they use it to check that ideas have been introduced,

present an argument, develop ideas, give examples, reasons and consequences, include idiomatic language and conclude. There were examples of work that had been written, using this framework which were of a good standard.

289. Teaching is very good. In the two lessons seen, the teacher used German very effectively throughout the lesson. The teaching was a constant challenge to which the students responded and there was full participation in the lesson by all students. The teacher's enthusiasm and love of the subject enthuses the students. They have every confidence in the teacher and want to do well. A variety of methodology adds to the challenges and students are made to think for themselves.
290. The subject is very well led and managed. Schemes of work are detailed and up to date. Resources are very well chosen. Good use is made of assessment and prior attainment data. Progress is monitored and targets set. There is currently no programme for work experience abroad, which would enrich the learning experience.

## FRENCH

The quality of provision in sixth form French is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teacher knowledge and expertise is good
- Leadership is very good
- Marking of work is thorough
- Literacy is well supported through good planning

### Areas for improvement

- To set up work experience abroad

291. A relatively small number of students study French in the sixth form. However most of the students do the full two year course, which is evidence of its popularity and success. All gained a pass at AS and A levels, in 2001, with the majority of students surpassing expectations. The 2002 results are still provisional, but are evidence of rising standards, with students performing better in French than in their other subjects.
292. The evidence from inspection is that standards in French are good. A Year 13 lesson saw students presenting an interview in pairs. This was recorded, replayed and self assessed. With teacher guidance and the help of a criteria sheet, students assessed the work at a correct level. They were proud of their success, which was well deserved. The interviews had been prepared in pairs independently, after hearing an exemplar, discussion and with teacher input. The situation was realistic. The delivery was "relished". It was a purposeful activity and lengthy discussions ensued.
293. Students in Year 12, have found the transition from GCSE level smooth. In a lesson about leisure they spoke fluently, using sophisticated language. Imaginative ideas were shared. There was interactivity and learning was fun. A strength of the sixth form French studies is the way in which students develop confidence and use independent study skills.
294. Student files are evidence of the intensity of work being undertaken. Topics are structured in such a way as to enable each student to reach their potential. Very good use is made of writing frames, which can be adapted for oral presentations. There is little danger of stereotyping, as students need to work independently and think about content, at each stage. There is much scope for individuality. There is a wealth of

resources, including authentic materials and tapes. Homework is regularly set and taken most seriously. Marking is very thorough, so that each student knows how to improve.

295. Teaching is very good. In one of the two lessons seen, French was used throughout and in the other mainly French, with a small amount of English, which was appropriate for the discussion. A wide variety of methodology is used. The teachers themselves enjoy the lessons and inspire the students, who have every confidence in them. Questions are asked at an appropriate level, resulting in brisk response and often discussion at a high level. Students respond to the challenges and are determined to do well.
296. The subject is very well led. Resources are aptly chosen and authentic. Schemes of work are up to date. Good use is made of data to set targets.