

INSPECTION REPORT

ST CUTHBERT'S R C HIGH SCHOOL

Rochdale

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105845

Headteacher: John Wood

Reporting inspector: David Bate
1545

Dates of inspection: 11 – 15 November 2002

Inspection number: 249737

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: St Cuthbert's RC High School

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Shaw Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr H Wormleighton

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

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10209	Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Art Citizenship	
1759	Geoffrey Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology	How well are pupils taught?
31863	Adrian Cornelius	Team inspector	Geography	How well is the school led and managed?
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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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30297	Gary Spruce	Team inspector	Music	
19295	Peter Wall	Team inspector	Physical education Business education in the sixth form	How good are curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
22878	George Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form	
31775	Meriol Meredith-Jones	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
20055	Sheila Entwistle	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Cuthbert's RC High School is a denominational comprehensive school educating boys and girls from 11 – 18 years. There are currently 1417 pupils on roll including 101 in the sixth form. The school draws its pupils from Roman Catholic parishes covering the whole of the Rochdale borough. The large majority of pupils are bussed to school. The pupil profile reflects a comprehensive intake, although there are 303 pupils in the main school and five in the sixth form having special educational needs (SEN), which is above the national average. Twenty-eight pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is above the national average. The pupils are from predominantly white British backgrounds with only a very small proportion of pupils coming from other ethnic groups. Thirteen pupils speak English as an additional language; these are predominantly refugees from the Congo, whose home languages are French and Portuguese. The school also has 22 traveller children attending. Attendance rates are below the national average for secondary schools. The headteacher is relatively new to the school; less than two years. There has been a very long-term deficit budget situation, stretching back to 1989 when the school was part of the whole Rochdale borough reorganisation of schools. This deficit situation is now under control with a clear plan for eradicating it in the next two years. It has, however, had a major effect on the ability of the school to provide sufficient educational resources, maintain and develop the fabric of the buildings and site and maintain adequate staffing levels. Since the new headteacher arrived there has been a major increase in information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and a drive to improve the fabric and resources. The school is part of the Rochdale Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Excellence Challenge areas. The school has been awarded the Arts Council Silver Artsmark. Attainment levels on entry in 2001 were in line with the national average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school with many good features, and pupils receive a good education. Leadership by the headteacher is good and there is a clear long-term vision for the school. The school is very successfully addressing the historical deficit budget situation. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Pupils are very positive about learning and behave well. There are good relationships throughout the school. Overall standards at the age of 14 are close to the national average and they are in line with the average at the age of 16 for this cohort of pupils. The school adds good value to pupils' achievement as they move through the key stages. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching, especially at Key Stage 3, enables pupils to achieve well
- Promotes positive attitudes to learning
- Leadership by the headteacher is good
- Cares well for the pastoral needs and welfare of the pupils
- Provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Works well with parents
- Careers guidance and support

What could be improved

- The strategic management of the long-term development of the school
- The use of ICT in all subjects and the need to meet statutory requirements for provision of ICT in both key stages
- The attainment of boys, especially at GCSE
- The use of assessment and target setting to guide curriculum planning
- Attendance

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in many areas. However, there are key areas where improvements have been significantly better, notably in the large improvement in the quality of teaching. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved significantly. The school is successfully eradicating its historical deficit budget. Provision for science and art has improved as have standards in both areas. There are still significant areas where improvements have been unsatisfactory, notably the failure to implement plans for checking teaching and learning and the lack of the use of assessment data to inform planning across the school. Although the school has continued to work hard to improve attendance there has been insufficient progress.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form pupils at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A2 level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	A
A2 levels/AS levels	D	D	C	

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

At the age of 16 years in 2001, the overall attainment of pupils in the GCSE examinations in terms of average points scored was in line with all schools and well above similar schools. For pupils achieving five or more grades A* - C, the school was average in comparison with all schools and well above in comparison with similar schools. GCSE examination results in business studies, design and technology –food, geography and Spanish were above the national average for those pupils achieving passes at grades A* - C. Results were weakest in design and technology, French and history. In relation to pupils' prior attainment at age 14 in 1999, the school's results were above those of similar schools, clearly indicating that the school is adding good value to pupils' achievements. The trend of improvement over the period 1998-2001 is in line with the national trend. Unvalidated results for 2002 indicate a dip in attainment overall. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above those expected nationally in art, citizenship, music and physical education (PE). Standards seen in all other subjects, except design and technology, were in line with national expectations.

Results for pupils attaining Level 5+ in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 in 2001 were close to the national average for all schools in English and below the national averages in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils attaining at Level 6+ in English, mathematics and science were close to the national averages. The school's results compared very well with those of similar schools. Although results in 2001 dipped from Year 2000, the trend over time based on points score has been broadly in line with the national trend. Unvalidated results for 2002 show a significant improvement from 2001 with English and mathematics being slightly above average and science being close to the average. Standards of pupils' work seen in citizenship, PE and science during the inspection are above average. This represents good achievement and progress by pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, compared with their standards on entry to the school. Standards seen in all other subjects are in line with national expectations.

Girls consistently outperform boys at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE. SEN pupils, refugees, those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and travellers make good progress by age 14 years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils like school and participate fully in lessons and activities during the day. Around the school there is an air of trust. They have good attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in most lessons and throughout the school is generally good. Bullying is rare within the school, but when it occurs is well dealt with. A good learning environment is created.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are friendly and polite. Good relationships exist throughout the school both between pupils and adults and with other pupils. Opportunities for pupils to demonstrate initiative and for personal responsibility are limited.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is an improving feature, but is still below the national average with unauthorised absence above. Exclusions are high, but this is partly due to exclusions resulting from activities outside school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good and occasionally excellent features, especially in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. There is, however, a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching especially in Year 11 in Key Stage 4. Teaching is particularly good in English, geography, history, PE, science and citizenship. It is satisfactory in all other subjects, although there are some weaknesses in design and technology, ICT, modern languages and mathematics. There are elements of good teaching in all departments across the school. Some teaching in English, geography, music, citizenship, modern languages and PE is very good and occasionally excellent. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in English and mathematics lessons is good, but it is inconsistent in all other subjects. The school generally meets the needs of its diverse population well, including those from traveller and refugee backgrounds. The support for pupils with SEN is good when available, but lacks consistency due to insufficient staffing.

The quality of pupils' learning is generally good, especially in Key Stage 3. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 4, but there are some areas where learning is less than satisfactory, especially in Year 11.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory with some good features. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 lacks breadth and balance due to lack of vocational opportunities. Statutory requirements for ICT are not met. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Provision is fragmented and variable in quality. The problems have arisen from a reduction in staffing levels due to the school's deficit budget situation. This is being addressed as part of the deficit reduction plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils' academic progress is well supported by teachers in class, and in their personal development by the pastoral programme and the church community.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Overall the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The overarching spiritual dimension is strong and well supported by other subjects across the curriculum especially religious education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The care and welfare of the pupils is underpinned by a very effective pastoral system that ensures close tutor/pupil relationships.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The leadership provided by the headteacher is good overall and whilst day-to-day management by key staff is effective, the strategic management of the long-term development of the school is unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body meets almost all its statutory responsibilities with the exception of non-compliance regarding ICT requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The school does not have sufficiently rigorous whole-school strategies for evaluating its overall performance.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes good strategic use of its limited resources, including teachers.

There are adequate teachers to support the planned curriculum, but support staff for SEN and technical support staff in science and ICT are inadequate. There is adequate accommodation, although much is in a poor state of repair and decoration. Learning resources are inadequate in most areas. There are rigorous financial procedures in place to ensure efficient and prudent fiscal control. The school rigorously applies the principles of best value when making spending decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school expects their children to work hard.• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or about a problem.• The teaching is good.• Their children like school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of extra-curricular activities.• The amount of homework.• To be kept better informed about their child's progress.• The school working more closely with parents.• The behaviour of pupils.

The response from parents was very supportive. The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. The range of extra-curricular activities is considered to be good, although clearly opportunities after school are limited because of the distance that pupils' travel. The amount of homework is appropriate to pupil age. There are good opportunities for parents to talk about progress, but the progress reports are not easy to relate to National Curriculum Levels. The partnership with parents has improved since the arrival of the current head-teacher. The behaviour within the school is good. Individual comments made by parents, many of which were supportive, were considered during the inspection and are dealt with within the main report.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this 11-18 comprehensive school is located within the main school complex with a segregated area, known as the 'sixth form centre', housing the common room and the sixth form office. Teaching takes place in specialist rooms around the school, where support services are also located. Certain areas within the main school; for example, the upper floor within the library, are reserved for exclusive sixth form use. The students are allocated to a tutor group and have a tutor base within the area where the tutor normally teaches. It provides a range of subjects at both AS and A2 levels. There are currently 101 students on roll with numbers having decreased over the last three years. The school now concentrates on AS and A2-levels courses for which the number of students has remained constant for the last few years. The majority of students in the sixth form have transferred from the main school. The numbers of students on some courses are very small.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective and students receive a good education. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory, mostly good and often very good. The students have good opportunities to develop the skill of independence and they make good progress over time; they are mature and motivated. The sixth form is well led, but the strategic planning does not produce a sufficiently wide curriculum. In spite of low student numbers in some subjects the sixth form is cost effective. The pastoral and guidance systems are a strong feature within the sixth form; this enables students both entering and leaving the sixth form to make well-informed choices.

Strengths

- Provision in business studies
- Relationships are very good
- Teaching is good
- Very good guidance and advice for students
- Good leadership
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment programmes

What could be improved

- Standards overall, but especially the proportion of students gaining A/B grades in A2 level
- Broaden the appeal and accessibility to students by increasing the range of opportunities within the curriculum, including vocational courses
- Educational resources, especially in relation to accessibility of ICT and the numbers of textbooks available to students

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory . Students achieve good results at both AS and A2-levels. As a result of good teaching, students produce good quality work and have positive attitudes
Biology	Satisfactory . Teaching is a strength in the department, but students' attainment needs to be raised by more effective use of target setting, based on prior attainment.
English literature	Good . Results improved in 2002. Teaching is consistently good or very good. Students report that they learn well as a result of their teachers' enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge.
Information and communication technology	Good . Teaching and students' response are good. Students are making good progress and work with enthusiasm, and the older students manage their own learning well.
History	Satisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory and students' attitudes ensure good progress. Standards achieved by students are satisfactory. The management structure is unsatisfactory for long-term subject development.
Modern foreign languages	Satisfactory . Teaching and learning are good. Year 13 students demonstrate an ability to speak and write at length to present and sustain an argument. Year 12 students have made a good start. Standards are satisfactory.
Music	Satisfactory . Standards are in line with the national average. Teaching is good in the area of composing, yet satisfactory overall, as it provides too few opportunities for students to develop as independent learners. Learning in lessons is satisfactory with students demonstrating good knowledge of musical techniques and structures.
Art	Satisfactory . Teaching is satisfactory despite significant staffing difficulties. The very good level of commitment of the teaching is producing A-level work that is in line with the national average, although standards in AS work are at present below.
Business studies	Very Good . Teaching and learning are very good and, consequently, students are achieving well. The department is very ably led and managed.

Other work was sampled through observations of lessons in media studies, community sports leader award, psychology, sociology, drama, physics, chemistry and health and social care. Standards reached were appropriate for the students and the courses being studied. The quality of the teaching was always at least satisfactory and mostly good or very good. The attitudes of the students were very positive.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very Good. The academic progress of students is well monitored by teachers of individual subjects and their tutors who have close working relationships with them. Advice on careers, further study and personal development are also very good. Relationships are very good throughout the sixth form.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory. There is good leadership within the sixth form and students are provided with good opportunities. Very good relationships have been established. Strategic management of the sixth form, which involves the main school leadership team as well as the head of sixth, is an area for development to broaden the opportunities available to a larger number of students. Students themselves are still involved with the main school where there is joint provision of specialist equipment and accommodation. All students, including those with SEN, have equal access to courses, equipment and facilities.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are well taught and challenged • The teachers are accessible to help with difficulties • They are helped to study independently • Choice of subjects suits their talents and aspirations • The school helps them to settle well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about progress • The school's response to their views • Being treated as a responsible young adult <p>Note: There was a 50 per cent return of questionnaires and these concerns represent the views of between 20 and 30 students.</p>

Students interviewed during the inspection had very supportive views of the school and were in agreement with the positive views obtained through the student questionnaires. There were some concerns over the information they receive about progress during the year and that there were not effective ways of having a voice about school issues. There was significant concern that, although they were not treated like children, the procedures were too close to main school procedures and that they were not sufficiently treated like young adults. Other areas identified as ones that could be improved from the questionnaire responses were: the advice about future career options; the range of activities and enrichments; the clarity of printed information and the advice being more helpful and constructive – the inspection team found that these are at least satisfactory and are being well addressed by the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- The word 'results' refers to how well the pupils are doing in national tests, GCSE and GCE examinations.
- The word 'standards' is used to define how well the pupils are doing when their work is compared with what pupils nationally are expected to know, understand and do at the ages of 11, 14, 16 and 18 years.
- The word 'level' refers to a particular standard of work described in the National Curriculum.
- The word 'grade' refers to the public examination grading systems for GCSE and GCE.
- The word 'achievement' refers to how well the pupils are doing at the age of 14 compared with what they were able to do at the age of 11, similarly at the age of 16 compared with what they could do at the age of 14 and finally what they can do at the age of 18 compared with what they were able to do at the age of 16 years. It indicates how much progress the pupils are making.

Results and standards on entry to the school at the age of 11 years

- Pupils' attainment on entry is close to the national average for all schools.
1. Results in the national tests at age 11 in the final term of primary school and standardised tests carried out by the school early in Year 7 clearly indicate that pupils' attainment on entry is close to the national average for all schools in English, mathematics and science. Standards of pupils' attainment on entry have improved over recent years.

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Results, standards and achievement at the age of 14 years

Strengths

- Improving standards
- Above average attainment in art, ICT and PE
- Good progress overall by most pupils

Areas for improvement

- Standards and progress in design and technology

2. Results for pupils attaining Level 5+ in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were close to the national average for all schools in English and below the national averages in mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils attaining at Level 6+ in English, mathematics and science were close to the national averages. The school's results compared very well with those of similar schools. Although results in 2001 dipped from Year 2000, the trend over time based on points score has been broadly in line with the national trend. Unvalidated results for 2002 show a significant

improvement from 2001 with English and mathematics being slightly above average and science being close to the average. Whilst girls attain higher results than boys, the boys attain in line with the national boys' average.

3. Overall, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by the age of 14 are satisfactory.
4. The statutory teacher assessments in 2001 in all other subjects, except design and technology, which was below average, were average overall, with most pupils achieving the nationally expected standards by the age of 14 years. Attainment in art, ICT, and PE were above average.
5. Progress was at least satisfactory in all but five of the 98 lessons seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 with over one half recording good or very good progress and advances in pupils' learning across all subject areas.
6. Standards of pupils' work seen in citizenship, science and PE during the inspection are above average. This represents good achievement and progress by pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, compared with their standards on entry to the school. Standards seen in all other subjects are in line with national expectations.
7. SEN pupils, refugees and those for whom English is an additional language and travellers make good progress by age 14 years and their needs are fully met within the school. All members of staff understand their particular requirements and practical, supportive mechanisms are shared by teachers to ensure full inclusion of these pupils and all those on the SEN register.
8. Through their EiC involvement the school has identified those pupils who are gifted and talented. These pupils make good progress overall and the standards of their work seen confirms this.

Results, standards and progress at the age of 16 years

Strengths

- Above average attainment in relation to similar schools
- Above average attainment in business studies, design and technology(food), geography and Spanish
- Improvements in the number of pupils attaining A* - G grades
- Good value being added from Year 9

Areas for development

- Boys' attainment in GCSE
- Standards of work and attainment in design and technology – excluding food

9. The school's results are close to the national average for five or more A*-C grades. This figure for 2001 was a significant improvement on the results reported in the last inspection and performance over the intervening years has been improving steadily. In comparison with similar schools the average points score of 37.2 was well above average. In relation to these pupils' prior attainment at age 14 in 1999, the school's results were above those of similar schools, clearly indicating that the school is adding good value to pupils' achievements. Girls performed better at GCSE than boys. Unvalidated results for 2002 show a dip in performance for five or more A*-C grades, but an improvement in the number of pupils gaining five or more A*- G grades. Boys attainment in 2002 was below the national average.

10. The trend since the previous inspection in the school's average points score has been broadly similar to the national trend. Even though some subjects are below average for pupils gaining A* - C grades, there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in all subjects. Attainment in 2001 in business studies was well above the national average, whilst geography, design and technology(food) and Spanish were above average. All other subjects, except design and technology, French and history, which were below average, were broadly in line with the national averages.
11. In 2001 the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A* - G grades was close to the national average and represents significant improvement since the last inspection. The average points score of 37.2 is close to the national average and continues an improving trend since the last inspection.
12. The pupils did significantly better in art and design, business studies, drama, single award science and English literature than they did in their other subjects. They did less well in design and technology, French, history, mathematics, RE and Spanish.
13. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above those expected nationally in art and design, citizenship, music and PE. Standards seen in all other subjects are in line with national expectations except design and technology, which were below expectations.
14. Most pupils make good progress by the age of 16 years as indicated in the national comparison against prior attainment. Progress for most pupils was never less than satisfactory in the 63 lessons seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11, with almost three-fifths recording good or very good progress and advances in pupils' learning across all subject areas. There is, however, a significant minority of pupils in Year 11 whose progress is unsatisfactory; these are generally lower attaining boys.
15. EAL pupils make good progress overall. SEN pupils make good progress overall in mainstream classes. Most SEN pupils complete GCSE courses successfully.
16. Standards of literacy and numeracy are generally satisfactory at age 16 years. Standards in ICT are in line with the expected standard for 16-year-olds for those pupils who study the GCSE ICT course. For other pupils standards are variable.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Improving standards
- Male students' achievement

Areas for improvement

- Proportion of students attaining grades A/B

17. Attainment for A levels, which was below national averages at the last inspection, has improved and average points scores overall in 2001 were close to the national average. Male students achieved significantly better than female students with the average points score of 17.5 being in line with the overall national average and well above the average for males' achievement. For pupils gaining grades A to E, geography was better than the national average. Chemistry, English language and sociology were close to the average whilst biology, English literature, history, physics and RE were below average. Other subject entries were too low to make valid statistical comparisons.

18. There was a significant amount of variation between subjects for pupils attaining the higher A/B grades.
19. There are clear indications from unvalidated 2002 results of significant improvements in AS and A2-levels attainment this year in all subjects, but especially in English literature, business studies, chemistry and geography at A2 level.
20. Pupils are making good progress from their GCSE attainment in business studies, English literature and mathematics and satisfactory progress in art, biology, history, modern languages and music. The standards of work seen in the sixth form were generally good in all subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Pupils have good attitudes to the school and to learning
- The school is a very caring school with a very good ethos
- Relationships are good with very good trust and respect for each other's feelings

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for initiative and personal responsibility
- Attendance and punctuality
- The behaviour of the minority who have inappropriate behaviour in some lessons

21. Pupils have good attitudes to school and to learning. They arrive at school, the majority by bus, in an orderly manner and approach the school day with enthusiasm. Pupils are well mannered and show courtesy to staff, visitors and each other – this includes movement around the school when, despite the inevitable congestion due to the design of the buildings and the layout of the site, there is purposeful movement. Their attitudes in lessons are mainly good and often very good with pupils concentrating well and usually working hard. There are very few lessons where pupils are less motivated and here the teacher uses skilful management techniques to control behaviour issues. The ethos within the school is very good in what is a very caring environment. The school has a rewards and a celebration scheme in place to encourage pupils to maintain and develop further their positive attitudes.
22. Attendance for Year 2000/2001 was below the national average with the level of unauthorised absence above the average. The figure for Year 2001/2002 shows a small, but significant, improvement. The school monitors and analyses the data and is making good attempts to improve attendance, but has not yet achieved satisfactory results. Registration is carried out efficiently at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions - procedures are secure. Punctuality at the start of the day and for lessons is frequently a problem, often due to the large site. Although the school timetable allows movement time at break and lunchtimes it is inevitable that pupils will be late for periods two and four. There were 146 fixed-term exclusions and four permanent ones in the year 2001/2002, which is high for a school of this type and shows an increase since the last inspection. In the first two months of this year there have been 25 exclusions, but many of these involve incidents on the bus and other off-site incidents. This has been a period during which the school has been making determined efforts to improve the behaviour of pupils, and the increase in exclusions is not considered to be significant especially as indications are that the number is now falling. Overall, whilst acknowledging that it is improving, the attendance is considered to be unsatisfactory as it was at the time of the last inspection.

23. The overall level of behaviour is good both around the school, including breaks and lunchtimes, and in most lessons. No bullying or other oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection, although pupils indicated that it does occur, but when it does it is very well dealt with. The development, through EiC, of the behaviour support unit has begun to have a very positive effect on the support for pupils with behaviour difficulties.
24. Pupils form good relationships with one another with their tutors resulting in a good working ethos in lessons. In most classes the good relationships had a positive effect on learning, as pupils supported each other well. Pupils are supportive of the tutor system, which encourages these effective close relationships and provides time for individual contact and guidance. They show clear respect for each other and the mutual trust is fundamental to the ethos of the school. There is no evidence of sexism or racism in the school, which is working as a harmonious community.
25. Opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility are limited within the school; for example, whilst one year group has its own council there is no whole-school council. There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities both during and after school, which include clubs linked to academic subjects as well as sporting, musical and social activities. Most year groups have their own social areas, where they can join in activities during the break periods. Pupils thought this should be extended to all year groups. There is trust between the pupils and the school, which enables pupils to have good access to facilities such as computers outside lessons. The clear ethos of the school and the very good learning environment demonstrate that pupils understand the impact of their actions and that they should respect others.
26. Through the good relationships, the tutor guidance and very good citizenship provision the pupils' personal development is well supported.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Very good relationships
- Good attendance
- Mature, sensible and motivated students

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement

27. Students all enjoy being in the sixth form and are very supportive of it. A clear strength in the sixth form is the guidance and support pupils get through the high teacher/student ratio. They are given good support in developing independent working and learning skills. Students welcome the more independent status they receive, but also benefit from the close links to the main school. They show an interest in school life, a pride in their work and are well motivated.
28. There are good opportunities for personal development through the extensive enrichment programmes. A good number of the students benefit from helping pupils in the main part of the school – the recently introduced peer mentoring system is an excellent example that enables them to support the Year 7 pupils and also will enable them to support other year groups as the system develops. The majority of students have clear, long-term career objectives mainly involving higher education. They make good use of the facilities and join in the school activities.

29. There are no behaviour problems in the sixth form. All students choose to attend and clearly want to learn. The attendance procedure is rigid and ensures that students do attend and hence benefit from the opportunities available to them. To enable more effective monitoring, whilst recognising their increased maturity, a 'swipe card' system is to be introduced for recording attendance at lessons. The school does not keep detailed analysis of retention rates because the majority of students complete the courses. There are reduced numbers in some subjects in the upper sixth as a result of students reducing the number of subjects covered; for example subjects studied for AS level only. Whilst a small number of pupils do leave the courses during the year this is compensated for by students who return to the school, having sampled college life elsewhere.
30. Personal development is a strong feature, students being encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. Relationships are very good both within the social area and in lessons. Learning directly benefits from the positive attitudes of well-motivated students. In general, there is total commitment from the students. The school is preparing students well for future life.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- There has been good improvement since the last inspection
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of subjects is good
- Teachers manage the pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour
- Teachers use time effectively and work hard to overcome deficiencies in support staff and resources

Areas for improvement

- Teachers planning for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies
- The quality and use of assessment so that all pupils are made fully aware of the National Curriculum standards.
- Teachers' use of assessment to guide planning is not consistent.

31. Overall, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all but nine of the 161 lessons seen in the main school. It was good or better in six out of every ten lessons and very good or excellent in approximately two out of every ten lessons. These are significant improvements since the last inspection where there was a dearth of good, very good and excellent teaching. A very small amount of unsatisfactory lessons were observed in all years; there was a higher proportion in Year 11 compared to all other years.
32. Some very good and excellent teaching was seen in art, citizenship, English, geography, history, ICT, mathematics, music and PE in Years 7 to 9. Good quality teaching was also evident in all other subjects. However, there was some unsatisfactory teaching in design and technology, mathematics, modern languages and science in these year groups.
33. The best teaching in Years 10 and 11 was seen in citizenship, English, geography, ICT, modern languages, music, PE and science. Good quality teaching was also seen in all other subjects. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen, especially in Year 11, in English, mathematics and modern languages.
34. There are three major strengths in teaching. The first is exemplified by teachers' good subject knowledge, their good quality lesson planning and their understanding of how

pupils learn. These are key factors in enabling pupils to fulfil their academic potential. The best lessons are planned to include a sequence of progressively harder tasks, which enables pupils to cope with demanding work. In most lessons, teachers' firm, but reassuring, approach helps to build up pupils' confidence in tackling the challenging tasks set for them. The teachers' authoritative subject knowledge was communicated well and lessons frequently began by challenging pupils' prior understanding. The lesson plans included different group activities designed to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding at an appropriate level.

35. The second strength is the effective management of pupils and the learning environment, which is good in Years 7 to 11, although there are individual teachers who struggle to maintain a positive working atmosphere. In response, pupils work hard, concentrate well and are keen to learn. In very good lessons, pupils have high expectations of themselves. In the very good lessons seen, teachers' assessment of how pupils are learning is of high quality. It enables them to match work appropriately to the attainment levels of individuals and groups. Written work is marked in a helpful and constructive way. In addition, teachers use careful and effective questioning in their assessment of pupils' progress. At the beginning of the lesson they usually check knowledge and understanding. Challenging questioning is also used to develop knowledge and understanding and to encourage independent thinking.
36. The third strength is the teachers' management of resources, which are usually used well in all subjects. Most teachers make good use of the limited resources available, although ICT is not in common use in all subjects across the curriculum. In design and technology, however, teachers make very good use of the specialist ICT suite and this is beginning to show in the quality of work produced by the pupils.
37. The main difference between very good teaching and good teaching is the degree to which the teacher inspires pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding outside the lesson timetable. Homework is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Marking of pupils' work is good, but this assessment data is not used consistently well in planning lessons and for monitoring pupils' progress.
38. However, there are weaknesses. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons, teaching does not always respond sufficiently to the different needs of all pupils and expectations are not high enough. For example, in some mathematics lessons average attainers are capable of achieving higher standards. In modern languages, refugee pupils whose first language is French are not challenged appropriately in their mother tongue. In these lessons teachers do not consistently use methods that actively involve pupils in the lesson. In unsatisfactory lessons, this lack of variety in teaching approaches limits the development of independent investigative skills.
39. There is no clear framework for identifying, supporting and sharing good classroom practice. For example, not all teachers begin lessons by making their objectives for the lesson clear to pupils or by reviewing pupils' learning at the end of the lesson.
40. The teaching of numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum is at an early stage of development. The situation is not currently unsatisfactory, but further work is needed before implementation is secure.
41. The quality of teaching for SEN pupils is satisfactory overall with some good features. The way that the school collates and uses data on attainment; for example, SEN pupils and individual education plans, does not ensure that all teachers are aware of their

pupils' capabilities at the outset of the academic year. High levels of teacher support for pupils compensates in most instances for this delay.

42. The quality of teaching for pupils identified as being gifted and talented is good overall; progress made by these pupils is good. Some parents expressed concerns about the provision for gifted and talented pupils. There was no evidence that this was the case and affecting standards.

Sixth form

Strengths

- The high proportion of good and very good teaching

Areas for improvement

- The teaching of key skills
- Greater emphasis on the assessment of pupils' work and of the effectiveness of homework

43. The overall standard of teaching in the sixth form is good. All lessons were at least satisfactory and seven in every ten were good or better. It supports pupils' learning very well and contributes to the good progress they make. Nearly one third of lessons seen were very good or excellent.
44. In art, English, ICT, mathematics and modern foreign languages teaching is at least good; it is very good in business education, geography and science. In history and music the standard is satisfactory with some good features. Many of the good features evident in the main school are also regular features of teaching and learning in the sixth form. They are further enhanced by the greater maturity and commitment of pupils, and teachers' good or very good specialist knowledge in most subjects. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the assessment of students' work and effectiveness of homework in some subjects. The situation is not unsatisfactory, but the thoroughness and consistency are not as effective as all the other aspects of teaching and learning.
45. Whilst a high proportion of good or better teaching was seen in nearly all subjects, the proportion of very good teaching and learning varied between and within subjects. The teaching of key skills is satisfactory. It is not timetabled as separate lessons except ICT, which is taught as a discrete area of study.
46. Teachers understand how to enable students to make good progress in developing their understanding. There are generally high expectations of students' achievement. Lessons are generally well-planned and there is a good balance between teacher-directed work and other activities where students are more actively involved in their learning.

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

Strengths

- The school's curriculum matches well the mission statement that places emphasis on the spiritual and moral development of its pupils
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are good
- Provision for personal, social and health education, including careers education is good
- Constructive relationships with partner institutions and with the broader community

Areas for development

- Increase the number of opportunities for pupils to follow subjects of a vocational nature in Years 10 and 11
- Implement changes to ensure that statutory requirements are met with regard to the teaching of ICT

47. The whole curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet statutory requirements with the exception of ICT. There is still some deficiency in the time allocated in Years 7, 8 and 9 and there are no opportunities for all pupils to study ICT in Years 10 and 11.
48. Since the last inspection the governors have approved a written policy on sex education and this now meets statutory requirements.
49. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory with some good features. A key strength is the arrangement made for Year 7 to be taught in the same group for almost 50 per cent of the subjects by their form teacher. This ensures that they settle well into their new learning environment and provides a great deal of stability and security in the early months. Standards in all subjects are not affected by this organisational strategy. Weaknesses in numeracy skills are not tackled in accordance with the National Numeracy Strategy and in mathematics too little use is made of ICT in learning. There is a similar picture in the teaching of music where schemes of work do not sufficiently reflect the National Curriculum guidelines.
50. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 lacks breadth and balance and is unsatisfactory. Only in business education is there an opportunity to study a subject of a vocational nature and this is limited to a more traditional GCSE course. The range of optional subjects is similarly narrow at this stage and this restricts pupils' choice. There are, however, good features, all pupils having the opportunity to study for the GCSE course in RE and a new GCSE course has been successfully introduced in PE.
51. Pupils in all years have timetabled provision for the 'guidance' programme designed in part to promote personal and social development. The course is well designed in this regard and appropriate to the pupils' needs. It very successfully combines the requirements for citizenship. This taught programme is very well supported by the comprehensive system of pastoral support throughout the school. This ensures that pupils are safe and secure in school and is the critical strand in providing for their personal and social growth. Within the whole provision are opportunities for careers education and guidance, including work experience, and the requirements for sex, health and drugs education are fully met. A key feature is the work of form teachers and heads of year in providing a clear framework for learning with due emphasis on good behaviour, respect for the feelings of others and eradicating the threat of aggressive or oppressive behaviour. This element of the curricular provision is particularly successful in providing a whole-school framework, within which pupils can be successful and reinforcing the mission statement that focuses on personal growth.

52. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There are good opportunities at lunchtime and after school for pupils to join sports clubs and/or play for school teams in a wide range of activities. These teams are consistently successful in local and county competitions. The traditional team games are particularly strong and girls do well in netball and boys in soccer and basketball. In some subject areas learning of a more structured nature goes on in regular after-school sessions. For example, in mathematics higher attaining pupils take part in the UK Mathematics Challenge and in design and technology a significant number attend extra sessions in order to continue with practical coursework and this leads to better progress. In English there are important theatre experiences; for example, an in-school workshop supporting GCSE work on 'Lord of the Flies', followed closely by a visit to see a performance of the work at Liverpool Playhouse. All these activities and many more are very popular amongst pupils and valued by their parents, and most make a clear and lasting contribution to the pupils' personal and social development.
53. Overall the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The spiritual dimension is very strong and well supported by other subjects across the curriculum, especially RE. Few departments have a detailed policy statement on this important aspect of the schools' provision. Nevertheless, there are many good examples. For example, in music the pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are encouraged to express and show their feelings for music; in art there is a strong emphasis on contemplating beauty and in English many of the chosen texts promote reflection and deal with issues beyond the material world. Most recently, and associated with 'Armistice Day', there were readings from 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'Remember Me'. More directly, assemblies and morning prayer in form periods, provide regular and well structured opportunities for reflection.
54. Pupils' moral development is good. This reflects well the provision made for this feature. Most pupils understand clearly the distinction between right and wrong and follow the school's rules well. They show respect for each other and for others' feelings. The fabric of the school is well cared for, although litter is a problem particularly around the school. In lessons moral issues are addressed in music; for example, on the background to and exploitation of 'black music' and musicians in the USA. In English there are regular discussions on the moral issues arising, for example, from the study of 'Macbeth' or 'An Inspector Calls'.
55. Alongside the provision made for the pastoral care of pupils and their personal and social development there is a clear and effective contribution from subject departments. The workshop atmosphere in art lessons does much to promote social intercourse and an interest in and concern for others. In music in the annual production, bands and choirs come together not only to perform, but also to work together within a common aim. Successful group and partner work is a feature of many departments including citizenship, English, PE and science. There is a long list of visits to events outside the school. Pupils from PE visited the Commonwealth Games facilities in Manchester. A few weeks ago some Year 9 pupils gained residential experience on Lindisfarne and some pupils from Years 8 and 9 travelled to the University of Manchester to take part in the 'Enterprise in Mathematics UK' competition. Overall provision for social development is good.
56. There are good examples of activities designed to promote pupils' multicultural awareness. In English literature much reference is made to traditional classics in different year groups, reading; for example, Christina Rossetti's poems in Year 7 and Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' in Year 9. Such activities strengthen and deepen pupils'

understanding of their own cultures and how they have developed through history. In art and in music pupils are introduced to works of other cultures. For example, in project work in art pupils have the opportunity to learn about the distinctive characteristics of aboriginal art. Those pupils who do not have English as their first language, travellers and newly arrived refugees are already well integrated into the school. Although not a planned feature of the curriculum the experience gained by all the pupils from these interactions has raised their awareness of life in a multicultural society. The school provides well for the pupils' cultural development overall and in keeping with its denominational values involves them in extensive charity work that brings them into contact with people from other countries, many of whom are seriously disadvantaged.

57. Provision for SEN pupils is unsatisfactory overall. It is fragmented and variable in quality, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. The problems in provision arise from a reduction in staffing levels, due to the historic, deficit budget situation, which is being successfully addressed.
58. The school has close links with the wider community, although these focus mainly on the parishes or come through the work experience scheme. The school receives good support from local companies who provide for pupils by offering placements in a wide range of occupations. Beyond these links comes an unusual contribution to learning from the Italian embassy, which provides after-school classes for pupils and interested staff in the Italian language. The classes are well attended and many of those who attend gain much from their involvement.
59. The school enjoys good relationships with its partner institutions. In addition to close curricular liaison with primary schools there is a range of events that are of mutual benefit. For example, the 'Primary Arts Festival', which brings together performers from several schools and provides an improved awareness of strengths in each phase. Pupils as young as Year 8 have been successful in linking with Manchester Metropolitan University through the business studies department to compete in the Young Enterprise competition. These experiences are almost invariably successful in broadening the minds of young people and opening their eyes to opportunities that lie ahead.

Sixth form

Strengths

- The enrichment curriculum

Areas for improvement

- Increase the range of learning opportunities to include vocational courses

60. The range of learning opportunities is insufficiently broad. The quality of the courses already established is satisfactory. Entry requirements – minimum 5A*- C grades at GCSE – for students seeking to further their studies are somewhat restrictive, and those who fail to reach them at the end of Key Stage 4 are denied access. Almost all courses in the sixth form are traditional AS or A2-levels courses in a traditional range of subjects. Only business studies enables clear progression in the 14-19 continuum, although again this is a GCSE to A2 level route. Only in health and social care courses is there a true vocational strand and in this case there is no lead-in opportunity from Key Stage 4. From this subject area comes a clear example of the success in Year 12 of a group of students who, from a most modest GCSE average points score, have reached merit grades at intermediate level GNVQ and, having made such clear progress to reach this level of attainment are now moving on to the advanced

vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in health and social care. Clearly there are large numbers of students who leave school at the age of 16 and continue their education elsewhere. It is equally clear that many of them have the potential to be successful in the next stage of their education and in a range of vocational subjects currently not available.

61. The arrangements made for the teaching of key skills is satisfactory. In the main this consists of ICT lessons, and there is some conflict between the teaching of ICT and computer studies.
62. Students value the numerous opportunities provided to enrich their academic courses. There are many visits to local universities, where pupils can join in 'master class' sessions in sciences, mathematics and modern languages. Several residential experiences offer the chance to develop leadership and/or meet with students from other parts of the country. The work within individual departments is enriched; for example, in business studies, by visits to companies and gaining 'live experience' of the business world or by successful participation in the 'young consumer' competition at Manchester University. Links with higher education institutions are of great value in raising awareness to the nature of advanced study and to the facilities enjoyed by their pupils. Overall the enrichment programme is good; it is, above all, highly valued by the students for whom it is planned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Strengths

- The general care and welfare of pupils
- The support and guidance provided by the pastoral staff
- The very good support for pupils in low attaining sets in literacy

Areas for improvement

- Co-ordination of assessment systems to link with National Curriculum Levels
- Use of assessment in curricular planning

63. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The school has four child protection officers named in procedures who are all fully trained and all the staff are given appropriate training to ensure that they are aware of procedures. The system is secure.
64. The school has a good approach to health and safety with responsibilities well defined. The health and safety policy was reissued in January 2001 and is comprehensive in describing the systems in place. Governor involvement in monitoring and review is clear. Records of essential checks and fire drills are readily available for inspection. Risk assessments are carried out for all activities. A strength of the school's system is that there are several people named as being trained for key duties such as child protection and first aid, which ensures adequate support if one member of staff is absent. During the inspection a fire alarm occurred and the evacuation was satisfactory – because the alarm occurred at the point when pupils were leaving the school at the end of the day a role call was not possible, but staff quickly adjusted to stop anyone re-entering the building and checking the building as they left. There is a room used exclusively for medical purposes where routine medical matters are dealt with by trained 'first-aid' staff who keep clear records of any treatments. The nurse visits the school on a regular basis. Accident reports are completed and external agencies are involved as required. Only two very minor health and safety concerns were seen during the inspection and these were identified to the headteacher.

65. The welfare of the pupils is underpinned by a very effective pastoral system that ensures close tutor/pupil relationships. Whilst pupils transfer to the school from a large number of primary schools with a wide range of backgrounds there are very good systems in place for induction, which fully involve both pupils and parents. The pastoral system within the school is very strong, led through the senior leadership team and well supported by heads of year and form tutors. The Year 7 pupils benefit from the new mentoring system whereby sixth form students support them. The whole system is well monitored through regular pastoral group meetings. Through the pastoral system pupils are given very good guidance on dealing with school life. A good example of the caring staff is the support given to pupils during the period after the exam results are known, when many staff make themselves available to pupils for advice and guidance.
66. The school monitors attendance and punctuality closely and has good relationships with the education welfare officer who provides good support. The procedures for analysing and encouraging attendance are all in place with Year 7 pupils being encouraged very strongly so that, as time progresses, the culture of wanting to attend well is bred into the pupils. The behaviour policy outlines clear systems to encourage good behaviour and well-known support and sanctions if incidents occur. The school's clear guidelines and expectations of behaviour are well known by pupils.
67. The assessment system in the school is aimed at being able to encourage pupils of all abilities through a system with three bands – foundation, intermediate and higher – with grades given at the end of each term. The grades given are 1-4 for attainment and A-D for effort and can have an 'R' for pupils who have been referred. On entry to Year 7 a baseline assessment is carried out, using results from the primary schools together with tests carried out on entry. Pupils are given targets for the end of Year 9, based on these baseline scores. In Years 10 and 11 a new system is being used where teachers identify whether pupils need to 'maintain or improve or are giving cause for concern'; this system makes it very easy for tutors and parents to focus on weaknesses and strengths. Parts of the assessment system are confusing to parents as departments are allowed flexibility in departmental monitoring systems, which they convert to 'scores' at the end of each term. A more uniform approach would be beneficial relating directly to National Curriculum Levels.
68. The school is working hard on its assessment procedures with the aim to encourage teachers to think of assessment as part of teaching, but the use of assessment to guide curricular planning is not yet fully implemented. The initial setting of pupils in Year 7 is based on their primary school test results with adjustments made as a result of Year 7 tests. Throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils will be moved up or down as appropriate, but formal methods for this are not in place. Each year the heads of department can adjust the curricular content, if the ability range changes. However, formal review procedures for this are not in place. In the upper year groups the systems are to support the pupils on the current curriculum, but not to review the curriculum as a result of assessment data.
69. Pupils' personal development is monitored mainly through the direct contact of pupil and tutor. Pupils with Special Educational Needs are monitored closely through the special educational needs department. The morning and afternoon registration periods provide daily contact between tutor and pupil giving opportunities to further develop close relationships. There is a weekly guidance period that is used to deliver the citizenship programme, which plays an important part in personal development. Systems for the monitoring of personal development are effective, mainly through the tutor contact and the reporting systems between teachers and the pastoral staff.

70. The overall provision for all SEN pupils is unsatisfactory. It is fragmented and variable in quality. It is very good in Year 7 literacy where the concentration is on support and guidance for all pupils. The quality and quantity of support for pupils in the lower attaining sets is inconsistent ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. These problems have arisen from a reduction in staffing levels.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Very good guidance on post sixth form courses and career pathways
- Procedures for monitoring and encouraging attendance
- The support and guidance by all staff

Areas for improvement

- Provision of areas for private study within the sixth form centre

71. Sixth form advice and guidance are very good. There is a very strong and well-trained pastoral team who are well led by the head of sixth form. Students are very supportive of the care and guidance provision in the sixth form and there are clearly very good relationships in existence. Staff are caring and dedicated and there is very good one-to-one guidance. The formal programme of advice and guidance they receive is very good, incorporating a specific guidance lesson each week and appropriate guidance within the subjects. The low number of students in the sixth form allows close and effective monitoring by the leadership team in the sixth form. The maturity of the students and the very good relationships provide opportunities for informal guidance and support throughout the day.
72. Procedures for supporting academic progress are in place, but the lack of suitable quiet private study areas close to the sixth form facilities reduce their effectiveness.
73. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good. The aim of the school is to ensure that students attend school and hence benefit from the opportunities available to them. To make students more independent and to reflect their increased maturity the in lesson registers are to be replaced with a 'swipe card' system.
74. The advice and information available to students on future careers and education are very good. Most of the students will be moving on to university courses or other types of higher education and consider the advice and encouragement they receive to be extremely good. Through the guidance periods students are given excellent advice on application and interview techniques. External support services provide advice on job opportunities as required.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- An integral part of the Catholic community
- A strong partnership with parents
- Parents are pleased with the school improvement
- Parents and students are very supportive of the sixth form

Areas for improvement

- Improve the regular informal communications between the school and parents
- Encourage parents to become more involved in the school

75. The partnership between parents and the school is good. A home/school agreement is in place and a well-designed and well-presented planner is used throughout the school by pupils. In general the planners are well used and form a useful vehicle for communication. Parents' views of the school expressed through the questionnaires and the parents' meeting are good.
76. The most pleasing aspects for parents are the high expectations within the school and that they feel comfortable to approach the school with questions or about a problem. They also believe the teaching is good and that their children like school. Areas parents would like to see improved were the range of activities outside lessons, the amount of homework and the information they receive about their children's progress. They would also like the school to work closer with them and for behaviour in school to be improved. Supportive comments from parents included: 'excellent transfer systems from primary to secondary; very good support for children with special needs; outstanding pastoral provision; excellent school with strong leadership and many improvements in the last two years'. Concerns from individual parents were about behaviour especially on the buses, poor resources, liaison with parents, poor toilet facilities, low expectations, attendance records and some poor teaching in certain subjects. All these issues are discussed within the report or were found to be at least satisfactory by the inspection team. Several parents were concerned about the lack of choice in modern foreign languages, but the school has systems for pupils to follow the language of choice if parents ask.
77. Communication with parents is considered to be good. The school produces regular newsletters supported by a letter on specific topics as required. The newsletters are personalised by the headteacher and aim to celebrate the achievements of pupils. The communication could be enhanced by additional, informal regular newsletters involving pupil contributions, possibly on a year group basis. Information about the school and its achievements are frequently reported in the local newspapers providing additional communication routes to parents. The school prospectus is combined with the governors' annual report and is a very comprehensive and useful document fully meeting its requirements. The pupils' annual reports are considered to be satisfactory containing data and individual comments for each subject - they meet statutory requirements for reporting. It is considered that they could be improved in format, to be a document in which pupils could take pride.
78. The school has strong links with parents through the church and the Catholic community. There is clearly a very good partnership with the other Catholic schools in the community, which facilitates transfer between primary and secondary education. Parents attend meetings in the school to discuss progress as well as any problems if they occur; there are good opportunities for parents of pupils with special educational

needs to be fully involved with decisions taken about their children. There are only limited opportunities for parents to play an active part in their children's education.

79. Students in the sixth form are very supportive of the school and the opportunities it provides. They consider that it is very well led and that they receive very good support and guidance about working methods in the sixth form and choice of subjects. Some students were concerned about the lack of information relating to progress during the year and some thought that there were not effective ways of having a voice about school issues even though there is a sixth form council. There was significant concern about sixth form procedures being too close to main school procedures and that they felt they could be treated as more mature adults. In spite of these few concerns they all felt that they had made the right choice and would recommend the sixth form to other students.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The leadership and professional commitment of the headteacher and key staff
- The tenacity of the school leadership in continuing to ensure that educational priorities are supported through the school's financial planning
- The evolving role of the governing body in its role in shaping the ethos and educational direction of the school

Areas for improvement

- The strategic management of the long-term development of the school
- Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance
- The inadequacies of staffing, accommodation and learning resources in some areas of the school

80. The leadership provided by the governing body, the headteacher and key staff is good overall and whilst day-to-day management is effective the strategic management of the long-term development of the school is unsatisfactory.
81. There are some issues identified at the last inspection related to the management of the school that have not been fully addressed. These relate to the failure to implement plans for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. The lack of the use of assessment data to inform planning across the school and unsatisfactory improvements in departmental development planning, target setting and the focus on standards, teaching and learning.
82. The school has been led effectively by the strong personal commitment of the relatively new headteacher through the ongoing difficulties of rationalising the historical financial deficit, which is being successfully eradicated in a planned way. Significantly difficult staffing issues have been dealt with well and staff morale has been improved greatly. Notable success has also been achieved in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the school and learning. The profile and image of the school have been significantly improved and numbers wanting to attend the school have increased in the last two years. Very good links with the partner primary school have been established, fully supporting the transition of pupils from Year 6 to Year 7. There has been a very substantial investment, supported by the National Grid for Learning (NgFL), in improving ICT resources throughout the school, and the fabric and environment of the school are beginning to be improved by the prudent use of specific grants.
83. Educational priorities are well supported by the school's financial planning, with the principles of best value carefully applied. Financial management and administration are

well managed with effective procedures and controls in place in many of the areas reviewed by a recent audit. No major concerns were identified, with budget monitoring reports providing governors with relevant information on areas of school activity. EIC money is also correctly identified and spent.

84. The school has a strong distinctive ethos, befitting the aims and values of a Catholic school, with a well-defined pastoral management system, clearly embedded in the heart of school organisation, thus creating a very positive learning environment.
85. The smaller leadership team, a result of budgetary constraints, has clearly identified the key issues of school management requiring attention, providing the school with relevant guidelines for development and further improvement. However, given these perceived priorities of the school, a disproportionate amount of senior management time and energy is deployed in day-to-day management, rather than addressing the school's vision of the future through good quality and effective strategic planning.
86. The leadership group and governors keep the curriculum under review, with liaison between leadership group members and heads of departments. The leadership group takes collective responsibility towards the achievement of school values and objectives, and is proactive in working with middle management. However, although structures and processes are well defined and in place, middle management are not sufficiently empowered as managers and trained accordingly to fulfil these enhanced roles effectively and address outcomes.
87. The school's performance management policy is now well bedded into school administrative processes. However, this process has inhibited the development of rigorous whole-school strategies for evaluating its overall performance.
88. There is a good balance of youth and experience on the staff, with a high proportion of subject specialists. In-service training does not address school and departmental management issues.
89. There are now good links and positive working relationships between the headteacher, the leadership team and the governing body. The role of the governing body has been rationalised and strengthened, with strong working sub-committees in place. The governors have a keen interest in building the school's reputation, and they are supportive and proactive in meetings, committee work, interviews and chaplaincy. All are committed to the success of the school, but need to carefully monitor school activities related to the middle and long-term effectiveness of improvement strategies.
90. The governing body meets almost all its statutory responsibilities in relation to providing a broad and balanced curriculum, with the exception of non-compliance regarding ICT requirements.
91. Subject leadership is generally good, showing an improvement since the last inspection. However, many departments do not engage in monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, teaching and learning. Heads of departments effectiveness is limited by lack of guidance and delegation of responsibility, for managing and developing subject provision, from school management.
92. ICT is limited in usage at departmental level, although it is used quite effectively to support school management systems. There have been substantial investments in recent years.

93. Management of the limited SEN provision is good. Individual education plans (IEPs) assess statemented pupils' needs and precise targets for literacy, and in some cases, behaviour. These IEPs are circulated to subject departments, but are not always effectively used by individual teachers to assess the type of support appropriate to their subject.
94. There is adequate general accommodation for the number of pupils on roll, with several subjects taught in suited accommodation. Some department facilities are inadequately planned and located, with many rooms in a poor state of repair. Some new and additional facilities have been provided in technology and in some Year 7 rooms, but many rooms are poorly decorated and furnished. There is a great deal of litter in parts of the site, both inside and outside the buildings. The playing fields, although badly drained in parts, are well cared for.
95. Administrative staff are appropriately skilled and qualified to carry out their respective duties, but support levels are below average for a school of this size. The school library and other resource areas are suitably staffed, and all curriculum areas, with the exception of science and ICT, have appropriate levels of technical support staff.
96. In spite of very limited educational resources, staff shortages in some areas and generally poor décor and state of repair of the buildings, teachers work very hard and teaching is generally good. Pupils' attitudes are good and standards achieved at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are close to national averages. Compared to similar schools, the school was well above average for pupils gaining Level 5+ at the end of Year 9 and attaining five or more A*V - C grades at GCSE in 2001. The school gives very good value for money.

Sixth form

Strengths

- Good leadership
- Relationships are very good
- The pastoral and guidance systems are very good

Areas for development

- Strategic planning of provision

97. The school sixth form has a strong distinctive ethos, befitting the aims and values of a Catholic school, with a well-structured guidance and pastoral system in place, offering advice on careers, further study and personal development. This enables students both entering and leaving the sixth form to make well-informed choices.
98. The leadership team with the head of sixth form work hard to make the sixth form a success and provide students with good opportunities. They have established a positive set of relationships in the sixth form community
99. Management of the sixth form involves the main school leadership team as well as the head of sixth. This facet of school leadership is weak, as time and energy are not well deployed towards strategic planning for the future development of the curriculum and the positive use of assessment data.

100. Students themselves are still involved with the main school where there is joint provision of specialist equipment and accommodation. There is some discrete provision in terms of a common room area and new ICT facilities; the provision of quiet study areas, other than the school library, would be beneficial to all sixth form students. All sixth form students, including those with special educational needs, have access to courses, equipment and facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

101. In order for the school to continue its improvement and raise standards even further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) improve the strategic management of the long-term development of the school by:
 - rationalising the responsibilities of the leadership group and ensuring more focused delegation of responsibilities to high scale holders and middle managers in order to develop these key staff into effective leaders and managers and free-up senior managers to manage strategically;
 - establishing very rigorous and accountable processes for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, target setting, curriculum development planning, assessment, school and departmental development planning;
 - identifying good classroom practice in the school and using the outcomes to further improve teaching and learning across the school;
 - developing the governing body further in order to be more rigorous and skilled in their critical friend role.
(Paragraphs: 32, 39, 80, 81, 86, 87, 89, 91, 109, 133, 158, 173, 185, 200)
- (2) improve the use of ICT in all subjects and meet statutory requirements for provision of ICT by:
 - ensuring that sufficient time is made available on the timetable for all pupils to receive their statutory entitlement
 - ensuring that all departments are provided with adequate training in order to be able to contribute effectively to overall ICT teaching.
(Paragraphs: 47, 49, 92, 127, 134, 135, 136, 138, 154, 164, 175, 178, 187, 201, 247)
- (3) improve the attainment of boys, especially at GCSE by:
 - developing a whole-school long-term strategic plan for identifying and dealing with boys' underachievement;
 - raising boys' self-esteem and personal expectations of academic achievement;
 - identifying successful external sources and research and assimilating these to the school's own needs and circumstances.
(Paragraphs: 9, 14, 103, 105, 136, 153, 158, 160, 167, 190)
- (4) improve the use of assessment and target setting to guide curriculum planning by:
 - ensuring that assessment data is thoroughly analysed, disseminated and used as the basis for target setting at individual pupil level and for curriculum and development planning.
(Paragraphs: 37, 67, 68, 109, 133, 164, 173, 200, 210, 230, 227)

(5) improve attendance by:

- continuing to develop the strategies already proving successful.
(Paragraphs: 22, 66, 76)

Sixth form

102. In order for the school to continue its improvement of the sixth form and raise standards further, the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (a) improve standards of attainment, especially the proportion of students gaining grades A/B.
(Paragraphs: 18, 218, 225, 248, 255, 262)
- (b) broaden the appeal and increase the accessibility to students by increasing the range of opportunities within the curriculum including vocational courses.
(Paragraphs: 60, 99, 214, 230)
- (c) ensure that there are sufficient educational resources, especially in relation to accessibility of ICT and the number of textbooks available to students.
(Paragraphs: 223, 242, 247, 252, 265)

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

Ensuring that there is consistent and equitable provision for SEN by:
(Paragraphs: 57, 70, 93, 124)

- providing sufficient good quality support staff to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of pupils with SEN;
- monitoring the effective use of IEPs by departments and teachers.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	161
	Sixth form	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		61

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	25	65	55	9	2	0
Percentage	3	16	40	34	6	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	9	18	10	0	0	0
Percentage	3	24	47	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1316	101
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	312	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	28	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	303	5

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.7
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	140	115	255

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	91	91
	Girls	81	66	59
	Total	168	157	150
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (69)	62 (70)	59 (65)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (31)	39 (38)	27 (33)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	94	102
	Girls	81	72	77
	Total	176	166	179
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (64)	66 (72)	71 (68)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (23)	43 (38)	25 (36)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	116	116	232

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	48	105	113
	Girls	62	102	110
	Total	110	207	223
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47 (41)	89 (81)	96 (92)
	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	37.3 (34.4)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

Number of pupils 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	24	28	52

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	24	28	52
	Average point score per candidate	17.5 (11.8)	12.9 (15.5)	15.0 (13.4)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (16.9)	17.9 (18.0)	17.5 (17.5)

		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	24	28	52	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	17.5	12.9	15.0	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.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school Year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1385	143	4
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	3	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	11	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	80.94
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	525.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

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

Key Stage 3	25.29
Key Stage 4	24.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	3,906,156
Total expenditure	3,880,366
Expenditure per pupil	2,814
Balance brought forward from previous year	-196,735
Balance carried forward to next year	-170,945

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1400
Number of questionnaires returned	201

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	47	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	3	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	50	10	3	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	53	11	4	1
The teaching is good.	32	57	2	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	38	16	3	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	36	5	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	30	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	27	44	14	4	10
The school is well led and managed.	38	48	2	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	52	3	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	41	9	3	19

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The following statements are a summary of the views expressed by parents on the questionnaires and from the parents meeting about what they liked about the school and what they felt could be improved:

What parents liked

- The school expects their children to work hard
- They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or about a problem
- The teaching is good
- Their children like school

What parents would like to see improved

- The range of extra-curricular activities
- The amount of homework
- To be kept better informed about their child's progress
- The school working more closely with parents
- The behaviour of pupils

The response from parents was very supportive. The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. The range of extra-curricular activities is considered to be good, although clearly opportunities after school are limited because of the distance pupils travel. The amount of homework is appropriate to pupils' age. There are good opportunities for parents to talk about progress, but the progress reports are not easy to relate to National Curriculum Levels. The partnership with parents has improved since the arrival of the current headteacher. The behaviour within the school is good. Individual comments made by parents, many of which were supportive, were considered during the inspection and are dealt with within the main report.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils do well at GCSE in relation to their other subjects.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Teachers in Year 7 have developed high quality resources to help with learning.
- There is effective support in Years 7 to 9 for pupils with special educational needs.
- Leadership and management are strong.

Areas for improvement

- Develop effective measures to raise the attainment of boys, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that the practices recommended by the National Literacy Strategy for Years 7 to 9 are fully embedded in the work of the department.
- Ensure more consistency in the quality of teaching, particularly in terms of lesson planning and time management.
- Strengthen measures to improve motivation and behaviour in some classes in Years 10 and 11.

103. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average in 2001, and well above those for similar schools. Results were similar to those in mathematics, and above those in science, with girls' performance noticeably better than boys'. Although there was an overall rising trend from 1997 to 2001, in line with that seen nationally, the results, nevertheless, dipped a little from Year 2000 to 2001. The slight downward trend continued in 2002; results in English were lower than those in mathematics and science, partly due to a significant fall in boys' performance and partly due to the disruptive effect of long-term staff absence on the learning of a group of pupils. Available data suggests that most pupils make satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 9.

104. Standards in the lessons observed and in the work seen during the inspection were in line with national expectations, and a little better than the results suggest. Pupils listen well to their teachers, although less so to each other, and generally speak with confidence. Many read aloud with expression and evident enjoyment, although some weaker pupils still have to develop this skill. Pupils learn to read more effectively using strategies such as skimming and scanning texts. Overall reading comprehension is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, pupils in higher sets write fluently and accurately. There is some strong narrative and descriptive writing, with imaginative use of carefully chosen vocabulary. Younger pupils in many sets are able to write persuasively in appropriate style, and are helped to structure their writing by the excellent materials devised by their teachers. Many weaker pupils, however, have difficulty in writing at length and some have poor handwriting skills, although overall they show improvement from Years 7 to 9. Pupils with special educational needs and those in lower sets make good progress as a result of the high level of in-class support that they receive.

105. In 2001, the GCSE English and English literature results were broadly in line with national averages. Pupils performed well in relation to their other subjects, significantly so in the case of English literature, and boys did well relative to other subjects. The results in 2002 showed a slight dip in both subjects, although they were still in line with national averages. The gap between boys and girls has narrowed slightly, helped by an increase in the proportion of boys gaining A*/A grades. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is in line with expectations.
106. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed this picture. Many pupils respond articulately to teachers' questions. Some need to develop better presentational skills in oral work and a higher standard of reading aloud. Most pupils show a greater depth of understanding of literary texts. Those in higher sets are beginning to develop the skills of literary analysis, producing good extended essays in which they express their own original interpretations of the texts studied. Many in middle sets show considerable improvement as a result of the drafting process, while weaker pupils can produce fluent personal writing on a simple level. A few still have serious difficulties with style, grammar and basic spelling, their progress not helped by the lack of learning support in low sets in Years 10 and 11. Pupils overall make satisfactory progress, mainly as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge, lively exposition, sound experience and thorough approach.
107. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with the majority of lessons observed being good or better. Some of the teaching in Year 7, which follows the structures of the National Literacy Strategy, is particularly effective in creating a good learning environment. Pupils follow their teachers' example and are well organised and well focused. Learning aims are clear, pupils are attentive, work productively and standards are good. In less successful lessons, planning is sketchy, teachers do not always communicate learning objectives to pupils, there is sometimes a lack of pace, time is not always well managed and pupils lose interest. There is a need to ensure that all teachers are consistent in their approach in Years 7 to 9.
108. Successful teaching in Years 10 and 11 is characterised by very good classroom management, which ensures that learning is not disrupted and that pupils participate co-operatively. Many teachers use skilled questioning to check for understanding and help pupils to explore ideas in depth. Pupils respond well when they have an opportunity to participate actively and when the activity is one that engages them appropriately in learning. In a very good lesson with a Year 10 lower attaining group studying 'Our Day Out', the teacher successfully used drama with a challenging group of pupils and succeeded in channelling their enthusiasm into thinking in greater depth about serious aspects of the play. In a few less successful lessons with older pupils, teachers sometimes spend too long talking at the front of the class, time is not always used productively and often pupils are not fully engaged. In a few classes, long-term staff absence has resulted in the lack of a work ethic and there are pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour from pupils who have lost the motivation to learn. Again there is a need to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching.
109. The strong leadership and good management of the department have had a stabilising influence, helping to mitigate the effects of staff changes and illness, and overseeing new national developments such as the introduction of AS level and the literacy strategy. Leadership is by example. There is an ethos of support and co-operation within the department and a commitment to improvement. The ethos is very much in line with that of the school. The work of staff and pupils is checked regularly and monitoring is informal. There is no formal programme of regular observations to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in a large department, which includes

several non-specialists. Assessment procedures are sound. Teachers of Year 7 groups have received training in assessing National Curriculum Levels in English, and teachers' judgements at the end of Years 9 and 11 are standardised. However, assessment is not yet used to the best effect to improve individual learning. Individual target-setting, for example, is not fully developed, and although teachers' marking is careful and detailed, specific targets for improvement are not always shown.

110. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved; in particular, the introduction of National Literacy Strategy techniques has improved teaching and learning in most Year 7 classes. There is now greater use of ICT in the English curriculum and most teachers have received ICT training; lesson plans provide opportunities for the greater use of ICT. Support for pupils with special educational needs in Years 7 to 9 is now more effective. The department is well placed to respond to change and further improvement.

Literacy

111. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. Pupils listen actively to their teachers and are confident speakers, although they rarely speak at length. Opportunities for developing oral skills are not as extensive as they could be. Most pupils are able to use the terminology appropriate to their subject; this is a particularly strong feature in music, geography and business education lessons. The reading skills of most pupils are sufficient to cope with the demands of the curriculum, although pupils do not have enough opportunities in all subjects to improve on their reading aloud, and only in a few subjects such as history and ICT are their research skills well developed. Writing standards are generally satisfactory. Most pupils write with a reasonable degree of fluency and accurately, and most plan, organise and express their ideas coherently.
112. Not all departments are starting to take the development of literacy into account in their planning. Many teachers mark rigorously, paying attention to grammar, spelling and punctuation. This is happening in English, geography, history, ICT and science, but much less in other subjects. There are satisfactory arrangements in English for pupils who arrive in school with weak literacy; arrangements that are more effective in Year 7 than in Years 8 and 9. There is a school literacy policy, which now needs revision, so that it can form part of a whole-school approach to the new framework for national developments in Years 7 to 9. The school has appointed a manager of these developments, but there are as yet no development team and no development plan. It is crucial that implementation should be carefully planned, and that its impact on standards of teaching and learning should be carefully monitored.

Drama

113. Drama is taught within the expressive arts department, and was lightly sampled during this inspection. GCSE results up to 2001 were above national averages, but in 2002 there was a decline. It is now hoped that the change to a different syllabus will halt this decline. Three lessons were observed, covering Years 9 to 11. Standards are in line with expectations. Pupils develop a satisfactory range of drama skills and give lively, convincing performances. They usually collaborate well in group work and, when given the opportunity, contribute thoughtful evaluations of their own and others' work. Teaching is good or very good. Teachers have considerable subject expertise and lessons are well planned, so that pupils' learning progresses appropriately. Teachers' good classroom management ensures that pupils work with concentration and application. Good relationships in classes mean that pupils respond positively to their teachers' challenging expectations and are keen to improve their standards. There is

frequently a strong moral theme in many topics, which form part of the drama curriculum. The subject makes an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in a significant number of lessons. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject; they provide clear explanations and give good individual guidance to pupils.
- Pupils' attainment is improving, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- In the majority of cases, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships with each other and staff are good.
- The department is effectively led and well managed.
- The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The number of pupils reaching GCSE grades A*- C.
- Opportunities for pupils to use ICT.
- The provision made for SEN pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The range and quality of resources for teaching and learning.

114. The results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were in line with the national average. When compared against the results of similar schools they are well above average. The results of the national tests taken in 2002 are better than those of the previous year and continue the upward trend of the last four years. There is no significant difference in the results of boys and girls.
115. Evidence from lessons observed and from scrutiny of the work of pupils in Year 9 indicates similar standards to those of last year. Many pupils in Year 9 have acquired the expected level of knowledge, skills and understanding across all aspects of mathematics and especially in written computation. They are able to determine the rule to find the n th term of a sequence and plot line graphs of simple functions. Higher attainers are working at a good level for their age; for example, they are able to factorise algebraic expressions and produce graphs to solve quadratic equations.
116. GCSE results for 2001 are slightly below the national average. Forty-six per cent of pupils in the school gained A*- C compared with 48 per cent nationally. However, there is a notable decline in standards achieved in 2002 when only 35 per cent gained A*-C compared with 49 per cent nationally. The reasons for this decline are related to staffing issues that have since been addressed. The school's results in terms of grades A*- G are improving each year and are better than national results. This reflects the school's commitment to enter as many pupils as possible regardless of their potential results. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
117. In Year 11, pupils of average levels of attainment have a secure knowledge and understanding of Pythagoras, which they apply successfully when solving problems. They are able to manipulate algebraic expressions, but some experience difficulties when attempting to find the mean of two fractions such as two-thirds and four-fifths. Higher attainers in Year 11 are able to produce accurately drawn cumulative frequency graphs. Lower attainers can make sensible interpretation of probability scales, but

show limited skills in converting simple fractions to decimals. Most pupils are working at levels commensurate with their abilities.

118. It is clear that standards are rising across the school, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, but progress is hindered by some poor attendance and punctuality of pupils, as seen in one third of lessons. However, those who attend regularly show at least satisfactory and often good achievement in relation to their starting point when they began school in Year 7.
119. The standard of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory in the vast majority of lessons seen. In almost one half of the lessons teaching is at least good.
120. All teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. Lessons usually begin promptly and often involve the rehearsal of mental skills. Classes are managed well in almost all lessons. Good quality exposition is logically structured to promote secure learning. Teachers make effective use of good quality textbooks, although these are insufficient to enable each pupil to have their own text. Teachers work hard to overcome this difficulty; for example, when setting homework. In most lessons, and in marking of pupils' work, teachers give insufficient attention to developing pupils' literacy skills; for example, only rarely do they emphasise spellings of key vocabulary, or correct misspelled words in exercise books. By contrast, most teachers give pupils frequent opportunities to apply speaking and listening skills, often through questions that are well pitched to the needs of pupils. Pupils have virtually no opportunities for using ICT within lessons. This is a significant weakness.
121. Very good teaching was observed in a Year 8 lesson. This high quality teaching is characterised by high levels of mutual respect between the teacher and pupils, and by the teacher's enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject, which impacts significantly upon pupils' attitudes and learning. As a result of these factors, pupils made very good gains in their understanding of complementary events in probability. In most lessons, teachers deal sensitively with pupils' misconceptions and thus promote pupils' confidence in the subject.
122. However, in two lessons, namely one in Year 7 and one in Year 10, teaching was unsatisfactory and resulted in no new learning for the pupils; the work was not sufficiently matched to the abilities of the pupils, the lessons lacked pace and challenge and the teachers did not manage the learning environment effectively, consequently, behaviour deteriorated.
123. In almost all lessons the vast majority of pupils behave well and show good attitudes to learning, as reflected in the pride taken in the presentation of written work. In three lessons involving pupils in Years 7, 8 and 11, the behaviour of pupils was very good and contributed to their good progress. However, in about one quarter of lessons seen, mainly, but not exclusively involving lower attaining pupils, a significant minority of pupils show unsatisfactory concentration, interest and on occasion, poor behaviour.
124. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress in those lessons when additional support is available. However, there are many occasions, especially within Years 10 and 11 when no such support is available and, consequently, pupils make unsatisfactory progress because the teacher cannot always meet their needs. Pupils from minority groups such as travellers' children, refugees and those for whom English is an additional language, participate fully in class and achieve similarly to their peers. Homework is set as established practice; it is checked rigorously and makes a good contribution to learning.

125. The department is well led and managed and is beginning to impact on pupils' attainment. Strategic planning is good, resulting in a department action plan that identifies appropriate areas for development. Systems for checking the work of the department; for example, scrutiny of pupils' work, are well established. The department's analysis of examination results is very good, providing very useful information on the relative performance of boys and girls and on the performance of pupils in different teaching groups.
126. Staff new to the profession are well supported and the department's senior team is committed to raising standards, Accommodation is satisfactory and is enhanced by some good quality classroom displays. Resources for teachers and pupils are currently inadequate, due to financial constraints. This deficiency is impeding the work of the department, especially the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.
127. Since the last inspection, the department has improved action planning and systems for checking standards and accommodation. This represents good improvement. However, the underuse of ICT remains an issue.

Numeracy

128. Overall, numeracy standards are average for most pupils throughout the school. Pupils are presented with many appropriate and relevant opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects. Pupils in Year 8 show competence in measuring within design and technology and science activities. In geography, Year 7 pupils apply knowledge of distance, direction and scale. Mental arithmetic skills are rehearsed effectively within Year 8 Spanish lessons. Many opportunities are provided within physical education lessons to utilise numeracy skills, such as scoring and timing. Year 9 pupils show good skills within their pattern designs in artwork.
129. The mathematics department has already begun to liaise with other departments to introduce a cohesive and unified approach to developing numeracy across the school. The head of department is currently preparing a whole-school numeracy policy.

SCIENCE

The overall quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching especially at Key Stage 3.
- The very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm of all staff.
- Relationships within the department and with pupils are good; pupils receive very good individual support.
- The very good behaviour of most pupils and their enthusiasm for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- A departmental development plan that identifies targets for improvement, measurable success criteria and is time related.
- Sharing good practice.
- Improving departmental guidelines.
- Use of ICT.

130. Standards at Key Stage 4 for 2001 show a seven per cent rise in A* - C at GCSE with a slight dip at A* - G. This was the sixth year of improvement from a low of 28 per cent at the time of the last inspection; however, these results are still below the national

average. The provisional figures for 2002 continue to show an upward trend and sustained improvement over time. At Key Stage 3 the 2001 Level 5+ and Level 6+ are close to the national average for all schools. However, in comparison to similar schools Level 5 is above and Level 6 well above average. Boys attained better results than girls in both key stages. The 2002 provisional results consolidate this and show continuing improvement against both all schools and similar schools nationally.

131. Pupils' attainment was good overall, especially at Key Stage 3 with one half of lessons being good or very good. Pupils are able to articulate their knowledge of scientific facts and apply them well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils were able to explain particles and bonds at melting and boiling points of water, and in a Year 9 class applied their knowledge and understanding of reactive metals to an investigation on sacrificial protection. Attainment at Key Stage 4, whilst satisfactory overall and good in about one half of the lessons, requires the most improvement. Pupils had a good grasp of investigations and the criteria applied to marking them. They could use this information to improve the quality of their work. This was shown well in a Year 11 lesson on resistance. They could explain the variables clearly and how these could ensure a fair test.
132. SEN pupils and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress across both key stages, whilst the progress made by EAL and refugee pupils is satisfactory.
133. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 overall was good with three out of four lessons seen deemed good. Teaching at Key Stage 4, whilst satisfactory overall, had many good features. Good teaching was as a result of careful planning, clear learning objectives, challenging expectations and a brisk pace. Pupils responded well to these lessons; for example, in a lesson on speed pupils were responsible for planning their investigation, completing it using simple equipment and using a previously learned formula to calculate speed. At Key Stage 4 a group of Year 11 pupils were able to explain the rules of electron shell filling with some confidence. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about their subject and this is projected well into the teaching of the best lessons at both key stages.
134. The relatively new head of department has worked hard to unite the department who now work as a team and feel valued. The delegating of responsibilities to others in the department has been effective in the production of schemes of work and the effective management of health and safety issues. However, his management skills are underdeveloped.
135. The departmental development plan is unsatisfactory and schemes of work do not address the Key Stage 3 literacy or numeracy strategies or identify the use of how whole-school ICT resources enhance science teaching. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils are established, but the department does not use National Curriculum assessment data to inform departmental, teacher and pupil targets. There are no formal systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning.
136. Accommodation is adequate. However, the layout of the laboratories only works because of staff and pupil co-operation. The two term time only laboratory technicians provide very good support. However, the layout of the department and the number of staff stretches their ability to repair and make apparatus. Resources are adequate. The department has not had any increase in capitation for some years. As equipment begins to wear out they will struggle to replace it. The lack of a co-ordinated approach to ICT is still unsatisfactory and is of concern.

137. The department has made substantial strides in improving provision since the last inspection. Standards have improved considerably at both Key Stages. The quality of teaching has improved further especially at Key Stage 4. Attainment in lessons has also improved substantially at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Marking is now consistent and sound overall and sometimes good with pertinent questions raised, areas for development identified on some occasions and praise given. Risk assessments are now carried out and laboratory practice is safe with a member of the department fulfilling the role well. Leadership issues have been addressed and the department now has a good reputation with the rest of the school. However, ICT has not been addressed adequately and is still a key issue for the department.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall provision for art is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The high level of commitment of the head of department and staff.
- Results in GCSE examinations.
- Improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The level of staffing in the department.
- The excessive number of pupils in some classes.
- The accuracy of assessment at the end of Key Stage 3.
- The development of ICT.

138. At the end of Year 9, standards in work seen are in line with national expectations. Pupils show skill in drawing from observation and in imaginative composition. Year 7 drawings, based upon the work of LS Lowry, for example, are very expressive and carefully carried out. Work in pattern is also well constructed and carefully finished. There is, however, very little use of ICT, and three-dimensional work is limited by the continuing absence of a ceramics element in the curriculum. Literacy is addressed by the display and discussion of subject terms, but there is little evidence of a numeracy policy. Results in tests show an above average number of pupils gaining National Curriculum Level 5+, with girls attaining better results than boys.

139. Achievement to Year 9 is good. From a below average level of general attainment on entry, pupils make good progress, although in a somewhat limited range of activities, to reach the average level. Progress in three-dimensional work and in ICT is very limited. Gifted pupils make good progress in response to well thought out assignments, which allow for success at a wide range of levels, and also to differentiated one-to-one tuition in class. For the same reasons, the achievement of SEN pupils is good.

140. At the end of Year 11, attainment is again satisfactory. In work seen, pupils show continuing skill in drawing from observation and in the development of personal ideas in projects for GCSE. There is good evidence of imaginative skills in collage and experimental weaving. Art historical material is incorporated in creative work effectively and the art of other cultures is explored as a source of ideas. Pupils choose a theme in their work and study related work in art history; the human figure, for example, may involve the study of Renaissance painting. There is still a comparative lack of progress in ICT.

141. Results in GCSE examinations are close to the national average and have remained at this level over recent years. Results in art compare favourably with those of other

subjects within the school. This represents continuing good achievement and progress. As at the earlier stage, pupils with special talent and those with special educational needs make good progress due to the open-ended nature of projects.

142. The quality of teaching and learning in the department is good. Teachers prepare their work very thoroughly and show good awareness of the needs of individual pupils. The planning of lessons is thoughtful and imaginative with very good deployment of limited resources. Good relationships are generated in class and form a basis for a pleasant and productive working atmosphere that, in turn, has a positive impact upon learning.
143. The management of the department is very good. The head of department plays a leading role in the teaching and, as the sole permanent full-time member of staff in art, is responsible for the overview of the curriculum, induction of new teachers and briefing of supply staff as well as all administrative matters pertaining to the work of the department. Staffing constitutes a major problem for the department. In order to sustain the level of successful attainment in these circumstances, a very high level of commitment is necessary by the head of department. The problems in staffing have a negative impact in several ways. Continuity in teaching is difficult to maintain. A succession of short-term supply teachers creates demands upon effective supervision of pupils' progress. This problem is highlighted by large numbers in several classes. These difficulties are resolutely met, but need to be seriously addressed in order to consolidate the progress of the department.
144. The accommodation provided is adequate for present courses, but storage is limited. Resources for learning are minimal due to a significant reduction of capitation allowance over recent years. This also restricts the breadth of the curriculum. Expensive equipment for ceramics is unused due to the lack of a ceramics teacher.
145. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4. Staffing, however, has been reduced and is less than at the time of the last report.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall provision for citizenship is **good**.

Strengths

- School commitment to the development of the subject.
- Quality of teaching.
- Response of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Library provision for the subject area.

146. The school has adopted a policy of delivering citizenship as part of personal, social and health education and guidance. Programmes of Study have been drawn up for all years, which reflect the aims of the National Curriculum for both Key Stages 3 and 4. Schemes of work are imaginative and well thought out. The opportunity for innovative thinking in planning has been seized in this new area of study. Although citizenship is linked with guidance in the timetable, units of study and schemes of work are distinctively addressed to outcomes rather than to the acquisition of skills and knowledge.
147. Attainment, therefore, is measured in terms of the development of pupils' outlook and attitude to life. Examples of this kind of development are evident in lessons. The

discussion of rights and responsibilities, for instance, brings forth serious discussion. Even the youngest pupils are asked to reflect upon their conduct, emotions and preferences. A resource sheet for a Year 7 group looking at 'personal rights' begins by asking 'What's your favourite food?' and leads on via 'What do you most regret doing?' to 'Who or what has had the greatest influence on the kind of person you are?' This provides for both the needs of all pupils and ensures they make progress.

148. Attainment in lessons seen was above average. Pupils demonstrate the capacity to analyse ethical and moral problems related to their everyday life in a searching and thoughtful way. Younger groups in Years 7 and 8, although looking at concrete issues such as 'bullying', show a willingness to go beyond their own experience to explore issues arising from adult 'bullying' and different types of behaviour; physical, emotional and verbal. In Years 10 and 11, attainment once more is above average. Pupils display debating skills and are able to marshal their arguments in a mature way.
149. At both stages, good progress has been made in the development of awareness of issues relating to citizenship in a relatively short time. An attitude change is perceptible in pupils' discussion. This brings an additional dimension of a distinctive nature to the 'guidance' and PSE area. This development has been brought about by very good and, in some cases, excellent teaching.
150. A wide-ranging variety of teaching styles is employed. In Years 7, 8 and 9, in particular, innovative teaching through dance has enriched learning. Expectations are high and teaching stimulating, pupils are asked to create 'freeze frames' to illustrate various rights. The brisk pace of activities requires pupils to organise themselves quickly. In Years 10 and 11, there is strong emphasis on responsible and mature self-organisation. Pupils consider issues in groups and are asked to appoint a spokesperson to express conclusions reached. Pupils show maturity and a serious sense of purpose in the discussion issues, such as arranged marriage in relation to freedom and human rights. The overriding aim in the teaching is to create a distinct identity for this area, stressing outcomes, and content is designed to this end.
151. Pupils' response is very good. They show an eagerness to participate in learning activities and a high level of interest on issues, such as human rights. The very good quality of teaching and learning owes much to the vigour and commitment of management. The school has taken on the initiative wholeheartedly and the area co-ordinator has shown a very good level of imagination and skill in organising staff seminars to develop ideas.
152. Resources have been largely produced by the school in the form of course material. There is a need to extend library provision to cover effectively for this new area of learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The impact of ICT is beginning to show in standards of work.
- Pupils' behaviour is often good.
- Teacher pupil relationships are often good and pupils receive high levels of individual support.

Areas for improvement

- Better co-ordination between the curriculum areas that collectively deliver the National Curriculum.
- Identification of the common features within the National Curriculum units of work.
- The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning and monitoring of pupil progress.
- Resources for computer assisted manufacture (CAM).

153. Standards in design and technology on entry to the school are variable and at best satisfactory. Pupils' skills in designing are less well developed than the practical skills of manufacturing. The standards of the pupils' work in Year 9 are below national standards overall, with variations between the material areas that collectively deliver the National Curriculum in design and technology. The pupils' earlier experiences and opportunities to learn and practise the range of design and technology skills are variable. They do not always recognise and use the knowledge and skills acquired in earlier work to inform increasingly demanding design and make activities in new situations. For example, in Year 8 electronics, assembling resistors, capacitors, timers and tilt-switches to produce a hazard warning device, and in resistant materials, when designing and making a steady hand game incorporating only a battery and 'buzzer'.
154. Pupils satisfactorily use a range of hand and machine tools safely for designing and making a range of products and articles, using a broad range of resistant and compliant materials, electronic components and food products. Standards in sketching and drawing are unsatisfactory and this hinders progress in designing. Investigation activities do not always inform designing and making; for example, in Year 9, when designing and making containers. Here pupils research a range of ideas and yet all the pupils' outcomes are constructed and jointed from identical materials. Research, analysis and evaluation are used effectively as methods of learning in food technology; for example, when investigating and testing snack foods and then making their own healthy snack. Pupils' knowledge of nutrition and ability to modify recipes are good; for example, when making bread and incorporating a broad range of different ingredients. Overall standards by the end of Year 9 are unsatisfactory, but are satisfactory in the food technology component of the curriculum.
155. Provisionally, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*- C at GCSE in 2002 was below the national average and none of the pupils achieved the highest A* grade. Girls' results were significantly higher than boys and similar to the overall school average. The results in design and technology resistant materials were disappointing. Compared to 2001, girls' results have dipped slightly whereas boys' results have fallen significantly and by approximately one half, in terms of pupils achieving grades A*- C.
156. In Years 10 and 11 standards are satisfactory overall, but there is variability between the different aspects of the curriculum. There is still underachievement in sketching and designing; for example, in a Year 10 resistant materials class a significant majority did not fully understand how to produce a three-dimensional or orthographic drawing of

their container design. The use of ICT is beginning to improve and extend the research element of pupils' work; for example, in textiles, when designing a fashion accessory or suitable item of clothing based on an Oriental or African theme. The recently acquired digital camera in food technology introduces new systems for the pupils to record and evaluate their work. Here higher attaining pupils consolidate their skill acquisition through good research, organisation and evaluation and produce folders of a good standard. In electronics, the higher attaining pupils have carried out complex circuit designs using the computer and an appropriate modelling software program. In these Year 11 lessons, pupils quickly investigate and construct prototype circuits to meet variable requirements in their alarm system.

157. SEN pupils make similar progress to others because they are well supported in lessons. Learning support assistants support these pupils very well, but they are rarely told in advance about the concepts to be learned in the lesson. Progress for many pupils is helped by taking advantage of supervised access to the specialist rooms at lunchtime and after school.
158. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The main strengths are teachers' good management of their classes, pace of lessons and clear framework for pupils to work. Teachers set appropriately high expectations and all pupils receive high levels of individual support in the better lessons. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and occasionally good. In some lessons, teachers are over-directive and the focus of the lesson is directed towards the task, at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. For example, in Year 8, when designing and making a table mat and/or 'coaster', the pupils' designs did not recognise the importance of fitness for purpose, including size and or shape for intended use.
159. In Years 10 and 11 the recently introduced individual formal assessment record is beginning to have an impact on pupils' understanding of progress and attainment.
160. Day-to-day leadership and management are satisfactory, but co-ordination is not yet secure. There is not a common approach to planning, assessment and the development of the key features of designing and making. The department should recognise and establish common features within the units of work and consider ways of improving continuity between the federated areas, including the use of pupils' prior attainment following transfer from one material area to the next. The department development plan lacks detailed quantifiable success criteria for some of the issues identified and positive strategies to address the underachievement of boys.
161. Although no health and safety issues were observed during the inspection, the department does not have a risk assessment policy. A refurbishment programme has been approved in food technology and the removal of old and obsolete machines in resistant materials. There is no equipment in this area to enable the control and machining aspects of the National Curriculum to be met.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is at least **satisfactory** and **good** in some areas.

Strengths

- An enthusiastic, committed team of well-experienced staff.
- Comprehensive worksheets and exercise sheets provided for pupils.
- Well planned and relevant fieldwork, both at local level and via annual residential courses.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and evaluation procedures to evaluate departmental improvement.
- Better resources, especially textbook resources available for homework.
- Use of ICT.
- Gender issue regarding uptake of geography in Years 10 and 11.

162. Assessment in 2001, at the end of Year 9, indicates results in line with the national average for pupils attaining Level 5+. This maintains a consistent trend over time. Overall, girls record higher levels than boys.
163. Attainment in GCSE at the end of Year 11 in 2001 was slightly above the national average. Provisional results for 2002 show a dip this year compared to previous departmental and national figures. The department has consistently been producing results above both school and national averages in recent years. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* - G have improved significantly compared to 2001 results. The main gender differences from the results are simply one of uptake of the subject at Years 10 and 11, where very few girls opt for the subject .
164. The standards of work are at least satisfactory across all year groups, with the best work seen in Years 7, 10 and 11. Pupils in all groups exhibit clear understanding; they generally listen attentively, approaching their work with enthusiasm and commitment. Class relationships are good, with some good collaborative work seen , especially in Year 10. The scrutiny of work demonstrated good progression, with presentational skills across the year groups of at least a good standard. The majority of Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve well, making good progress in all aspects of their work , applying physical and creative efforts in both classwork and homework, as well as showing very satisfactory levels of application of knowledge to case studies. This was particularly a strong feature in the Year 11 work on urbanisation in South America, where good general knowledge and interpretational skills were exhibited. Fieldwork is a strong feature of the department's work across the whole age range; very supportive local studies are undertaken, plus an annual week-long residential course in Dorset, providing useful experiences for older pupils.
165. A major feature of all lessons was the high degree of inclusiveness; all pupils had a role to play, with SEN pupils well supported by staff and making satisfactory progress, although some more varied work to meet the needs of all pupils is desirable. A positive learning environment is found in all classrooms, with pupil behaviour and attitudes being good, or very good. Little evidence of unsatisfactory behaviour was observed.
166. The quality of teaching is good throughout, with some examples of very good and excellent teaching observed. A major strength is that preparation and planning is of the highest order, based on excellent departmental documentation that offers support and guidance on a wide range of issues including assessment, homework and marking. The specialist teachers use a wide range of appropriate teaching strategies and

methods. They are all enthusiastic and knowledgeable with high expectations of their pupils. Most pupils responded well to this pupil-friendly style of teaching, generally exhibiting a reciprocal enthusiasm and commitment to their studies. The use of ICT is limited. Pupils' work is well marked, having heed to school and departmental policies, as laid out in the very useful documents given to all staff. Although considerable priority is given to assessment procedures and target setting, this facet of teaching needs greater refinement and application by all staff. Not enough use is made of data and information available in determining future improvement strategies. Links with other humanity subjects are thorough, with particular reference to the strength of the extra lesson available for one half of the year in Years 8 and 9. The Foundation geography course in Year 7 is also well directed and taught, with the total context across the three years clearly satisfying National Curriculum requirements for the key stage.

167. Leadership of the department, and where geography is taught across Years 7 to 9 within the humanities framework, is good, offering relevant experience and supportive teaching competences across the board.
168. Overall, since the last inspection, the subject has continued to make progress in terms of teaching and learning and improving standards.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching of pupils aged 11 to 14 years.
- The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils.
- Planning of the curriculum with regard to the teaching of key skills.
- Marking of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- Aspects of teaching: a need for consistency in the review of learning at the end of lessons and for greater concentration on comparing key features of different periods of history.
- Aspects of leadership and management especially in respect of monitoring the quality of teaching.
- The use of ICT in teaching and learning.

169. In the GCSE results of 2001, the proportion of A*- C grades was well below the national average. The proportion of A*- G grades was close to the national average. Girls performed markedly better than boys with almost one half of the girls attaining A*- C grades compared to just over one third of the boys. Provisional results for 2002 show significant improvement with one half of all entrants achieving A*- C grades and almost all achieving A*- G grades. This indicates a very high level of inclusion, although girls again considerably outperformed boys. Strategies that are being used this year to maintain the improvement include a more intensive study of source material, linked to the requirements of past examination papers.
170. In work seen, pupils are working towards an average level of attainment by the end of Year 9, confirming the teacher assessments of 2002. The achievement of pupils from Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Progress is notable in four of the five key elements of the National Curriculum. Analysis of notebooks indicates that they are competent with the organization and communication of knowledge acquired. Their range and depth of

knowledge are increased and they develop the necessary skills of enquiry. They gain an appreciation that historical issues are capable of differing interpretation in their work on the English Civil War in Year 8. Chronological awareness and the ability of pupils to compare and contrast the key features of different periods of history are weak. Higher and average attaining pupils write about the subject at a standard of literacy that is either satisfactory or good. Lower attaining pupils' standards of writing are weak, but they can represent the subject well in illustrative form.

171. The attainment of pupils at the age of 16 is broadly in line with the national average and highlights the improvement seen in the GCSE results of 2002. The achievement of these pupils is satisfactory. Clear progress from Year 9 is seen in a greater depth of study, the better interpretation of both primary and secondary sources and the more confident usage of subject-specific vocabulary. Progress is also evident with regard to source evaluation, although this important skill is more developed amongst the higher attaining pupils. The standard of literacy that these pupils achieve is very good and the overall standard in GCSE work is good.
172. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils aged 11 to 14, as well as those aged 14 to 16, are good. They show a conspicuous interest in the subject and maintain a good level of concentration throughout lessons. The interest taken by one of the lower attaining groups in a Year 7 lesson was clearly demonstrated by the frequency with which a number of them both asked and answered questions. Take-up rates at the start of Year 10 compare favourably with those for other optional subjects. Positive working relationships are evident between teachers and pupils and pupil-to-pupil. Books, resources and equipment are treated with a proper respect and pupils are generally courteous and well mannered. SEN pupils make good progress, when supported at an individual level; when this support is not provided their progress is satisfactory. Refugee and EAL pupils make the same level of progress as pupils in general.
173. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good for pupils aged 11 to 14 with some very good elements, and satisfactory for pupils aged 14 to 16, but with some features that are good. All teachers have a secure command of the subject. They make very good use of resources, including videos and artefacts, in support of learning. In each of the Year 7 lessons with Foundation level pupils, one pupil was presented with models of a Saxon helmet, chain mail, sword and shield; this demonstration fascinated all the pupils and allowed them to perceive the advantages in battle of this armour and weaponry. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were able to make effective use of a computer program to survey death registers for the Rochdale borough in 1881. Teachers employ good methods, make profitable use of time and have high expectations of pupils at differing levels of attainment. Homework is set regularly to consolidate and extend classroom learning. Marking of pupils' work is consistently good, indicating errors and inadequacies as well as giving due praise and encouragement. Teaching would be better if there was a more consistent practice of reviewing pupils' learning at the end of lessons, and a stronger emphasis placed on making comparisons of different periods of history.
174. The curriculum is thoroughly planned and satisfies all statutory requirements. Opportunities for the use of ICT and for the enhancement of pupils' numeracy skills are clearly indicated. The curriculum for Year 9 would be given a better chronological balance and a closer relevance to the present day by paying more attention to the second half of the 20th century.

175. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but with several features that would benefit from further development. Full schemes of work, modes of assessment and teaching and learning strategies for developing the empathy of pupils and their perception of interpretations of history appear in the handbook. There is a good ethos for learning and a shared commitment to improvement amongst the departmental staff. The head of department does not monitor or evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. There are inadequacies in the staffing; currently, the head of department is the only permanent, full-time teacher in post.
176. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection. Pupils' skills with the use of sources are more developed. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen of pupils aged 11 to 14 years. Homework is a regular and consistent feature of learning. Curriculum planning now makes appropriate links with both the key elements and level descriptors of the National Curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning overall is good or better.
- Good quality and appropriate resources.

Areas for improvement

- Extend time allocated in Years 8 and 9 to allow all pupils a full year of ICT.
- Ensure that all pupils receive ICT in Years 10 and 11 to meet statutory requirements.
- Develop the assessment procedures.

177. Since the last inspection there has been considerable financial investment in resources and new schemes of work. ICT is now taught as a discrete subject in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, the school does not provide sufficient time in Years 8 and 9. It does not provide ICT in Years 10 and 11 for all pupils and so is not meeting National Curriculum statutory requirements.
178. The level of prior attainment of pupils is below the national average. The improvement in attainment by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory and matches the national average or is just above. Teacher assessments indicate that the proportion of pupils obtaining Level 5+ is above the national average. The figures also suggest that significantly more girls than boys obtain Level 5+. However, the quality of work examined suggests that this figure is inflated. All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 now have discrete ICT lessons each week.
179. Year 7 pupils produce presentations using text and relevant images. They access a database to elicit information for a written document about castles. Year 8 pupils work on a project designed by Manchester Metropolitan University. They organised and managed an enterprise fair. They are now analysing the data on the results and effects of the fair. They use data that has been entered into a database and transferred to a spreadsheet to create a graphical representation of the data. They use a word processor to produce a report that includes text, tables and graphs. They show flexibility in using the facilities of a range of software packages. They are able to explain and demonstrate how they have formatted and edited documents. Year 9 pupils work on an integrated project in the management of a cinema. They design logos, business cards and produce management reports on the results of a survey. They explain how

they use a number of software packages to transfer data from one to another. Most work is at Level 5 with some pupils extending what they do to Levels 6 or 7.

180. ICT was only offered for the first time to Year 10 in Year 2000. About 50 pupils in each year undertake the ICT GCSE course, while about the same number are undertaking a business studies course in which there is an element of ICT. The Year 10 ICT pupils are creating a personnel system for a small company. They use a database to input staff personal data, a spreadsheet to calculate wages, a design package to create a logo and a desktop publishing package to design a payroll slip. They use mail merge to print individual pay slips using the inputted data. They manipulate the facilities of the software with ease and demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of the system and the need to produce correct output.
181. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. Teaching overall is satisfactory with more than one half of the lessons observed being good or better. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject and prepare well for lessons. They provide good worksheets and set constructive activities, which challenge pupils and allow them to extend their skills in the use of ICT. The teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 is consistently good with some very good features. Teachers engage pupils in discussions and devise worksheets appropriate to the ability of the pupils to ensure that concentration does not wander. Pace of lessons is always good and homework is often used to enhance classroom teaching and learning. They manage pupils with care and ensure a good learning environment. In Year 10 there is some very good teaching, with the rest being satisfactory. Sometimes the technical planning for the lesson affects the quality of the learning. Teaching in Year 11 is generally satisfactory with one poor lesson observed. Year 11 pupils did not receive the full entitlement to ICT in previous years, but the teaching does not always set directed tasks and does not direct or focus sharply enough on the pupils' learning.
182. Pupils generally take advantage of the activities presented to them to increase their knowledge and expand their use of ICT. Teachers assess the progress of pupils, but do not provide information about level criteria to pupils to assist them in assessing their own progress. They formally assess pupils at the end of each activity identifying strategies for development. At the end of the year a formal assessment is used to set targets for the following year.
183. Behaviour is good and pupils respond well to planned lessons. They pay attention and keep to task when working on the computers. In Years 7 and 8 they show great enthusiasm for the work, and in Year 9 work with enthusiasm and independence. Pupils are prepared to co-operate with each other and also provide help where appropriate. They have respect for the teachers, school, equipment and each other and show a friendly approach to everyone. They freely discuss their work and are able to explain what they are doing and how they use the facilities of the software. They work independently and are willing to experiment and find out new techniques for themselves.
184. Year 10 pupils work with enthusiasm and enjoyment on the integrated business system. In Year 11, however, some pupils lack motivation and concentration is limited. There was some unsatisfactory behaviour, due to the poor quality teaching.
185. SEN pupils achieve satisfactorily and in some lessons worksheets ensure that they enjoy the work and achieve well.
186. The head of department has a wide range of responsibilities, including the curriculum development of ICT as well as the management and general control of all the

networked facilities, including the school administrative system. This has now become too broad a responsibility and the continued development of curricular ICT would benefit from its own distinct co-ordination and management. The management and deployment of the technician support are problematic. Support in the preparation of lessons is inadequate and results in technical problems, reducing learning opportunities.

187. The head of department has managed the installation of significant resources and the introduction of new schemes of work. He leads a supportive team of teachers, who team teach with good effect. There is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning. The balanced deployment of teaching staff is a positive move to ensure wide experience.

ICT across the curriculum

188. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in the number of computers in the school. The resources are now good with three dedicated ICT rooms, and rooms dedicated to design and technology, modern foreign languages and English, an upper school resource area and facilities in the SEN learning support base.
189. The progress of the use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Good examples of the use of ICT were only seen in geography. ICT in English, history and physical education is satisfactory, but unsatisfactory in science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and music. There is nationally funded training, but only 30 staff have completed it. There is no strategic management for ICT across the curriculum and pupils are not offered the wide range of experiences they should have in all subjects.
190. The progress made since the last inspection is significant in terms of the resources, staff development and access to ICT, but there are still areas for further development, such as the time allocation in Years 8 and 9, the failure to meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 and the development of cross-curricular ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The overall provision for modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Newly appointed head of department provides sound leadership to a united and committed team.
- All staff are specialists with good subject knowledge.
- Management of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching.
- The use of ongoing assessment.
- Departmental documentation.
- Lack of a development plan.

191. All pupils are allocated to French or Spanish sets in Year 7 and study one language to GCSE level, with the opportunity to study a second foreign language from Year 10. A minority of higher attaining pupils in Year 9 study both French and Spanish, but few choose to study both to GCSE.
192. In recent years both French and Spanish results have been unsatisfactory when compared to national averages. The 2001 GCSE French results show satisfactory

improvement on the previous year and Spanish results improved greatly and were broadly similar to national averages. However, standards in both languages, in particular French, were unsatisfactory taking into account pupils' performances in other subjects. The proportion of pupils awarded grades A*- C was very small. Girls performed better than boys in both subjects, and particularly in Spanish, where the difference was greater than that found nationally.

193. In Year 11 pupils often display indifferent attitudes to their work, and behaviour is unsatisfactory overall. Speaking is a particular weakness. Pupils in top sets have acceptable accents, but cannot speak at length without relying on prompts from their books. Their responses are often hesitant and contain too many basic errors. The higher attainers can write at length, but accuracy is poor. Pupils in bottom sets make unsatisfactory progress. Pupils with SEN make unsatisfactory progress in Year 11 because teachers' planning does not meet their needs. Standards in Year 10 are satisfactory overall in French and Spanish with good standards achieved by most pupils in the top sets. Pupils' listening skills are well developed. They can speak and write accurately and at length when referring to future and past events. Their attitudes and behaviour are good. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress.
194. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show standards broadly in line with national expectations. The higher attainers can use a range of tenses in their written work, but most struggle for accuracy. Pupils' work is generally well presented and attitudes are good. A minority of pupils are taught in single-sex classes. This arrangement enables the girls to make particularly good progress. Good work was seen in Years 7 and 8 classes where pupils showed sound understanding of French or Spanish, spoken at near normal speed, some pupils being able to respond at length and with good accents.
195. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and in Year 10. It is unsatisfactory in Year 11 in both languages because teachers' expectations are not high enough and their methods do not sufficiently engage the pupils. In Years 7 to 9 and in Year 10 teaching was good or better in just under one third of the lessons observed with a small proportion being unsatisfactory. Particular strengths are good subject knowledge, the management of pupils and an expectation that pupils will work hard. In one very good Spanish lesson in which pupils were talking about their daily routines, the lesson was conducted entirely in the target language and the teacher insisted on accuracy. Errors were corrected so that all pupils made good progress. In both key stages there are some important shortcomings in the quality of teaching in French and Spanish. Learning is unsatisfactory for pupils whose home language is French. These pupils need more challenging work to improve their learning and attainment. There is some unnecessary use of English by teachers. This deprives pupils of hearing the spoken language. Too many errors, both in speaking and writing, go uncorrected and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to redraft their work to improve its accuracy.
196. Since the previous inspection standards have fallen at the end of Year 11 and the shortage of resources denies pupils access to reading material and limits opportunities for independent learning. The department now has access to computers, but not all pupils can use this facility. Adequate time is now allocated to French and Spanish. Departmental documentation is poor.

197. The recently appointed head of department provides sound leadership to a newly established team following a period of considerable staffing difficulties and low morale. She has established a clear direction for the work of the department. Teachers are highly committed to the pupils and offer additional lessons after school. New schemes of work have been written, but the handbook requires revision and further development. Following a number of new appointments the department now has the capacity to move forward together to improve provision.

MUSIC

Overall, the provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- GCSE results, which are consistently above the national average.
- Teaching at Key Stage 4.
- Standards achieved in Key Stage 4 lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work need to be developed to reflect the content and structure of the National Curriculum.
- Assessment policies need to be developed to relate to National Curriculum levels of attainment and ensure consistency of assessment in the department.
- Teaching in Key Stage 3 needs to focus more strongly on musical rather than theoretical learning.
- Systems need to be put in place to monitor teaching and learning.

198. GCSE results in music are consistently above the national average. Provisional results for 2002 indicate that three-quarters of pupils gained grades A* - C. Standards observed during the inspection were good in Years 10 and 11 and particularly strong in composing and performing. Pupils' compositions demonstrate awareness of musical structure and their ability to use contemporary musical styles creatively and in an individual way. Their performances are characterised by secure technique and an awareness of the style of music being performed.

199. Standards achieved at the end of Year 9, according to teachers' assessment, are well in line with national expectations. The department does not keep recorded examples of pupils' compositions and performances and, therefore, it is not possible to verify these assessments. However, in the majority of Year 9 lessons observed, standards were well in line with, or slightly above, national expectations. When given the opportunity pupils can perform with fluency and improvise creatively. They demonstrate good understanding of the characteristics of the 'blues' and can use this understanding in their own performances and improvisations.

200. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good, particularly in the areas of composing and performing. Here, teachers enable pupils to perform confidently in a wide variety of styles. In the course of one lesson, pupils performed a classical aria (one pupil accompanying another), a trombone solo and a particularly moving account of a gospel song, composed and performed by two French-speaking pupils who have recently joined the school. In the one listening and appraising lesson observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory, but could have been improved by a worksheet that guided pupils' learning more clearly. There has been a significant increase in the numbers choosing to follow the GCSE music course since the arrival of the present music co-ordinator.

201. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall with examples of very good and some poor teaching. Where teaching is good or better, questioning is used skilfully to engage pupils' attention and remind them of previous learning. Lessons move at a brisk pace and fully involve pupils in the musical activities of composing or performing in a musical style that they recognise. In these lessons pupils have a clear aural picture of what they are trying to achieve, enabling them to learn more quickly and to be aware of when they have achieved the musical objectives of the lesson. Where lessons are satisfactory pupils do learn, but there is often an undue emphasis on the theoretical aspects of music such as the learning of notation. In the one poor lesson observed, pupils were asked to copy diagrams from the blackboard and draw pictures of musical instruments. These activities do not further musical learning. A particular strength of the teaching in most lessons is the development of pupils' literacy skills. Lessons typically begin with a review of the musical terms to be used in the lesson and appropriate vocabulary for describing music to which they are to listen. All teachers create a supportive atmosphere in lessons, where pupils feel secure in performing and composing in front of each other and commenting on each others' work. In the one instrumental lesson observed, teaching was satisfactory.
202. The management of the department is unsatisfactory. The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 does not reflect the structure and content of the National Curriculum and tends to emphasise knowledge about music and musical theory at the expense of pupils' working with musical sound as composers and performers. There are too few opportunities for pupils to listen to and perform music from non-western cultures; an important aspect of their musical and cultural development. There are no formal strategies for assessment against National Curriculum levels of attainment or to ensure consistency of assessment across the four teachers in the department. There is no monitoring of teaching and learning or opportunities to observe and share good practice.
203. Music resources are satisfactory except in the area of music technology where they are unsatisfactory. This results in the department failing to meet the music National Curriculum requirements for ICT. The overall improvement since the last inspection is just satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Overall the quality of teaching is good and many lessons have very good features.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The department is well managed.
- Pupils achieve well especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment information to track the progress of all pupils.
- The standards of all outdoor surfaces.
- The allocation of time for all Years 10 and 11 pupils.

204. Attainment on entry to the school has until very recently been below average and experience in physical education activities has been variable. Tests on standards of attainment carried out this year showed that overall standards of physical fitness and

- co-ordination in Year 7 pupils were below expected levels at the time they entered school.
205. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils, both boys and girls, have reached Level 5 of the National Curriculum Levels for the subject. Over one fifth of all pupils have exceeded that level especially in their levels of personal fitness. In a boys' rugby league lesson, for example, standards of skill are average or above, mainly because their level of physical fitness is good. The standards seen in lessons are well in line with the teacher assessments made earlier in 2002. This represents good achievement and clear value added to the level of attainment on entry to the school.
 206. By the age of 16 overall standards have been well sustained and remain well in line with national expectations. In some classes pupils achieve well and reach higher than expected levels of attainment. For example, in a Year 10 girls' netball lesson the majority of pupils were able to play the game to a good standard. Passing movements were fluent with accurate handling and catching. In a Year 11 badminton lesson the standard of play reached by a majority of boys was good. Rallies were well extended and the range of shots used in them was wide.
 207. In the 2002 GCSE examinations a good standard was reached with almost two-thirds of pupils reaching grades A*- C. These results in the newly introduced examination course are most creditable, especially the average points score per pupil, at 5.36; the highest of all subjects. When judged against a below average level of attainment on entry this is very good achievement. Work seen in lessons and in folders is at expected levels with a broad range. Some pupils, mainly girls, are working well and making good progress; a few boys in year 11 are displaying a degree of immaturity that is affecting their learning.
 208. Pupils with SEN achieve well in physical education especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. Success in physical tasks; for example, in games, enables them to feel good about their work and themselves. Consequently, they will tackle further challenges for improvement with a higher degree of self-confidence.
 209. Almost all pupils have a positive approach to the subject. Behaviour is invariably good and all have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Most are eager to do well in all activities and show this in a variety of ways. Standards of personal kit, attendance and participation in both lessons are all good.
 210. Almost all teachers know their subject very well and are, consequently, successful in planning and managing activities that are designed to improve standards. The style of teaching is encouraging and challenges realistically for improvement in individuals as well as whole groups. For example, in many lessons in both key stages the teacher explained very clearly how the focus of the work was to improve a sequence or a skill and that this would come as a result of improved control over movements and better quality knowledge. This enabled all to have a clear view of what they needed to do in order to improve. Overall the quality of teaching at both key stages is good and in many lessons there are these very good features. In one or two lessons the standard of teaching is not consistent with that of the greater majority. Insufficient attention is given to assessment and often the tasks set are too prescriptive and do not promote individual improvement.
 211. The department is well managed. The programme of activities is well documented and this supports the smooth running of the lessons. The extra-curricular programme of sports and games is good and provides opportunities for both individuals and teams to participate at the higher district and county levels. Currently all pupils in Years 10 and

11 are allocated an insufficient number of lessons in physical education compared to many secondary schools; this restricts the range of activities available. In particular it puts candidates for GCSE examinations at a disadvantage.

212. Arrangements for assessment are currently satisfactory, although the department recognises the need for further developments in making more detailed and more often reference to National Curriculum Level descriptions. Currently insufficient use is made of the information collected by assessment procedures. The progress of all pupils in all years is not tracked or measured against previous levels and against predictions produced from the statistical data available to schools.
213. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Teaching is much improved across the school. There is now opportunity to study for GCSE in PE and results in 2002 were good. There are still further improvements to be made; for example, to outdoor surfaces, although it is clear that it may be some time until these can be financed. The capacity and commitment to improve are already in place.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	5	0	2	80	52	0.80	0.79

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	2	50	46	100	96	6.00	6.57
Biology	13	31	34	54	88	3.69	5.25
Chemistry	14	29	43	100	90	5.29	5.90
Communication Studies	6	0	31	33	93	0.67	5.53
Computer Studies	4	0	23	100	86	4.50	4.62
Economics	6	33	36	67	89	3.67	5.52
English Language	5	0	30	100	91	4.80	5.27
English Literature	14	29	37	86	95	4.71	5.91
French	1	0	38	100	89	6.00	5.59
General Studies	52	13	30	58	85	2.88	4.91
Geography	8	38	38	100	92	6.25	5.74
History	6	33	35	83	88	4.7	5.45
Music	3	0	35	33	93	2.00	5.74
Other Sciences	10	10	30	100	90	4.40	5.16
Other Social Studies	1	100	34	100	87	8.00	5.30
Physics	6	33	40	83	88	4.33	5.67
Religious Studies	7	0	38	100	92	4.57	5.84
Sociology	12	33	35	75	86	4.83	5.32
Spanish	2	0	39	100	89	4.00	5.70

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

In mathematics the focus incorporated both the AS and A-levels courses. In science the focus was on biology, but chemistry and physics were also sampled where the teaching was good or very good in five out of seven lessons seen. In all three subjects the teachers in charge have worked hard to develop good schemes of work.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The teachers' knowledge and understanding are good.
- The standard of work is good.
- The attitudes of the students are positive.
- The courses are appropriate.

Areas for improvement

- The retention rate of students in both year groups.
- The number of lessons allocated to the subject in Year 12.
- Matching the needs of Year 12 GCSE students.

214. The inspection covered AS and A-levels courses offered by the school – the students take three modules in each year covering pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In addition the department runs a course for GCSE, in which students may enter the examination in either the autumn or summer terms.

215. The department does well at AS and A levels for those students who complete the course. In 2002 there was a 100 per cent success at both levels, but the numbers entered are too small to make any national comparisons. However, in the period 1998 to Year 2000 the A-level results were broadly in line with the national average. For the same period the AS-level results showed a 94 per cent success rate, but the entries are too small to make a national comparison. There were no A2-level entries in 2001.

216. The retention rate of students is unsatisfactory. The present Year 13 group has diminished to one third of the size of its original take-up, and the Year 12 group has already lost one third of its students in the first term. The number of timetabled lessons being offered in Year 13 is good. However, the four lessons on the timetable for Year 12 are barely adequate for the course to be covered at a reasonable pace for these students. It is compounded by the fact that those students who choose the mechanics option receive the basic four periods whilst those who choose the statistics option receive one fifth lesson after school. These factors could well be a contributory factor in the retention of students in the subject.

217. Teaching is good. The mathematical topics are clearly and correctly explained demonstrating that the lessons are well prepared. Good examples are chosen with the appropriate level of difficulty to illustrate the work. The pace of lessons challenge the students who respond by keeping on task throughout the lesson. The teachers show a good knowledge of the students' abilities, which is demonstrated clearly through the amount of input and help offered to individuals. The students are made to think hard

about the topic and, as a result, they develop a good understanding of the subject matter.

218. The standard of work seen in lessons and in the students' folders is good. The quality of the oral work in Year 13 is above average. The students have a good understanding of previous work in the subject and build on this in their lessons e.g. in partial fractions realising that this is the reverse process to adding two or more algebraic fractions and in moving from finding gradients of points on curves by drawing tangents to differentiation. The progress of the students in both AS and A levels is good because the teacher demonstrates a clear understanding of the previous knowledge of these students when applying it to a new setting.
219. No GCSE lessons were observed. However, from discussions with the department this course needs some reappraisal. A significant number of the students on this course are not able to attend all timetabled lessons. Not surprisingly, the majority of the students achieve below average grades with only a minority of the students achieving at least a grade C.

BIOLOGY

The overall quality of provision for biology is **satisfactory** and has **some strengths**.

Strengths

- The teachers have very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject.
- The quality of teaching.
- Students have a sound grasp of concepts. They are able to apply them well in classwork and when answering extended questions.

Areas for improvement

- Examination performance at AS and A2 levels.
- Retention of students from the AS course to the A-level course.
- The opportunities for all subject specialists to teach the sixth form.

220. Standards at A and AS levels are below national averages. Year 2002 provisional figures indicate a very small improvement. Students' levels of attainment in lessons were good. Students are able to handle equipment with confidence and accuracy. They are able to explain the differences between independent and dependant variables and apply them to a practical situation. Attainment in other sixth form lessons sampled for physics and chemistry was good.
221. The quality of teaching in biology was good. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about their subject. They plan lessons well with clear learning objectives set out. All lessons are challenging with high expectations of students' work and attitudes. Teaching takes place at a brisk pace.
222. Students respond well to the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, they confidently carry out an investigation involving separation of amino acids using paper chromatography. They understand the need for 'clean' working, and they are able to predict with some confidence the expected outcomes.
223. The head of department provides effective leadership. He has united the department who now work as a team and feel valued. The delegating of responsibilities to others in the department has been effective in the production of good schemes of work for both A and AS-levels courses. The use of whole-school ICT resources to enhance science

teaching at this level is developing well. More needs to be done to ensure that students have effective opportunities for using appropriate software and related equipment; for example, in data logging.

224. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students are in place and relate closely to exam board requirements. Students' prior GCSE performance is not used to inform departmental, teacher and student targets.
225. Accommodation and resources are adequate. However, the department has not had any increase in capitation for some years. As equipment begins to wear out they will struggle to replace it.
226. The department has made some improvements in provision since the last inspection. Standards have, however, remained fairly static. The quality of teaching has improved with students having good opportunities to undertake quality investigative work. Attainment in lessons has also improved substantially since the last inspection. Marking is now consistent with pertinent questions raised, areas for development identified and praise given. Good use is made of marking schemes to support the students. Risk assessments are now carried out and laboratory practice is safe. Leadership issues have been addressed and the department now has a good reputation with the rest of the school.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects available.

BUSINESS

The focus subject was business studies.

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- A most positive approach by the students.
- Many students make good progress.
- The leadership and management are very good.

Areas for Improvement

- Procedures for assessing students' progress.
- Allocation of time in Year 12.

227. Business studies at A level is new to a department that has been successful in recent years in economics. The 2002 results at AS level were good with almost one half of the students attaining A or B grades. Results at A level were very similar. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is average and, therefore, achievement in both year groups is good.
228. Work in lessons and in folders of Year 13 students is a good standard overall. There is a considerable volume of content that is very well organised by most students. The standard of written work in most cases is good. Answers are accurate and well detailed. Coursework assignments are usually of a high standard and show clearly, that

most students know the subject and demonstrate well-developed understanding in applying that knowledge. In the classroom all are very confident in using specialist technical words and phrases; for example, 'niche markets' and 'pricing mechanisms' to answer questions. Many have good background knowledge of markets and contemporary products and producers; this strength enables them to argue strongly held views on present day business issues.

229. In Year 12 understandably, knowledge and understanding are not so well developed, but in folders and in the classroom there is clear evidence of good progress. For example, most students can judge with accuracy levels of 'price elasticity of demand' in determining marketing strategies for growth. These standards are well in line with those expected and at this stage of the course well ahead of time. This is a consequence of very good standards of teaching and learning.
230. Almost all students approach the subjects in committed fashion. They are invariably positive and eager to do well. Most can work equally well on tasks requiring independent study or group work. Their enthusiasm for the subject is clear. In the classroom, relationships amongst students are very strong, as are those between students and their teachers. Discussions are lively with contributions from all. Many students are sufficiently mature to be equally comfortable and confident in both asking and answering questions.
231. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. Subject knowledge is of a very high standard and this is well used to plan and prepare lessons; for example, by using well known names to illustrate the complex principles of business. These companies are also well known to the students; this ensures that the work is 'alive', meaningful and related to their experience. Worksheets are regularly and effectively used to provide detailed examples, again often well known, from publications in the business world. The teacher consistently uses subject-based technical language; this has resulted in the students' strengths in this feature of the course. Regular checks are made on progress; for example, the use of challenging questions at the beginning of a Year 13 lesson, ensuring that the learning from the previous lessons was well established before moving on. The pace of work in lessons is also most challenging, as it has to be, due to the allocation of less time than is normal to subjects at this level.
232. The work of the department is very well managed by a hard working, capable and committed leader. The change from economics to business studies has been managed very ably. The head of department has a keen awareness of developments needed to further broaden the appeal of the subject area, especially its vocational aspects. Currently business studies alone has a 14-19 curricular dimension. The arrangements for assessment at present provide accurate information on students' progress. They know how well they are doing and from thorough and informative marking what they need to do in order to improve. Insufficient use is made of statistical information to check on students' progress. The use of this information would also provide an accurate measure of the effectiveness of the department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus subject was ICT, which includes the examination subject of computing.

ICT

Overall the quality of provision in ICT is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching that ensures a constructive learning environment.
- Good resources including hardware, work booklets and material on school Intranet.

Areas for Improvement

- Development of a structure for evaluating more precisely lesson progress and performance.

233. The standards in previous years have been below national averages. Students in Year 12 are currently undertaking two different AS courses – ICT and computing. In Year 13 there is a small group of four completing the computing A level.
234. At this early stage in Year 12, the quality of the work in both courses is good and suggests that at the end of the year the results should be in line with the national average. The ICT group has undertaken work on the construction and manipulation of a database. They had no previous experience of the software package, but now show ease in handling it and an ability to explain its contents and operation. The computing group are creating a working calculator, using a high level programming language. They write procedures and test them, explaining what functions they perform and how to correct errors. The Year 13 students are working positively on another high level programming language. They write sequences of instructions and discuss with each other the management of errors, procedures and compilation. They show considerable progress since the start of term and should produce results that are in line with national averages or above.
235. The teaching is good, with positive tasks set for the students to undertake. There are full workbooks, with sharp guidance and extensive activities. The pace of lessons ensures that students keep to task and progress their learning. The individual support given is positive and encourages students to manage their own learning and develop strategies for progress. The work seen indicates that the students have progressed well since the start of the course.
236. Students have a positive attitude to the subject and attendance is good. They work independently, but co-operate with each other. They manage the pace of their own learning, but keep to task in lessons. They generally show enthusiasm for their work and are willing to question teachers and engage in probing discussions.
237. The management of the courses is good and positive and there is effective use of the full resources available. The presentation of the subject creates a sound environment for learning and the students take full advantage of this. From these well-organised courses, the students should produce good results. Previous poor results may partly be as a result of only offering computing as a sixth form subject.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects available.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

There are no focus subjects in this area.

The advanced vocational certificate of education course in health and social care was sampled; the teaching was good and students make good progress from modest GCSE grades to reach intermediate merit grades in one year.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and music. Lessons were sampled in drama and theatre studies, where teaching and learning were good in lessons seen.

ART

Overall provision for art is **good**.

Strengths

- Attitudes and response of students.
- Relationships between teacher and students.
- Commitment in the teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Staffing.

238. The art department offers the AQA examination board's painting and drawing syllabus at AS and A2 levels. Six students are currently working to this syllabus, three at each level. Course content allows a wide project choice within painting and drawing and provides continuous experience from the painting and drawing option.
239. Standards in AS work seen are below average and have been very much affected by poor attendance. Students show imagination in their work, but ideas, in some cases, outstrip basic skills in drawing and composition. Some work, in which ICT is used to good effect, alleviates these shortcomings, and standards could be further enhanced by more careful presentation and organisation of work in folders. All students at AS or A2 levels have gained a pass grade in recent years. Given current staffing problems, however, achievement during this transitional period is satisfactory.
240. Only two students took the A2-level examination in 2001 and gained a grade B and D. One student took AS level gaining an E grade. A2-level work seen is broadly in line with the average level. Students display a capacity for independent working and enquiry. Imagination, again, is a strength and is reinforced by developing strengths in drawing and composition.
241. Students show a keen interest in the work of contemporary artists, Hockney, for example, and artists of the modern movement, like Salvador Dali, who have had a major influence upon the development of ideas in art. In some cases, students display an excessive preoccupation with conceptual rather than visual ideas. Achievement from AS level is satisfactory with clear progress evident in basic art skills.

242. The groups at both AS and A2 levels are very small and are not independently timetabled. As a consequence, they are often taught alongside other groups, although there is provision for exclusively sixth form classes. Additionally, students are allowed free access to studios and often work unsupervised, when a studio is available.
243. The teaching at sixth form level is good from a base of sound subject expertise and experience. Good relationships prevail between teacher and student and the working atmosphere generated is purposeful. The transition from Year 11 is sensitively managed and students are expected to develop more independence and creative maturity. In recent years this change of emphasis has provided difficulties for students taking the AS-level course and results have reflected their directional uncertainty. The difficulty in establishing the new examination regime is heightened by problems in staffing placing a heavy burden on the sole full-time teacher who has other, additional, whole-school responsibilities as a head of year. The level of commitment in the teaching is, however, very good and these difficulties are addressed positively and cheerfully.
244. Students express satisfaction with the curriculum and the teaching provided by the department. They consider themselves privileged to be in the sixth form and enjoy their work. Their progress is well monitored and they are aware of their respective levels of attainment. The lack of a designated sixth form base for art is an inconvenience, offset only partly by the existence of the nearby school sixth form base.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The management of the department.
- Students' involvement in the musical life of the whole school.
- Standards achieved in composing.
- Student-teacher relationships.

Area for improvement

- The provision of music technology and ICT to enable the department to offer the full range of Post 16 examination courses.
- Opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills.

245. Despite results that were below the national average in A Level in 2001, the general pattern of results in Post 16 music examinations since the last inspection has been well in line with the national average. Provisional results for AS-level music in 2002 continue this trend with the three candidates gaining pass grades of, respectively, B, C and D.
246. Standards observed during the inspection were satisfactory in musical analysis and aural perception and good in composing. Students are able to draw on their knowledge of musical forms and composing techniques to analyse music and, with a good deal of support from the teacher, can write down music they listen to repeatedly. Recordings of students' compositions demonstrate their ability to use computer-based music software to create compositions, which demonstrate a good awareness of structure and instrumental timbre and the ability effectively to combine a number of musical strands.

247. Overall teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory and good in the area of composing. The teacher has sufficient musical knowledge to teach the musical analysis parts of the syllabus. However, in lessons there is a tendency to rely too much on reading from published notes. This means that the teacher is not always adequately prepared to respond to questions raised by students that are not covered by these notes. Students are given too few opportunities to express their own views about music during musical analysis lessons or to develop independent learning skills that could be used to support their study away from lessons. The teacher creates a supportive atmosphere for the teaching of aural perception by recognizing the difficulty students have with this part of the syllabus and by drawing on the knowledge and skills that they have developed in their composing and performing. However, aural perception activities sometimes go on for too long, resulting in students losing concentration. Teaching and learning in composing are good. The teacher uses the very limited ICT facilities in the department to support composition and students make good progress in this area of the syllabus. Relationships between teachers and students are good.
248. The management of the department is good. The music co-ordinator has successfully introduced new A and AS-levels courses. Students are fully involved in the musical life of the school, performing in the range of instrumental groups and stage productions, supported by the department. Students speak warmly of the improvements made to the department by the music co-ordinator since his arrival, and particularly of the support given to them both in lessons and during other times of the school day. The music co-ordinator has used to maximum effect the very limited ICT resources available to enable students to create compositions of a high standard.
249. The resources for teaching Post 16 music are satisfactory in terms of accommodation, texts and recordings. However, the inadequate provision of music-specific ICT means that the department cannot offer certain Post 16 music courses such as music technology. This results in students going elsewhere for music courses and those students remaining being inadequately supported in areas of the syllabus such as composing. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

HUMANITIES

The focus subject was history. Lessons in geography, sociology and psychology were sampled and teaching and learning were good in all areas.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The standard of attainment at GCE A level since 1998.
- The response of students.
- Students' views of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management of the subject.
- Resources; the availability of more A level texts.
- Aspects of teaching.

250. In A level in 2001, four-fifths of students attained grades A – E. There were no A grades, but one third of the students gained a B grade. There was only one candidate for A level in 2002. In the AS-level results of 2002, four-fifths of entrants gained grades within the range of A – E and one fifth were awarded A – B grades.

251. Standards of work in Year 13 are close to those expected nationally and reflect the A-level results of 2001 and those of each year since 1998 with the exception of Year 2000. The continuity of work from GCSE level as regards areas of study is appreciated by students, as it gives them confidence and allows them to make good progress. There is a wide span of ability and the overall level of attainment is average. In their study of British history in the 19th century, students have acquired a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the political aspects of the 'Irish Question' and can give the names of key personalities, associated with the 'Home Rule' movement. They have not yet gained, however, a full understanding of the relationship between political, economic, social and cultural factors. In their study of American history, students appreciate why some of the black people of America began to demand equal rights during the first 30 years of the 20th century. The standard of their essays ranges from satisfactory to very good; the higher attainers are able to write fluently at a very good standard of English.
252. Students in both Years 12 and 13 show very mature attitudes to their studies. They are keen to learn and wish to achieve the highest A-level grades of which they are capable. Year 12 students have adapted readily to the demands of A-level work. Retention rates since 1998 have been very good with very few students failing to complete the full course of study.
253. Teaching is satisfactory with certain aspects that are good. Both teachers of the subject have a secure knowledge base for A-level teaching. Their expositions of topics are clear and accurate and they use resources productively. In a Year 13 lesson, for instance, the display of a large map allowed students readily to appreciate the strategic and economic importance of the Panama Canal to the United States of America at the end of the 19th century. They enjoy very positive, easy and mature working relationships with students. There is a need, however, for students to be more actively involved in their learning with regard both to the discussion and analysis of issues and the setting of tasks, and for teachers to take a less dominant role in these matters.
254. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory at present. The head of department takes no responsibility for the sixth form and there is no forward planning. Learning resources are inadequate. Textbooks are shared between students in Years 12 and 13. This means that students do not compile their own written records of the areas of study to the extent that is usually found. It also means that the skills that are associated with extensive note making, such as summarising, synthesising and cross-referencing, are not sufficiently developed.
255. Discussions with students in both years indicate a general enjoyment of the subject. Students are satisfied with the standard of teaching that they receive and with the assessment and marking of their work, although students in Year 13 express the view that they would like to be set more essays in order to measure more frequently their developing A-level skills.
256. The previous inspection report made no mention of standards in the sixth form or of leadership. With regard to teaching, the standard has remained satisfactory.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The main focus in this inspection was on English literature at AS and A levels. The department offers a further choice in the form of English language at AS and A levels. This course was lightly sampled. Although there has been no consistent trend in the results since 1998, they have usually been lower than those in English literature. However, there was a significant improvement in 2002 from the situation in 2001. Numbers in the class are usually low, but there is satisfactory recruitment to the current Years 12 and 13 classes. In the one A2-level language lesson observed students were analysing differences in attitude to language change; standards were below expectations at this stage in the course, but other aspects of the lesson were satisfactory.

The focus on modern foreign languages inspected both French and Spanish.

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Standards at A level have improved since the last inspection
- English literature is a popular subject; students appreciate the stimulating teaching they receive.

Areas for improvement

- Students need more opportunity to participate in high level discussion and debate.

257. Results at A level have been variable over time, but there has been an overall improvement since 1998. In 2001, results in A2-level English literature were below the national average, although students did well in comparison with their results in other subjects. The results in 2002 were a considerable improvement on the previous years and distinctly better than those in A2-level English language. Numbers taking the subject have fallen since 1998, with female students usually outnumbering male students. Results at AS level showed a clear improvement on those in 2001, with about one third gaining A and B grades. Recruitment on to the AS course is healthy; in 2002 most students carried on with the study of literature to A level.

258. Standards seen in Year 13 during the inspection are above those usually found nationally. Most students have gained good grades at AS level and made good progress from GCSE, benefiting from the expert teaching they have received.

259. Students tackle difficult assignments confidently. They write well-structured essays in a mature style, showing themselves capable of cogent analysis and perceptive insights into writers' aims. The higher attainers are well organised and have good note-taking skills. Their responses in lessons show a well-developed ability to grasp subtleties of meaning in the texts studied and willingness to question and challenge points raised during the lesson, although there are no attempts at sustaining a debate. The number of male students is small, but nevertheless, they make a valuable contribution to class discussion.

260. Students in Year 12 are making good progress. They have responded well to the increased demands of study at this level, although the earlier work of some weaker students fails to use textual references properly. Most are developing an appropriate formal written style, and are becoming more assured in their grasp of literary concepts and their use of literary terminology. They show good analytical understanding of the texts and are becoming more confident in formulating and justifying their own point of

view. Some are helped to do this through the redrafting process, and most show increasing depth of thought in response to their teachers' comments, many of which contain helpful pointers on how to improve.

261. Teaching and learning are good overall, frequently very good. Students respond positively to their teachers' enthusiasm for literature, their lively expositions and thorough knowledge of their subject. Skilled questioning in lessons helps to consolidate their understanding and ensures that they explore concepts in sufficient depth. Teachers use a range of methods to help students to learn. In one Year 12 lesson observed, students discussed animatedly in groups and presented their findings about different aspects of the play they were studying to the whole class, learning in greater depth from both activities.
262. Students have many opportunities to develop research skills and use a range of resources for independent study; the school library, local libraries, Manchester library and appropriate websites on the Internet. They appreciate the extent to which studying literature has contributed to their own personal development. Many value the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of the classics of literature, while others feel that they have gained insights from the study of character and motive. All recognise that they have benefited from the very good teaching they have received and value the individual help given by their teachers.
263. Since the last inspection, results have improved and the new AS and A2 levels courses have been successfully implemented. Teaching styles no longer include the dictating of notes, and students are more independent and less reliant on their teachers. As in the main school, leadership and management are strong.

AS-LEVEL THEATRE STUDIES

This course was lightly sampled. One lesson of AS-level theatre studies was seen, which was very good overall. Standards are above average. Students' very good progress is partly due to their excellent attitudes and partly to the high quality teaching they receive. Good relationships in the class allow students to develop skills of critical evaluation, while the teacher's extensive background knowledge and high expectations contribute to the students' very good learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching in both languages.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of students' work.
- The range of courses on offer.
- Post 16 resources.

264. In recent years the GCE A2-level examination results have been unsatisfactory with no candidates gaining grades A or B. All students have access to AS and A2-levels courses. The number of students studying modern foreign languages in the sixth form has been historically small. Two students are currently studying AS Spanish in Year 12. There are seven students studying languages in Year 13; three in the Spanish group and four in French.

265. The standard of work of current Year 13 students is satisfactory overall. It is slightly higher in French, where students' work indicates that they are working towards high grades. Standards in Spanish are more variable, but all students are now making satisfactory progress. Students listen well and show good understanding of the teacher's language. Most can answer accurately at length with very little prompting. Although accents are readily comprehensible, there is room for improvement to reduce native language interference. They can use new language appropriately and their recall is good. In a Year 13 French class they responded enthusiastically to the theme of 'rich and poor', demonstrating mature attitudes to social disadvantage.
266. In the Year 13 Spanish group, students have responded well to their new teacher. They are now making good progress in speaking, making only occasional errors. The best student can express ideas clearly, using some complex language. They use topic related vocabulary and cope well with unexpected questions from the teacher. Written work is satisfactory overall. The higher attaining student writes accurately and at length, using a wide range of structures and some complex language. Acquisition of topic related language is good. There was insufficient evidence to judge the standard of work of students in Year 12 Spanish at this early stage of the course, but they are well taught.
267. Although students use the Internet to find information, they have insufficient opportunities to develop as independent learners due to a lack of resources, particularly a good range of reading materials. They have no textbooks. Nevertheless, their attitudes to language learning are good and some students intend continuing with a language at university. They show interest in class, work hard and respect one another's viewpoints in discussions.
268. Teaching is good in both subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge and present authentic models of French and Spanish. Lessons are conducted in the target language and expectations are high. Activities are well planned and presented with enthusiasm and the teachers' methods engage and motivate all students. They ensure that all students are brought into discussions and make a contribution. Challenging homework is set that consolidates and extends work covered in class. An important shortcoming is the unsatisfactory quality of on going assessment of students' written work. There is insufficient evidence of teachers' marking being focused on identifying misconceptions or repeated errors and setting specific targets for improvement.
269. The management of the subject is satisfactory and the schemes of work reflect the subjects' requirements. The range of courses currently on offer is very narrow and this needs to be addressed if greater numbers are to be attracted to modern languages.