

INSPECTION REPORT

Thomas Adams School

Wem, Shropshire

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123589

Headteacher: Mr A. P. Stephens

Reporting inspector: Terence Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 21st - 25th October 2002

Inspection number: 249812

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lowe Hill Wem Shrewsbury
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mary White
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15465	Terence Parish	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9974	D Singh	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
31100	G Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20629	J Bryson	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
31441	M King	Team inspector	Science Biology Chemistry	
23080	R Isaac	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Computer studies	
30518	M Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design	
30899	K Boden	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?

18967	B Loydell	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
23324	S Greenland	Team inspector	History Sociology	
15396	R Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French Educational inclusion	How well is the school led and managed?
8360	F Peacock	Team inspector	Music	
8329	G Salter-Smith	Team inspector	Physical education	Sixth form co-ordinator
30128	S Stanley	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education
13122	S Matthews	Team inspector	Business education Vocational education History post-16	
19528	R Portsmouth	Team inspector	Supported mathematics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas Adams is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school with 1225 on roll, including 259 in the sixth form. Almost all pupils and students are white. Unusually, the school has 56 boarding places, about half of which are taken by sixth form students of twelve different nationalities. These account for most of the pupils and students in the school who do not have English as their first language at home. A full range of ability from significantly below average to well above average is evident in Years 7-11. The current Year 7 has a higher proportion of more able pupils than other years; attainment is above average overall. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average whilst the proportion with statements of educational need is higher than average; this is because the school has a centre for up to ten pupils who require help with behaviour management. The school has just become an arts college specialising in the media arts.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school in the process of becoming even better under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, which embraces all aspects of the school's work. GCSE results are well above average due to very good teaching and the very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Management across the school is very good. Pupils, students and parents like the school very much; attendance in school is well above average and parents' participation in activities is very high. The 56 boarders in the school are very well supported both academically and pastorally. The value for money provided by the school is good.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well and attain well above average GCSE results overall.
- Teaching is very good and pupils make very good progress in their work.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good.
- Very good pastoral and academic care is provided; pupils are well looked after and motivated.
- Leadership is excellent and management across the school very good.
- Many subjects have very good or better provision.

What could be improved

- The provision for design and technology needs further improvement.
- Non-examined religious education in Years 10-13 does not fully meet statutory requirements.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1996. Since then good standards have been maintained and there is evidence of recent further improvement. Teaching is much better. The curriculum has been improved to better provide for the less academic and for those likely to benefit from vocational opportunities. Provision for ICT is much better. Health and safety is now a key element in the school's very good provision of care. A large budget deficit has hindered some improvements the school would like to make but this deficit has been rapidly tackled in the last two years with the advent of the new headteacher and will soon be resolved. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The proportion of pupils who attain higher grades at GCSE is particularly high. Some pupils follow alternative examinations, such as certificates of achievement, in which they broadly do well. The statutory targets for GCSE performance overall were exceeded in 2001 and 2002. Males do less well than females across the school, but the school is doing something about it by addressing teaching methods, and the difference narrowed significantly in the 2002 GCSE results. Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 11. End of Year 9 test results in 2001 were above average, and well above average in mathematics and science. English results were average and did not match the much higher teacher assessments. End of Year 9 test results in 2002 were well above average for all three subjects. Standards of Year 9 work in science match test results with standards in mathematics and English currently above average; it is early in the year. Both Year 9 test results and GCSE results have generally been improving in line with national improvements over the last five years. Overall, Year 9 test results have improved more rapidly over the last two years. This is due to very good teaching. GCSE performance dipped a little overall in 2002, due to a weaker year group, but pupils did at least as well as expected. Some subjects, such as art and design, improved dramatically; others like physical education were weaker, in this case because of temporary staff absence. Design and technology results in the short design and technology examinations in 2002 were poor and this is being addressed.

In Year 9, standards are well above average in science, above average in most subjects, average in design and technology and in physical education. In Year 11, standards are well above average in English, science, geography and music, and above average in most other subjects. Standards are average in non-examined physical education and in business education. Pupils are achieving very well in science and in modern languages by the end of Year 9 and in English, art and design, modern languages, music and GCSE religious education by the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve well in most other subjects, satisfactorily in design and technology and in non-examined physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like school and most want to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Most pupils are exemplary in classrooms and get on with their work well. Corridor rules are mostly well followed. There is some dallying between sites.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. A really fine bunch of youngsters, maturing into good-natured and hard-working young adults. All people in the school get on very well together, including the boarders who represent about a dozen countries.
Attendance	Well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good in English and in science, and good in mathematics. A high proportion of excellent lessons were seen in a range of subjects. Teaching has many strengths and no consistent unsatisfactory features in any subject. Any *relative* weaknesses that occur in lessons do so in Years 7-9 more than in Years 10-11.

Teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning, and the high expectations they have of pupils, lead to challenging work and pupils working hard to do it well. This effort is more evident in English, history, ICT, modern languages and music than in other subjects. Very good assessment practice by teachers means pupils acquire new knowledge and skills well, as both teachers and pupils are aware of what has been effectively taught or learnt. Pupils learn at a very good pace in most lessons and this rate of work is supported by effective homework set by teachers; time is not often wasted in lessons doing, for instance, work that could easily be done through private study or research. The management of pupils is most often very good, though very good relationships between teachers and pupils mean that management does not have to be too heavy handed. Both relationships and management enable learning to go on in a purposeful way, with few interruptions. In design and technology the pace of learning is slower, though satisfactory, as there is too often insufficient challenge. Pupils are not always clear about how well they are doing so cannot easily take the initiative to do better.

The skills of literacy are very well taught across many subjects and this contributes to the performance of pupils in examinations; they communicate very well. The skills of numeracy are well taught in mathematics and well supported elsewhere. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. More able pupils are well catered for in the class setting system and through the 'Shropshire able pupils in English project'.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Drama is well provided for. A very well organised and monitored work-related curriculum is available in Years 10 and 11. Design and technology provision is not broad enough and short GCSE courses are not successful. Religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in the sixth form does not fully meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There are many very good classroom assistants who ensure pupils in their care progress as well as their peers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)	Excellent for pupils and students in the boarding house. They receive additional support and also help each other. Good for the very few other EAL pupils – appropriate support is requested by the school.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Spiritual development is good overall and much better in English and music. Moral and social development is very good and at the centre of the school's aims. Cultural development is good overall; some opportunities for developing multicultural awareness are missed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Pastoral care is exemplary. Pupils are safe and feel secure. Academic care is very good; assessment is very well used to help raise standards. The school works very well with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is an excellent leader who is well supported by very good managers. Leadership in English is exceptional and management in drama very good, which bodes well for future media college developments. Management expertise in science is also well used by the county to develop Year 7-9 work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very well informed about the school, monitor performance rigorously and take appropriate actions to enable improvements to be made. Performance management is well understood. Best value principles have been generally very well applied to curriculum and management decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is excellent. Data, classroom observations, questionnaires, the school council, and a hands-on approach to management all ensure no-one is in any doubt of how well all aspects of the school are performing or what needs to be done to make improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Money is very efficiently used and a large financial deficit will have been removed quickly whilst the school has continued to improve. Staff are generally well deployed though the use of special educational needs teachers for teaching lower-ability classes needs reviewing.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are good overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Their children make good progress • Teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard and do their best • Ease of communication and the availability of the headteacher and managers • Management is good • The school works closely with parents • There is an interesting range of activities. 	

The inspection team fully agrees with parents' positive views and also agrees with parents at the meeting who find the school very approachable and supportive.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of Thomas Adams school is known as Adams College and is in a separate centre on the site of this large popular comprehensive school in the small town of Wem, Shropshire. Boarding facilities house students from different parts of this country and twelve other countries. A high proportion are learning English as an additional language. With 259 students on roll it is larger than most sixth forms. Around sixty-five per cent of students in Year 11 continue their education into the sixth form and it is increasing in popularity and numbers. The socio-economic circumstances of students are better than average and overall attainment on entry is above average compared with most sixth forms. The college advises students to have gained at least five A*-C grades at GCSE but students with lower grades are accepted if they are well suited to the courses they choose. A small number of students have special educational needs. A wide range of AS and A-level courses are offered plus a small number of vocational courses. These build on courses offered in the main school but there are no plans for extensive vocational provision because the school has effective partnerships with local providers of vocational opportunities. Students may also re-sit some GCSE examinations.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a very good quality of education with some excellent features. Compared with sixth forms in all maintained schools, results in 2001 were above average and have improved since the last inspection. Compared with all providers of post-16 education, results in 2001 were well above average. In 2002 the provisional results improved significantly and students gained better results than those expected of them based on their prior attainment. Females do better than males, reflecting their earlier attainment in GCSE examinations. Standards of work seen are above average overall and are higher in a number of subjects. Very few students drop out of courses either in the early stages or over the first year. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students have mature attitudes towards their studies and relationships between students and staff are excellent. The sixth form is very well led and managed. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and day-to-day management is very good. High quality support for students' personal and academic progress is a significant factor in students' success. High expectations of students' endeavour are established in a friendly and supportive manner. The sixth form meets individual needs very well. It is very cost effective.

Strengths

- Provision in biology, English and sociology is excellent and results are outstanding.
- Very good teaching makes high demands of students.
- Students achieve above average results that are improving year on year.
- Students are mature, responsible and hard working and relationships between students and staff are excellent.
- Students benefit from a great deal of individual support and guidance from staff.
- Leadership of the sixth form and its day-to-day management are very good.

What could be improved

- Males have not yet caught up with females in examination results.
- Elements of teaching can be improved in some subjects to make them as good as the very best. There are not always enough opportunities for active participation in learning in lessons, independent learning and the use of ICT.

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.

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Students achieve well, supported by good and very knowledgeable teachers. Relationships and individual support are very strong.
Biology	Excellent. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and excellent advice and guidance.
Chemistry	Good. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching, very good relationships and individual support help students, especially higher attainers, to achieve well.
Business studies	Good. Standards are above average in Year 12 and average in Year 13 due to staff absence. Teaching is good but ICT is not used enough.
Computing	Very good. Standards are above average. Teaching and leadership are very good and enabling the subject to now improve rapidly.
Physical education	Good. Results have improved. Students achieve well due to good teaching that is varied and well paced, and very good advice and guidance for individuals is given.
Art and design	Good. Results are improving significantly. Teaching and learning are very good. Theory and practical work are well linked. Relationships are very good.
Music	Very good. Very good teaching and learning and rich musical experiences encourage students to be fully committed and achieve very well.
History	Good. Standards are above average and students have positive attitudes. Teaching is very good and students achieve well.
Religious studies	Good. Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching. Standards are rising and a higher proportion of pupils are working towards higher grades.
Sociology	Excellent. Students' achievement is excellent and they are becoming independent learners as a result of excellent teaching and management.
English	Excellent. Students achieve very well as a result of excellent teaching, planning, regular assessment and guidance.
French	Very good. Teaching is very good. Students achieve very well. Small groups and close relationships support high quality speaking and writing.

Lessons were seen in a variety of other subjects. In AS-level psychology teaching is good and students have a good level of understanding. Students achieve well in health and social care because the teaching is good and good use is made of placements and visits in the locality. In the recently-introduced Intermediate GNVQ ICT, teaching, learning and achievement are good. In geography standards are high; students work hard and ask perceptive questions, and research skills are well developed. In drama excellent teaching leads to high standards. In media studies satisfactory teaching is knowledgeable but lacks variety and pace. Extension studies are satisfactorily taught. The teaching in physics is excellent; students work very well together, though standards in the lesson seen were average.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very well. Students' academic progress is closely monitored and form tutors, subject teachers and senior staff give very good support. Students appreciate the high level of support. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers give them a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve or maintain their high standards. Students receive excellent support in preparation for university applications and there is good guidance on careers and work opportunities.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. There is a clear emphasis on improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The strengths and areas for improvement are well known and informed by a close analysis of results and monitoring of teaching and learning. Very good systems of performance management support the school's effective self-evaluation and commitment to improvement. The day-to-day management is very good and ensures that the progress of all students is carefully checked and that they receive very good support for academic and personal development. The governing body has a very good understanding of the work of the sixth form. The principles of best value are very well met and it is cost effective. However, more money is provided for the sixth form than is spent on it and there are some large teaching groups and some shortages, for example in books in the library. The small number of pupils with special educational needs and EAL are very well provided for.

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"> • A wide range of courses suits their needs. • The teaching is good and they are challenged to work hard. • Independent work is encouraged. • Teachers are accessible and give them a great deal of extra help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of the extension studies course. • The range of activities outside lessons.

About half the sixth form expressed their views through a questionnaire and inspectors talked to many students. Students spoken with are very positive about the advice they receive on careers, the information they have on their progress and the way they are treated as adults. Inspectors agree with their views, although there are some subjects that can do more to encourage independent learning. Inspectors also agree that parts of the extension studies course can be improved but they consider that there is a good range of extra activities available and students have plenty of opportunity to organise their own events.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of boys and girls is well monitored. Females do better than males across the school but the gap is narrowing due to concerted action by management and teachers. The significant relative improvement in boys' results in their GCSE examinations in 2002 is evidence of this. Overall, results in 2002 were a little lower than in 2001 but this is not significant. Results do go up and down a little as year groups of pupils vary. The school well knows what pupils should be doing and challenging targets are set for their performance. Such targets are now consistently being met. The school has recovered from a real dip in performance in 1998, in consequence of which it received a school achievement award in 2001. Standards of work seen during the inspection are standards at the end of the first half term in Year 9 and Year 11. Test and examination results reflect attainment at the end of the academic year. Consequently there is time for pupils to make very real progress, which they will do through very good teaching, and their high level of literacy means they cope very well with tests and examinations.
2. Some pupils are not entered for a full range of GCSEs, but are able to take the certificate of achievement in some subjects, for example history, and some pursue other activities which they get credit for. A number are following a work-related course which will receive accreditation in 2003. Standards in this course are appropriate and its success can currently be measured in the very good attendance and attitudes of pupils taking it; pupils really enjoy their work. Pupils working on projects for the Certificate of Achievement in geography show a good knowledge of coastal erosion. In work on facilities for the disabled in their local town they are able to use a range of transferable literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. They take a First Aid course and become aware of health and safety issues in the work place. They achieve well in these activities.
3. Standards of speaking and listening are very good. Pupils listen attentively and answer questions with well-constructed answers. More able pupils can develop answers to offer more evidence and support a point of view. All pupils can investigate ideas together in groups and report back to the whole class. They learn technical terms relevant to their studies and most understand the need for standard English in formal work. Pupils read aloud as part of their regular learning routine and a majority read aloud with confidence. More able pupils read with fluency and expression; reading of texts studied in lessons indicates good understanding of them. The library is well used by pupils, both for independent research and for reading for pleasure. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 write fluently and with imagination in a wide range of styles. Many use word processing skills well to improve the organisation and quality of their writing. Their control of grammar is generally secure and effective marking leads to improvements in expression and spelling. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 write accurately and this has contributed to rising standards at GCSE. Writing of a high quality is seen in the coursework of many Year 10 and 11 pupils.
4. Numerical skills are above average. Pupils demonstrate good use of these skills in their work across the curriculum. In design and technology, measuring and weighing skills are effective and pupils show a good capacity to see shapes in three dimensions and recognise proportions. In geography and in science, pupils show good skills drawing block, line, and best-fit graphs, and can manipulate formulae and balance equations.
5. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, taught in mainstream classes, is most often as good as that of all other pupils, and sometimes better due to very focused teaching and good or better support by the special support assistants. Many pupils with special educational needs have achieved creditable end of Year 9 test results in English, mathematics and science. Most achieve around Level 4, well below average, but significant numbers achieve much better than this, though there are fewer higher levels in English, where literacy remains a problem. GCSE results of pupils with special educational needs show they have achieved well from the end of Year 9. Very few leave school with no GCSE grades. Those with specific learning difficulties (often

dyslexia or dyspraxia) often achieve results above those expected; for example, in 2002, a pupil achieved two A, two B and four C grades at GCSE, and a student attained three A grades at A-level.

6. In Years 7 to 11 very few pupils require support for English as an additional language (EAL). When support is necessary, it is good. Pupils with EAL achieve as well as their peers. In the sixth form there are many overseas students who speak English fluently. These students are doing very well. They are eager to ask questions and take part in lessons; they are well informed about what they need to do to get even better.

Sixth form

7. Results in A-level examinations have improved since the previous inspection and are rising year on year. In 2001, the most recent year in which results can be compared to national averages, results were above average compared with all maintained schools and well above average compared with all post-16 institutions. Females do better than males and this reflects the gap between their performances at GCSE. Provisional results for 2002 have improved significantly overall, but the gap between the performance of males and females continues. The few students with special educational needs make very good progress due to the level of support the school maintains into the sixth form and the excellent peer support provided by students. Students whose first language is not English (EAL students) achieve as well as their peers. They are not at early stages of learning English and English students probably acquire as many modern foreign language skills from EAL students as they do from English students.
8. In most subjects, students attain above average or better results. In 2001, sociology results were best and were within the top five per cent of results across the country. Results in biology, media studies, computer studies, English language, English literature, geography, mathematics, and psychology were all well above average. In business studies, general studies, French and history, results were above average. Results in chemistry and physics were average, in religious education and physical education they were below average and in art and design they were well below average. In most of the best performing subjects the proportion of students gaining grades A and B is high and reflects the good achievement made by students of high prior attainment.
9. In 2002, results improved in most subjects, or were similar to the previous year. They improved significantly in art and design and religious education and to some extent in physical education. In English literature, results were not as high as the previous year but this has no significance. Based on students' attainment at GCSE, these results represent good achievement. Most students reach or exceed the grades expected of them and a greater proportion of males exceed their target grades than do the females.
10. Results in GNVQ intermediate courses are good. In both health and social care and business, all students taking the courses passed in both 2001 and 2002. Students re-taking GCSE examinations gain better results than those in other sixth forms.
11. Standards of work seen are above average overall with a number of subjects reaching much higher standards. Females continue to reach higher standards than males but in relation to their attainment at GCSE both males and females are achieving well and making good progress in response to very good teaching, individual support and guidance, and the positive attitudes the students bring to their study.
12. The following table shows the standards of work in each subject and how well students are achieving; effectively, how well they are doing. Excellent achievement reflects flair in teaching not easily emulated by all teachers. English teachers have this flair, but students' achievement is judged very good, rather than excellent, as students start the sixth form with a better understanding of English than they do of post-16 biology and sociology.

SUBJECT	STANDARDS OF WORK SEEN	HOW WELL STUDENTS DO (ACHIEVEMENT)
English	Well above average	Very well
Mathematics	Above average	Well
Biology	Well above average	Exceptionally well
Chemistry	Above average	Well
Computer Studies	Above average	Well
French	Above average	Well
Sociology	Well above average	Excellent
Art	Above average	Well
Music	Well above average	Very well
Business	Average	Well
History	Above average	Well
Physical education	Average	Well
Religious studies	Average	Well

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes to learning and the school in general are very constructive and a very positive feature of the school community. Very good moral and social education fosters very good behaviour and the very effective relationships they have with each other and most teachers. Pupils work in a mature, responsible and purposeful manner.
14. Most pupils are confident, disciplined, and motivated learners. In most lessons and subjects pupils concentrate well and persevere to complete work. They co-operate well and work effectively in small groups, exchanging information and ideas. In a very few lessons, typically not as well organised as most, a small number of pupils are not so keen to learn; they take longer to settle down and interrupt the lesson. Pupils speak proudly of their school and appreciate the efforts of their teachers. They have a positive attitude to teachers and visitors, which is demonstrated in their helpful and courteous behaviour. Many pupils participate in extra-curricular activities during the lunch hour and after school. These opportunities encourage pupils to think positively about themselves and others, and build up their confidence and self-esteem.
15. Standards of behaviour are very good in most lessons and good around the school. Despite the congestion in some narrow, long corridors and stairways, the school functions as an orderly community. Many pupils demonstrate a pride in their school and its traditions. Pupils are friendly, polite, courteous, and most are able to talk very confidently and informatively to adults, both inside and outside of the classroom. Many younger pupils welcome the opportunity to please teachers and visitors. There were no visible signs of bullying or other types of anti-social behaviour. However, a very small minority of pupils reported concerns about bullying which the school has recorded. Pupils are adamant that bullying is dealt with very effectively. During the last school year there were 89 incidents of fixed period exclusions involving 39 boys and 14 girls. The number of fixed period exclusions is above the number found in secondary schools of similar size. There were no permanent exclusions. However, the number of exclusions has significantly fallen when compared to patterns in previous years, and the school promotes a sensitive and caring policy towards exclusion whilst successfully sustaining its high levels of discipline.
16. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very constructive and purposeful. Pupils relate positively to their peers, teachers and other adults. They treat others with respect and are willing to help each other in a variety of ways. Older pupils serve the school as prefects and support the wider community through work placements and charitable work. Many older pupils have opportunities to work closely with younger pupils with learning needs, for example through paired

reading. Pupils throughout the school serve on the year and school councils and represent their school community in sports tournaments and very popular drama productions that further enhance pupils' confidence and self-esteem. All these very productive relationships effectively support pupils' personal development and enable them to better value their school and the wider community it is part of.

17. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are very good overall. Those with learning difficulties appreciate the help given them by special educational needs staff and by teachers. Pupils with behavioural problems also appreciate the help of the behaviour support team, although they may not show such appreciation immediately. Pupils with special educational needs are treated sympathetically and respond well, with mostly good behaviour, with little need of recourse to withdrawal or exclusion.
18. Attendance is consistently very good. Unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Most pupils like school and are encouraged to attend regularly and punctually by teachers and most parents. Registers are taken at prescribed times and comply with statutory requirements. The school rigorously pursues absences and both parents and the educational welfare officer work closely with staff, particularly the student welfare officer, to ensure sustained attendance. However, a small but significant minority of parents take their children on holiday during term time and this has an adverse effect on the school's record of attendance.

Sixth form

19. Students' attitudes to learning and the school are excellent and their very mature behaviour and relationships, with each other and teachers, enable them to learn in a very friendly, welcoming and productive environment.
20. Students have very positive attitudes to learning, both inside and outside of the classroom. They are very confident and motivated learners. They work very hard and are well organised. Students respond particularly well to the demands of independent learning, evident in a significant number of lessons, especially, English, biology, chemistry, sociology and computing. Many students are involved with extra-curricular activities, particularly music and drama. This enables both students and pupils to interact and work as a whole-school community.
21. Relationships amongst students and with teachers are very constructive and contribute significantly to the warm and friendly atmosphere in the sixth form and around the school. Students respect each other; students from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly boarders, are fully integrated into the sixth form and form a valued part of it. Sixth form students are actively involved in community work; for example, organising an annual Christmas party and other entertainment for the elderly in the community.
22. Attendance in the sixth form is very good. At around 95 per cent it is much higher than in many sixth forms. Most students enjoy coming to the sixth form and value their education. All students are formally registered and there are effective guidelines to ensure their regular attendance. All absences are rigorously investigated and students are expected to explain them. Students are required to inform tutors of all late registrations and to notify staff when leaving the school premises. These procedures are fully observed and ensure consistent levels of very good attendance and the safety and well-being of all students. Most students arrive on time for lessons. The very good attendance and punctuality contribute significantly to students' achievements and personal development.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

This section should be read in conjunction with the summary, as judgements stated there are not necessarily repeated here.

23. Around 200 lessons were seen and these observations are a significant part of the evidence from which judgements about teaching are made. The work done by pupils is also taken into account

as this reflects the quality of teaching they have had over time. Ninety nine per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better. The two lessons that were not satisfactory are not considered very significant but did occur in Years 7-9; teachers' planning and management was not good enough and led to too little learning. Far more significant are the 82 per cent of lessons that were good or better and the 46 per cent that were very good or excellent. In Years 7-11, out of 148 lessons, 18 were excellent. In Years 12 and 13, out of 53 lessons, ten were excellent. These are high numbers of excellent lessons.

24. Teaching on vocational courses is amongst that which is particularly effective. Students taking the new GCSE in leisure and tourism, which has a strong vocational and coursework element, are taught in a way that ensures that they can succeed, at an appropriate level of difficulty, through a range of practical ICT-based activities. Teachers, and special educational needs support staff, support pupils taking the college link course very well. In one lesson, learning and student response were excellent because of the close match of the activities to the learning needs and interests of pupils; they were able to talk about their experience on farm visits and visits to the Welsh coast with real confidence because of the very effective teaching that they have received.
25. Teachers recognise their role in making literacy policies work and there are examples of good practice in all departments. Teachers in design and technology, mathematics and art emphasise the correct use of technical language. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in drama; reading is well developed in history. Modern foreign language teachers highlight the application of correct grammatical structures. Writing frames (typically worksheets with missing words or phrases) are provided in geography and science to help pupils to construct appropriate written work.
26. The good teaching of numeracy in mathematics is well supported in most other subjects across the curriculum. In modern foreign languages, teachers encourage pupils to use basic arithmetic to find the cost of keeping a pet, buying shopping or renting a flat. In history and in religious education, teachers enable pupils to gain an idea of timelines. In ICT, teachers ensure pupils use spreadsheets to investigate solutions to problems, which helps them to understand functions better.
27. English teachers make a very good contribution to raising pupils' skills in ICT; standards are high in word-processed work in folders and on display on walls. Teachers encourage the use of the Internet often in English lessons for research and this also helps pupils' levels of literacy to improve. However, in mathematics, teachers use ICT more sparingly; there is occasional practical work on spreadsheets or in writing and running LOGO programs. In science, teachers use data-logging resources well to promote pupils' research about heart and breathing rates but ICT is not consistently used well by all teachers. In art and design, teachers do not use ICT enough; there are insufficient dedicated computers, although teachers are properly trained in their use and planning for the use of ICT is written into the scheme of work. The opportunities to use ICT in design and technology have been dramatically improved this term with the introduction of new computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) equipment, including a "state-of-the-art" laser cutter. Although their use in lessons has not yet been incorporated into the scheme of work, teachers are already using them enthusiastically and this is raising pupils' interest and improving their creative effort. Geography teachers are also promoting the acquisition of new skills by pupils, and supporting independent research; pupils have collated geographical data, including text, photographs, images, and maps from multimedia encyclopaedias, and Internet websites. Laptops linked to the school's wireless network are used often in geography. Similarly in history, pupils have learned about the Roman Empire by researching Internet websites about Roman public health, and have carried out research on poverty in Elizabethan England. The excellent technical subject knowledge of teachers of music, coupled with the provision of a specialised computer suite, enables pupils to make much creative effort composing music using keyboards and specialised computers. Modern languages teachers promote the use of ICT enthusiastically and skilfully; pupils have been enabled to use presentation software to improve their accuracy in the use of languages. Pupils in physical education have been encouraged to make more of their homework and present their ideas better with the use of desktop publishing and word-processing programs; they also use the Internet for research to download relevant material and video clips to

analyse and refine physical performance. ICT is not used as much to support teaching and learning in religious education, although teachers and pupils use the Internet for research purposes.

28. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in mainstream classes, though often in smaller, relatively low-ability sets. Certain teachers are designated as special educational needs teachers, but they teach all pupils in the classes they are allocated, in many subject areas of the school. They are rarely specialists in any one subject that they teach, and some do not have particular expertise in dealing with special educational needs of all types. A few of the lessons taught by these teachers are not as effective as they might be; knowledge and understanding of subject matter is sometimes weak, and pupils do not demonstrate the very good attitudes they show elsewhere. Teachers on the behaviour support team teach the Year 10 and Year 11 vocational course well; it caters for disaffected pupils, and includes the pupils with statements of need related to emotional and behavioural disorders. The special educational needs co-ordinator has strengths in dealing with individual pupils, and will withdraw them from lessons they find particularly difficult, to help improve their literacy. The large team of support assistants is very good at teaching and supporting individual pupils too.
29. Managers and teaching staff work hard and effectively to ensure the inclusion and success of the very few travellers' children and pupils from ethnic minorities, some of whom have English as an additional language.

Sixth form

SUBJECT	HOW WELL STUDENTS ARE TAUGHT AND LEARN
English	Excellently
Mathematics	Well
Biology	Very well
Chemistry	Well
Computing	Very well
French	Very well
Sociology	Excellently
Art	Very well
Music	Very well
Business	Well
History	Very well
Physical education	Well
Religious studies	Very well

30. Overall students are taught very well and, as a result, learn at a very good rate in lessons and in their own time. Students' achievement is good rather than very good, and this is in part due to males not yet doing as well as they could; the effort put in to this in Years 10 and 11 has yet to work through or be adopted and adapted in the sixth form. In part it may be due to the particularly large teaching groups which were a feature until comparatively recently. This situation is resolving itself and group sizes are generally much better now, whilst being economic.
31. The proportion of excellent and very good lessons seen was higher than in many sixth forms. Excellent lessons were observed in English, religious education, sociology, biology and drama and very good lessons were seen in almost all subjects.
32. The consistently high quality of teaching is characterised by teachers' outstanding knowledge of their subjects, their effective use of a variety of teaching approaches to challenge and stimulate

students, their high expectations of students and infectious enthusiasm. The very careful checks teachers make on students' progress and the support they give to individual students is also first class.

33. Across subjects, teachers require a great deal of students in terms of their intellectual capacity and their endeavour. Teachers' outstanding subject knowledge is seen in their clear and helpful explanations and introductions to topics, in their skilful use of questioning to stimulate debate and class discussion, and in their helpful summaries of lessons. In English, sociology and religious education especially, students appreciate teachers' up-to-date knowledge of their subjects and the intellectual challenge this leads to.
34. In most lessons the pace and variety of activities pose a significant challenge to students and they become fully involved in learning at a productive pace. In biology, chemistry, mathematics, physical education, art and design and religious education teachers make very good use of practical models, practical activities or role-play to help demonstrate and clarify theoretical concepts. In most subjects students are encouraged to carry out their own research and share ideas and opinions with each other. Consequently students grow in confidence, rely less on teachers as the sole providers of information and gradually develop their own opinions or their own creative ideas.
35. The developing confidence of students is also due to the excellent relationships that teachers establish with their students. Students find teachers approachable and always ready to give individual guidance and support. Very thorough assessment systems help students to know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve or maintain their progress. Regular marking of students' work, frequent testing and comparisons to students' potential are means by which teachers keep a close check on individual student progress and quickly identify where students may need extra help and support.
36. Students' differing needs are met well. The small number of students with special educational needs receive appropriate support and make good progress. For example, a laptop computer is provided to support one student with specific learning difficulties. A number of students come to the sixth form with English as a second language. These students make rapid progress in learning the language because additional lessons are provided through the boarding facilities. Despite this good level of support, some students struggle with technical language and the nuances of the language used in the subjects they are studying and they would benefit from additional support from subject teachers.
37. The key skills of communication, use of number and ICT are taught satisfactorily. In most subjects students are encouraged to talk to each other, sharing opinions and developing a critical approach to their work. There is a good emphasis on using the correct technical language both in discussion and written work. Occasionally lower-attaining students are not well prepared for using unfamiliar vocabulary and students learning English need more help. The use of number is developed appropriately; for example, in physical education graphs are used to exemplify and explain findings in investigative work. Most subjects encourage students to use ICT for research and presentation of their work. However, ICT is not used as extensively as it could be, either by students to present their work or by teachers to support learning in the classroom.
38. In a small number of lessons teaching is satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons too much time is taken up by the teacher talking to students rather than students being involved in activities to make them think. Too many of the teachers' questions to students require one word or short answers and students are not required to apply what they know to new situations and so do not get the chance to develop understanding.

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

39. The overall curricular provision is good. A broad and balanced range of learning opportunities is provided and issues raised in the last report have been tackled, for example “ensuring better provision for the full range of ability”. The statutory requirement for all pupils and students in the school to follow a course in religious education which meets local SACRE requirements is not met (SACRE is the organisation responsible for producing a syllabus). Those pupils in Years 10 and 11 not taking the subject at GCSE have some religious education within their personal and social education programme (PSE), but not enough. Students in the sixth form have no religious education; this is true in many school sixth forms but does not meet statutory requirements. The very recent award of Media Arts College status to the school presents opportunities for a major rethink of the curriculum and an active curriculum committee, which has a very positive outlook on what can be achieved, is overseeing ideas.
40. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, drama is available for pupils in Years 7-9, though those Year 8 pupils wishing to take two modern languages cannot do drama too. All pupils follow a very good PSE course that includes careers education and aspects of citizenship.
41. Curricular provision is very good in English and in music, which also provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In most other subjects it is good. In geography and history, for example, new schemes of work are being developed, and in ICT good emphasis is placed on cross-curricular initiatives such as literacy and numeracy. ICT provision has also improved since the time of the last inspection. The curriculum for design and technology requires further development to incorporate new technologies and provide greater opportunities for pupils to develop design skills. There has been insufficient time given to design technology in Years 7-9 until recently and Year 7 still does not have enough, though the school intends to remedy this. All pupils take a short course in GCSE design and technology and some are given the option of a further long course. Short GCSE courses have not been successful; examination results in them are poorer than in full courses taken prior to 2002. There is a need to review both their effectiveness and the duplication that can occur if pupils choose two courses inappropriately.
42. There is a very well managed and monitored work-related course for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who might not otherwise benefit from a full range of GCSE courses. Pupils spend one day a week in work experience, linked, as far as possible, to a further day following a vocational course at college. For example, work in a garage and a vocational GCSE in engineering. For one day a week in school, pupils follow a course which includes personal and social education, citizenship, and certificates of achievement in humanities and modern languages. For the remaining time pupils take GCSE courses in mathematics, science and a technology subject. Pupils are enthusiastic about their opportunities. Their attendance is good and they were keen to explain to inspectors how the course had benefited them. Unusually, the school employs a classroom assistant to monitor pupils' work at college to ensure a quality experience and this provision seems to be the key to the success of the course. The work-related course is a very good improvement on provision since the last inspection, when the lack of vocational work was an issue.
43. Subject areas are very effective in providing for boys and girls with a wide spectrum of ability. English, science, history, geography and modern languages succeed in adapting their curriculum and teaching methods to suit all pupils and sixth form students. Boys and girls with physical disabilities, including visual or hearing impairment, are included in all aspects of learning. They are often individually supported and all make good progress in lessons, sometimes using special equipment. The large extent of the school site and the difficulty of access to the upper floors of some buildings limit the use of wheelchairs, however. Many boys and girls find expression for the creative and spiritual side of their nature in drama, music, and religious education. Subjects with a vocational slant, including business education, leisure and tourism and ICT, appeal to those seeking direct links with the world of work.

44. In Years 7-9, there are no disapplications from the National Curriculum; a few pupils are occasionally withdrawn from some lessons to do work that will help them make even better progress. Pupils with learning difficulties are allocated special support assistants when in mixed ability classes, and are otherwise taught in smaller, lower-ability sets. Extra literacy and numeracy emphasis is given, in English 'catch-up' and mathematics 'springboard' lessons, with support from assistants. The subject option structure in Year 10 caters for individual interests; pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need related to emotional and behavioural disorders, and other disaffected pupils, can join the vocational course that began in 2000. They follow the ASDAN accreditation system, which gives credit for a variety of worthwhile activities in and out of school. Some pupils in Year 8 and 9, who show signs of disaffection, also follow an ASDAN course, some of which takes place after school. (ASDAN is nationally recognised provision for pupils with a variety of learning problems.)
45. Curriculum provision for teaching numeracy is satisfactory overall. There has been staff training to improve the teaching of numeracy across the school. Good documentation has been produced for departments, giving advice as to how best to improve their teaching of numeracy and to help them produce departmental policies. Unfortunately, staff illness has hampered progress. Most subjects, however, have made a good start on policies to guide and direct teachers towards a more unified approach teaching numeracy. This is especially the case with science, modern foreign languages and ICT. The school has a very effective strategy for literacy and has introduced a number of mechanisms to improve the teaching of literacy. These include a school literacy policy, a marking for literacy scheme, a departmental Years 7-9 checklist, a set of cross-curricular priorities, and a collection of activities to encourage reading. All departments have developed clear literacy policies too.
46. Provision for careers education is good. Departmental schemes of work link subject topics to the world of work. More specific guidance is given to Year 9 pupils and option choices are linked to possible career routes. Work experience for Year 10 pupils is preceded by a thorough programme of preparation that involves pupils in writing letters of application and curricula vitae. The value of the experience is increased by giving pupils responsibility for finding their own work placements and involving them in evaluation exercises afterwards. The school meets the quality standard for careers and its 'Investors in Careers' award was recently updated.
47. The local and wider community makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning, and their social, cultural and personal development. For example, employers and further education representatives contribute to careers education and the personal development of pupils through such things as mock interviews. There are missed opportunities to form constructive links with minority ethnic organisations and communities. The school enjoys very purposeful and constructive relationships with its feeder primary schools. Very good links exist between English, mathematics and science teachers; sharing expertise and special knowledge, for example about literacy and numeracy, helps teachers to raise standards and support pupils' development and progress.
48. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in activities outside lessons. Despite transport difficulties for the many pupils who live a distance away and rely on buses, there is a good uptake of the social, cultural and curricular extension activities offered by the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education

49. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments is very good.
50. Although the school does not fully fulfil the requirement to provide a daily act of worship, other planned experiences ensure that students' spiritual needs are well addressed. This shows improvement since the previous report. The religious education programme in Years 7-9 makes a valuable contribution by providing opportunities for well-structured discussion of issues in the light of religious beliefs, for example in Year 9 where students discuss William Paley's watch theory and scientific and Christian theories for the creation of the world. Very good examples are to be found in music, where, for instance, students listened and reflected on how music gives another

dimension to the setting of religious words. Good examples were found in English, art and design, history and business studies. Considerable thought and planning are given to improving the self-esteem of all students including those with special educational needs. Regular school assemblies and an act of worship once a fortnight provide important opportunities for pupils to meet and, in so doing, reflect on and contrast with the lives and concerns of other groups in the world.

51. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Most understand clearly the distinction between right and wrong in following school rules and behaving well, showing respect for property and individual beliefs. For example, discussions on capital punishment are well managed in religious education. Most subject areas make a planned and deliberate contribution to ensuring that provision for social development is very good. Many encourage pupils to become actively involved in partner or group work to solve problems, make decisions or share views. Very good examples were found in English, art and design, music, modern foreign languages and science. Good examples of pupils' moral and social development were to be found in geography, business studies and physical education. Pupils in all years show a willingness to take responsibility, for example by representing others on the year and school councils. Sixth form students support the work of younger pupils by helping in lessons.
52. Overall the provision for pupils' cultural development is good. An understanding of cultural diversity is well reflected in many curriculum areas; there is room for further development in art and design. There is clear provision in English, geography, modern foreign languages and business studies. In music, pupils' cultural development is excellent. Black Umfolosi Gospel Singers performed in assembly and ran a workshop all day during the inspection week. There are visits to a wide variety of concerts and performances including a residential trip to London to see six shows. Religious education, a multi-faith approach, helps students to develop their understanding and tolerance of other cultures as well as tolerance of other viewpoints. Students from overseas add much to the image of the sixth form college and the richness of its provision. Their profile and influence in the main school are less evident, however.

Sixth form

53. The range of learning opportunities in the sixth form is good, with AS and A-level courses in a wide range of established subjects. Most students take the traditional route and study straight A-level courses but smaller numbers of students are able to take GNVQ intermediate courses in health and social care and ICT. These courses occasionally provide students with an entry route into AS and A-level subjects. The range and type of opportunities offered by the curriculum very closely matches the needs of students attending the college and, sensibly, the college works closely with other institutions in the area to avoid duplication of provision. Students are given good advice on the kind of course which best suits their needs.
54. Entry requirements to the sixth form are used as guidelines only. Individual judgements are made about each student and, with very good support and guidance, students without the recommended minimum requirements often achieve well. The same high quality of support is extended to students with special educational needs and the students for whom English is not their first language, enabling them to participate fully in the life of the sixth form. Timetable arrangements create difficulties in art. Some Year 12 and 13 students are taught in a combined group of 31 students. This is far too many for the available space and only sustained by excellent student attitudes and the enthusiasm of the teacher.
55. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment and extension activities which support academic work and help students achieve better. In music, for example, the wide diversity and high quality of extra-curricular activities enriches and supports work in lessons. However, few students take the opportunity to capitalise on their extra work by gaining additional accreditation in A-level general studies, for example.
56. Advice on future career routes and higher education is given through the curriculum enrichment programme. Since most students intend to carry on to university, advice for them is very good. Students are provided with opportunities to visit different universities and sample the way of life in

higher education. This helps students make informed choices, as well as to succeed to the next stage of education. Links with institutions of further and higher education are good; their representatives are regularly invited to speak at the school and students visit the institutions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance for all its pupils, including boarders. The arrangements for child protection, health and safety and careers guidance are very good. These features are a significant strength of the school.
58. The headteacher and the senior management team provide very clear and strong leadership for the conscientious and committed staff, who carry out their pastoral duties in a sensitive, professional and caring manner. The form tutors and heads of year take a significant role in the monitoring of academic progress and personal development. Pupils are aware of how well they are doing in most subjects. Pupils value the opportunities for careers guidance. Good attention is paid to pupils' health and safety; pupils learn in a safe and secure learning environment.
59. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very effective and systematically monitored by form tutors, heads of year and the behaviour management team. They know their pupils well and are sensitive in their management of pastoral work. They use formal and informal contact time with pupils to build constructive and trusting relationships. They ensure effective levels of communication and sensitively listen to and address the concerns of their pupils. Staff value the achievements of pupils and recognise the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs. PSHE and citizenship lessons ensure pupils can make informed choices about careers, and receive relevant information about sex, keeping healthy and the misuse of drugs.
60. The school has a comprehensive policy and very good procedures to foster very good behaviour and to enable staff at all levels to monitor behaviour effectively. The code of conduct is clear and is understood by almost all pupils. Current practice encourages and achieves respect, consideration for others and self discipline, creating a warm and friendly school.
61. There are very good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour such as bullying. There is a low incident rate but all cases are thoroughly investigated and dealt with effectively. Racist incidents are even more rare and dealt with effectively too. The school excludes pupils for reasons of aggressive or disruptive behaviour only as a last resort. Teachers work hard, often in co-operation with external agencies, to keep pupils in school. Programmes of mentoring and counselling are widely effective, although the school has not, on occasions, shirked permanent exclusion where necessary. An inclusion unit is purposely accommodated at the heart of the school building and is effective in helping pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties to complete their school careers successfully.
62. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are very effectively implemented. When necessary, teachers work closely with welfare support workers and the educational welfare officer to ensure information about any frequent absentee is shared and attendance improved. The headteacher and heads of year value the support of parents in ensuring their children attend school. As in many schools, holidays taken in term time interrupt the learning of some pupils.
63. The school produces very good data, well used by most departments, for tracking pupil progress and setting pupils' targets for improvement. Regular testing takes place in all departments and is put to good use when decisions about pupil groupings, such as setting in mathematics, are made. Test results are also used to identify where lesson planning or curriculum content need adjustment to better meet the needs of pupils. Improving the quality of assessment further, to help pupils recognise where they need to improve for themselves, is one of the school's priorities. This is already a strong feature of work being done in the special educational needs department and in business studies. Across the school the level of support to help individual pupils understand their own strengths and weaknesses is very strong. This is particularly the case in English and in science. In English there is excellent practice including each pupil sticking advice and guidance inside the cover of their exercise books. In Years 7-9 this is entitled "Steps to success" and in

Years 10 and 11, "Be a star in English at GCSE". Pupils are given and understand their target grades for examination success in all subjects. In most subjects it is made clear that these are the minimum grades expected based on their earlier work; pupils see this as very good guidance and it motivates them to work harder. All pupils have effective mentoring about their work which helps them focus on how best to improve; senior managers do this work on a regular basis.

64. Since the last report, the school has sustained its very good provision for pupils' care and well-being. The arrangements for pastoral care are highly valued by parents.

Sixth form

Assessment

65. Very comprehensive information about pupil and student attainment is generated in a useful form by the school and used very well in almost all departments for setting student targets and checking their progress over time. Levels of academic support for individual students are very strong and especially so in modern foreign languages, biology and in English. Outstanding work occurs in English where, for example, students assess and analyse texts in relation to what is expected at examination level. In art too, students learn very well from assessing their own work against examination criteria. Very regular short tests, marked to external examination standards, tell teachers what the students are finding difficult and inform them of changes that need to be made to teaching programmes or to lessons that have been less successful than they might have hoped. In biology, weekly tests provide excellent close monitoring of students' progress, and analysis of module and examination tests informs changes in planning. In English and in mathematics, students find model answers to test questions and exercises, given them by their teachers, very informative and helpful in showing them the standards they are expected to reach.

Advice, support and guidance

66. There is very good provision for the educational and personal support and guidance for all students. Form tutors and the head of sixth form meet regularly to assess, monitor and review the quality of pupils' learning. The information and support gives students' clear guidance on what they need to do to improve and how they might go about doing it. This support is well appreciated by students and ensures them a smooth transition and progression to the next stage of their education.
67. There are very constructive and purposeful strategies in place to ensure the high levels of attendance, and low levels of unauthorised absence are maintained. Sixth form managers systematically monitor all absences and ensure the information is used effectively to pursue them and to set targets for further improvement, particularly reducing levels of unauthorised absence.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

68. A very high number of the questionnaires sent out before the inspection were returned to the registered inspector. The questionnaire responses and the views of parents at the meeting show parents have very positive views about the school; they praised the school for the very good provision of education and pastoral care. Parents value the very positive ethos of the school and the high standards of behaviour. Most parents rightly believe the school is very well led and managed. The inspection team is in full agreement with the parents' very positive views of the school and its work. Inspectors think that the school does make people welcome and that managers take a great deal of trouble to sort out problems.
69. The SENCO contacts the parents of all pupils with special educational needs, sending them copies of their child's IEP for comments, and involving them in any review. Parents of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs have even closer contact, and are invited to each annual review, many of them contributing in depth to comments about progress, and future provision. Parents are mostly appreciative of the SENCO's personal style, and written comments made on the parents' questionnaire are all positive concerning the provision for special educational needs.

70. Most parents enjoy a positive and constructive dialogue with the school. These parents are pleased with the very good quality information they receive through the school prospectus, the home school agreement and the annual report from governors. School documents are written in an accessible style and comply with statutory requirements. Pupils' end of year reports also provide good levels of information about pupils' achievements, attainment, attitudes to learning, and their personal development, but targets to help pupils understand what to do in order to improve are not clear in some subjects. Most parents appreciate the information they receive during parents' evenings, which are very well attended. All parents are provided with regular newsletters from the school which enable them to know of the achievements of pupils and to keep abreast of events, both inside and outside the school.
71. The overall effect of parental involvement in the life of the school is very good. The parent and teachers association works extremely hard by hosting social and recreational functions and fund-raising events, which enable the school to purchase materials for learning and support the personal and social development of pupils. Parents also provide very good resources for their child's learning at home and ensure their homework tasks are completed. Most ensure their child attends regularly and on time.
72. Since the last report the school has successfully sustained the very good relationships and communications evident then.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

73. The headteacher provides exemplary leadership. In the two years since his appointment he has set about clearing a substantial financial deficit and this task will be completed next year, freeing the school from many constraints related to improvements that need money, for example staffing and resources. The headteacher, and very good managers, have controlled and reduced the deficit whilst improving the school along a broad front: standards, teaching, management, and curriculum provision. Specialist college status has also been sought and attained. The school is looking forward to the developments in curriculum and other benefits this will bring. The headteacher leads by example; a very good classroom teacher, he is always in and about the school and working long hours to ensure the completion of the very large workload he has set himself. The management team was reduced as part of the cost-cutting exercise and this has resulted in many responsibilities for those left. The headteacher has made himself directly responsible for the executive management of the sixth form. Whilst this has proved very effective in moving the sixth form on and increasing student numbers, it is recognised by the headteacher and governors, and is the opinion of inspectors, that this situation is not ideal in the long term.
74. The governors ably support the headteacher and his managers in planning and implementing far-reaching improvements in the school's provision. Many have long, robust associations with the school as parents or employers. New members bring fresh insight and an equally high level of commitment. The review and planning documentation provided by the headteacher is regular, copious and comprehensive. Committees are consequently very effective in their decision-making, as well as the review of management, curriculum, teaching and the care of pupils. Governors are very well aware of recent innovations in education, particularly the need for astute, supportive monitoring of teaching and learning. They were substantially involved in introducing the dynamic management style and cycle of self-evaluation that underpin the school's most recent successes. Governors fulfil their statutory duties with the exception of ensuring a daily act of collective worship. While they receive regular subject reports and are frequent visitors to school events, governors have not yet progressed to observing teachers and pupils working in class.
75. Overall the quality of the school's middle management is very good. A continuous dialogue between middle and senior managers and a heightened sense of responsibility, generated by the headteacher, clearly emphasise strengths and identify where improvement is needed. Several new appointments have strengthened middle management since the last inspection, although some new subject leaders have substantial programmes of reorganisation to complete. Most subject and pastoral leaders thrive on promoting whole-school priorities such as educational inclusion, teaching and learning, while sharing their own vision and expertise with their teams. The excellent

management of English is recognised nationally as well as locally. In several subjects including drama, history, ICT, modern languages and music the very good quality of leadership and organisation has a positive effect on standards. The management of most other subjects is good, although in some important, complex areas such as design and technology, cross-curricular ICT and special educational needs, further improvements are required to make provision better. The management of pastoral care is of an exemplary standard, so the headteacher's vision of a safe, happy community where everyone is valued is realised through skilful planning, strong commitment and sheer hard work.

76. Methodical procedures for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work have enabled the bolstering of strengths as well as the elimination of many previous weaknesses. Central to these has been the systematic programme of lesson observations by senior and middle managers, and by teachers themselves. This painstaking, demanding but ultimately beneficial process has been an early stage of developing teaching and learning strategies that respond to every pupil's needs. While the process is not yet uniform, the staff and governors have placed the principle of reflective, co-operative management securely at the heart of the school's improvement planning. A very good corresponding programme of training and performance management ensures that professional development is focused on agreed school priorities as well as teachers' individual targets.
77. Excellent use has been made of money in the last two years. The school is well funded, primarily due to the large sixth form, though does not receive any additional grants because it does not have, for example, a significant number of ethnic minority pupils. It does receive substantial monies for additional staffing and resources needed for pupils with special educational needs. The school certainly spends both this money and other money from the school budget to provide for these children. However, the allocation of the money is not as efficient as it might be and either more could be done with it, or the same results achieved for less, so freeing up the additional school money for other things. The bulk of money available to the school is very well linked to the school development plan to ensure school priorities are adequately funded and achievable. Progress towards targets is very closely monitored and best value principles are applied to decisions. For example, staffing the new course of leisure and tourism in Year 10 has effectively cost nothing; the headteacher teaches it, and the progress, so far, is very good. Possible curriculum developments in the sixth form have very carefully been compared to provision available from local colleges and the decision not to go heavily down the road of vocational courses is sensible; students are directed to the best place for their studies. Pupils, students and parents are also well consulted about such decisions. Purchases and maintenance also meet best value criteria. For example, an efficient leasing arrangement for computers, offered by the local education authority, was accepted by the school after an advantageous change to the contract. Consequently the school is well equipped with computers and should remain so for the foreseeable future.
78. The school has an experienced, well-qualified, hardworking and dedicated team of teachers and assistants. The mix of specialist qualifications with experience and stability means that pupils have much respect for the staff, and this contributes to the very good learning environment. Departments are also very supportive to new teachers joining the school, enabling them to quickly make a full contribution to raising standards. The school has good systems for the induction of ITT students and newly-qualified teachers. Performance management systems are very good. The planning, monitoring and evaluation of in-service education and training (INSET) is very good. As a result, teachers keep relatively up-to-date with new developments in their subjects, as well as national initiatives in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Overall, there is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. All ancillary and support staff provide a very good service
79. Expanding numbers are putting increasing pressures on the accommodation; the current building programme will alleviate these pressures to some extent, particularly for ICT and the arts. Subjects, such as geography and science, are often taught in inappropriate classrooms. The science and art classrooms are too small. In physical education, there is only one indoor space for work in gymnastics or dance. Some other rooms, especially those used for mathematics, are

cramped. However, there are some fine features of the accommodation; the overall ambience of the buildings and grounds creates a very positive learning atmosphere. The site, inside and outside, is very well maintained; it is clean and secure, and health & safety arrangements are first class, providing a very safe environment. The condition of corridors and floors is good. The school canteen is a civilised area where over 800 meals of good quality are served daily. The quality of displays around the school, in classrooms such as those for the teaching of French, German and religious education, as well as in the very attractive main entrance area, are excellent. Outside, equally careful attention is paid to the grounds, with the provision of social areas, to enhance the school's facilities. Despite the inadequacies, the accommodation is good; it gives the message that all who work in the school are important and deserve civilized conditions in which to work and flourish.

80. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. The proportion of the school's budget spent on resources in real terms has been doubled in the last two years and is now in line with the national average. This is an achievement, given the substantial budget deficit. In English, there is a good range of challenging texts and audio-visual aids, which have a positive effect on standards. In geography, resources criticised in the last inspection have been improved and now all years have relevant textbooks supplemented by a range of reference works. In a good range of subjects there are separate course materials for lower-attaining pupils which helps their motivation and learning. In mathematics, the learning resources available are largely paper-based and the lack of the latest graphic calculators and digital projector holds back the pupils' conceptual understanding. In physical education, textbooks are good, and in modern languages, books are bright, relevant and up-to-date. Some science textbooks though are rather dog-eared. Resources for art are good, and for music are excellent. Students use a dedicated computer suite, with specialist software to compose music, along with a sufficient number of keyboards available to support a full class of pupils in music in Years 7-9. The school's contribution towards the cost of peripatetic music provision is a valuable way of supporting talented musicians. There has been considerable investment in improving design and technology and ICT. However, there are still not enough computers to meet the school's needs, and ICT resources need urgent improvement in art and mathematics.
81. The library is managed well. The librarian confirms that there is a high level of borrowing. The existing book stock contains fiction and non-fiction books of sound quality, suitable for pupils of all reading levels. However, the current number of books is very small, being less than a third the recommended minimum number of books per pupil nationally. The overall stock of books needs to be substantially increased with both popular and recent publications if the library is to meaningfully support the school's literacy policy.
82. Though the school is very good, it will undoubtedly improve. The school's target is to be the best of its kind.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

83. Overall management of the sixth form is very good and the leadership of the headteacher is excellent. The headteacher has taken over the overall management of the sixth form for a temporary period. His clear emphasis on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning is reflected in the highly ambitious targets for improvement set out in the sixth form development plan. His direct involvement in the sixth form on a regular basis has helped to build up an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. Strong heads of subject have informed this understanding through their close analysis of results and regular monitoring of teaching and learning. Very good systems of performance management, which include a focus on sixth form work, support the school's effective self-evaluation and commitment to improve.
84. The day-to-day management is very good. Students benefit from the very close attention paid to their academic and personal development by subject teachers, form tutors and senior staff. Form tutors meet each student for a review of their academic and personal progress every three weeks.

Frequent assessments and checks on performance by subject teachers help to inform these reviews. Senior staff act as mentors and meet every student at least twice each year. Any under-performance is recognised quickly and senior staff do much to ensure that students receive the support they need to catch up. Students are appreciative of the close attention and support they receive. The quality and range of courses and additional activities are monitored closely and the review of their quality includes seeking students' views that are then acted upon. For example, the extension studies course is continually under review and improvements are made regularly.

85. The governing body has a very good understanding of the work of the sixth form. They recognise the strengths in the work of the sixth form and the areas for improvement. They have made effective long-term decisions about its overall management; for example, they supported the decision made that the headteacher take over the senior management role for the sixth form.
86. The principles of best value are very well met and the sixth form is very cost-effective. More money is provided for the sixth form than is spent on it and there are some large teaching groups, in mathematics and science in particular, and some shortages, for example in books in the library.
87. Management ensures the sixth form meets the needs of individual students very well. Managers take care to match courses to individual students' needs. The small number of students with special educational needs is well supported. The students with EAL are well provided for, receiving additional English lessons through the boarding facility. The level of guidance and support for individual students, provided by teachers and managers, is outstanding.

Resources

88. Staffing, accommodation and resources are also commented on in the leadership and management section of the main school. The sixth form does benefit from well-qualified teachers and many specialist classrooms, and a very good social and dining area. Sixth form group sizes were too often very big last year, due to financial constraints. Because of the dedication of teachers, students do not appear to have suffered unduly as a result of this. Things are more relaxed this year, though many groups remain very financially efficient. Resources are not as good as they might be, particularly books in the library and some specialist equipment. As finances allow this will be remedied. Houses alongside the college are for boarders and their social and academic lives are closely integrated; they enjoy excellent facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

89. To raise overall standards further and improve the quality of educational provision, the school and governors should continue with the school improvement plan, which generally recognises the areas for development identified by this report, and ensure all the points below are covered.
- a. Improve the provision for design and technology by:
 - Addressing the lack of clarity in management due to the dual responsibilities of the head of department
 - Raising standards and the quality of teaching and learning in food technology, so that they are similar to best practice in the department
 - Increasing the time available in Year 7
 - Broadening the curriculum in Year 7-11 to include modern technological experiences
 - Reviewing Year 9 option choices so that duplication of pupils' experiences is avoided
 - Re-considering the curriculum offer of half GCSE courses(Paragraphs 41, 75, 129-133)
 - b. Improve the provision for non-examined religious education in Years 10-13 by reviewing the content of PSE and extension studies work.
(Paragraph 39)

Sixth form

- c. Ensure male students improve in attainment at least in line with boys' improvements in GCSE by further adopting and adapting successful teaching and learning strategies used in Years 10 and 11.
(Paragraph 7)
 - d. Raise the standards of teaching still further by ensuring all sixth form teachers are given opportunities to observe and then emulate best practice, particularly in relation to active participation by students in lessons, independent learning and the use of ICT.
(Paragraphs 37, 38)
90. In addition to the main improvement points above, the school and governors may also wish to consider the following issues in the action plan that follows this report:
- a. Improve the work of the special educational needs department by:
 - Reviewing how the money available is delegated so that best value is ensured
 - Ensuring that liaison between the special educational needs department and teachers and managers is improved so that, for example, individual education plans and the work of support assistants are better integrated into lesson planning.(Paragraphs 28,77, 91, 92)
 - b. Raise the standards and achievement of pupils in physical education in Years 7-9 and in non-examined physical education in Years 10 and 11 further. (Paragraphs 169-173)
 - c. Provide better opportunities for students to gain accreditation beyond their examination subjects, for example in general studies. (Paragraph 55)
 - d. Ensure ICT is used consistently well by all subjects and teachers. (Paragraph 27)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS DEPARTMENT

91. Leadership and management of special educational needs are split between the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), leading the special learning support department, and the behavioural support team, led by a deputy headteacher. Problems of liaison and priority have occurred in the past two years, but are now being addressed through the 2002-2003 school development plan. The local education authority advisor has been very helpful in reviewing provision, and two reports have led the way for the headteacher to initiate this latest plan. Meetings have been structured for the SENCO and behavioural support teachers to meet regularly, which is particularly important when concerning pupils who have both learning needs and emotional/behavioural difficulties. The development plan requires greater liaison between the SENCO and subject leaders, paving the way for more involvement of all teachers in the provision and review of individual learning programmes. The SENCO also plans to be involved in training all staff in the philosophy and practicalities of the revised Code of Practice, which will improve the general provision for special educational needs within the school. Access for the disabled has not yet been addressed, and an action plan is urgently needed. The governor with responsibility for overseeing special educational needs visits the school regularly and is involved in the plans for improvement.
92. Overall, assessment practice is very good. Assessment information for each pupil with special educational needs is entered on their Individual Education Plan (IEP), and is used to decide on provision for them. All pupils have reading age and spelling age tests, as well as end of Year 6 test information for English and mathematics. Further test and assessment information is entered when the IEP is reviewed twice a year, and progress is commented on. Targets are set for improvement, and the pupils are involved in the setting and review of these targets. Subject teachers should also contribute to the review of targets for each child with special educational needs, but there is usually little response. The SENCO has an effective system of writing and reviewing IEPs, with the help of support assistants, but there needs to be greater liaison and involvement of subject teachers and leaders. The files of pupils with special educational needs are kept efficiently and thoroughly by the SENCO, and there is good liaison with relevant external agencies. The behavioural support team deal with the statements and IEPs of those pupils whose special educational needs are for emotional, social or behavioural difficulties. This team uses a similar system to the SENCO, but there is better liaison with, and involvement of, the pastoral team of year heads and form tutors. One of the behavioural support team deals effectively with child protection and 'looked after' children, and liaises with social services.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	148
	Sixth form	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	18	46	54	28	2	0	0
Percentage	12	31	37	19	1	0	0

Sixth form

Number	10	18	18	7	0	0	0
Percentage	19	34	34	13	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. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y 7 – Y 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	964	259
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	81	0

Special educational needs

	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	43	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	142	2

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	40

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	54

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	85	85	170

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	61	64
	Girls	62	67	69
	Total	101	128	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (74)	75 (68)	78 (62)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (40)	53 (42)	46(36)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	57	60
	Girls	69	66	67
	Total	129	123	127
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (83)	73 (72)	75 (64)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (55)	45 (43)	47 (37)
	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	92	80	172

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	46	83	86
	Girls	62	78	78
	Total	108	161	164
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	63 (63)	94 (93)	95 (96)
	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	44.8 (44.7)
	National	39 (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 students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	52	42	94

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	52	42	94
	Average point score per candidate	15.8 (n/a)	21.5 (n/a)	18.3 (n/a)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18 (18)	17.5 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	52	42	94	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	15.8	21.5	18.3	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	1188	89	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	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	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	22	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Financial year	2001/2002
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Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	632

	£
Total income	3,526,166
Total expenditure	3,435,606
Expenditure per pupil	3,048
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 270,654
Balance carried forward to next year	-180,094

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Years 7-9	24
Years 10-11	22.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	22.6

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	1225
Number of questionnaires returned	400

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	47	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	47	2	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	58	2	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	57	10	2	1
The teaching is good.	40	52	1	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	43	9	1	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	33	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	33	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	41	47	6	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	53	40	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	49	4	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	44	7	1	8

Other issues raised by parents

Forty-six parents attended the inspection meeting. Comments were very positive and reflected the questionnaire and the school's communications and attitude towards parents' questions were described as excellent. The mobile phone number and email contact were particularly praised. There were some issues about design and technology and the nature of the short courses taken in it. Overall, options were considered very good, with the school supporting choices well. Parents said extra-curricular provision was improving, with more sports coming on line and encouragement for those pupils not in teams. Drama and productions were considered excellent and the very popular music and drama evenings were praised. Parents considered the sixth form to be very good in many ways; it provides a social need for many pupils who live in small villages. Parents value the boarders and commented on how they help students become better in modern languages. Parents thought induction and transition are very good, with Year 6 clubs and extra mathematics. They consider pastoral care is now way above what it used to be several years ago. The new headteacher is much appreciated by parents.

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

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Teachers plan lessons and manage classes very well so that pupils are encouraged to raise the standards of their work.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent and are helping to improve the use of English throughout the school.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to improve pupils' performance in Year 9 tests need to be consolidated.
- The recent improvement in boys' GCSE results needs to be maintained and secured.

93. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average in Year 11 and above average in Year 9. Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 9 in relation to their standards when they begin in Year 7 is good. At the end of Year 11 their achievement in relation to their standards at the beginning of Year 10 is very good. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good. Very good pupils' attitudes and teachers' subject knowledge also enable high quality learning.
94. In 2001, end of Year 9 national tests indicated pupils' attainment was average. However, teacher assessments and work seen during the inspection show that attainment of current work is above the national average and that this was the case last year too. The performance of girls has been consistently better than that of boys. In order to improve the performance of boys, the department has introduced a range of strategies including setting, changes in seating arrangements, short-term targets, and boy-friendly tasks. Apart from a dip in 2001, attainment in English has risen faster than the national trend over the last five years. The dip in results in 2001 is explained by staffing difficulties. In 2002, school results show that the performance of pupils has improved by the time pupils reach the end of Year 9.
95. In the 2001 GCSE English language and literature examinations seven out of ten pupils attained the higher grades of A*-C. This was well above the national average. At this age girls' attainment is much higher than that of boys. In English language and literature girls' attainment in 2001 was well above the national average, while boys' attainment at GCSE was close to the national average. Pupils did slightly less well in both English language and literature than they did in several other subjects in 2001. The trend from 1997 to 2001 has been one of sustained improvement. In 2002, school results show that the performance of pupils has further improved and the proportion of boys gaining A* to C grades has increased. This is because teaching is very good and teachers provide extension classes for gifted and talented pupils at lunchtime and at an after school club.
96. In Years 8 and 9, pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. They listen attentively and answer questions with well-constructed answers. Oral work in many lessons contains a large proportion of teacher-directed question and answer sessions where the pupils' enthusiasm to answer usually ensures a brisk pace. The best lessons offered pupils opportunities to investigate ideas together in groups of a similar level of ability, often with a responsibility to report back to the whole class. For example, a Year 9 class working on descriptive techniques in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* showed good listening and speaking skills, building on one another's contributions in a series of well-structured exercises. In Years 10 and 11, standards of speaking and listening are very good. Pupils' spoken answers show good understanding of the texts studied and they use technical terms accurately in discussions of literature, drama and the media. Teachers provide good examples of spoken English and promote high standards by requiring pupils to express themselves well with reference to evidence to support answers. For example, a group of Year 11 boys studying multicultural poetry was able to identify and explain examples of personification and alliteration.

97. Standards of reading are good in Years 8 and 9. Pupils read aloud as part of their regular learning routine. A majority of pupils do this with confidence. More able pupils read with fluency and expression. The scrutiny of pupils' work provided evidence of research and effective use of the Internet. In Years 10 and 11 pupils read effectively from set texts and can compare and contrast different authors. A shared reading and discussion of *To His Coy Mistress* by a Year 11 class showed that pupils could understand significant ideas and events and make moral judgements based on their understanding of the text. For example, a girl explained, "Andrew Marvell is immoral. He is interested only in sex, not love."
98. Written work shows that pupils of all ages write fluently and at length on a range of subjects. ICT is used effectively for drafting and redrafting. A strong quality of teaching is the originality of the written tasks that pupils are set; for example, a Year 7 descriptive writing class portrayed their school under siege. Writing skills to do with planning, audience and style are taught in all years and all pupils, including those of low prior attainment, produce good pieces of longer writing. Pupils' writing benefits from accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling. It is clear from the scrutiny of GCSE coursework that pupils benefit from very good teaching in the planning and drafting of their assignments.
99. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Good support from classroom assistants enables pupils to make good progress in lessons. Individual education plans are well used to ensure that pupils are receiving a good level of appropriate help. Very few pupils have English as an additional language and their progress in lessons is not hindered. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress because their teachers provide both intellectual challenge and support.
100. Teaching was very good or better in all lessons observed. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They teach basic skills of literacy very well and encourage pupils to use ICT to improve the quality of their work. For example, in the coursework folders of Year 10 and 11 pupils there are some very good examples of word-processed essays, stories and newspaper articles. Teachers have high expectations of pupils; they use constructive spoken comments skilfully to motivate pupils and to help them improve. They manage lessons very well and their planning is very good; homework supports learning very effectively. Marking is thorough and accurate, follows departmental policy and is very well understood by pupils; pupils receive very good advice on what they have done well and how to improve their work.
101. Leadership and management of the English department are excellent. The departmental policy documents are clear and well focused on raising pupils' attainment. All members of the department share a very strong commitment to the school's aims. Staffing is good, but could be improved by the introduction of more English specialists into Years 7-9. Resources and accommodation for teaching are good. All classrooms contain stimulating displays that are well organised and of good quality.
102. The subject has made very good progress since the previous inspection. This is reflected in the steady improvement in pupils' attainment. The collective strength of the team of teachers, plus excellent leadership and management, give grounds to believe that the English department's capacity for further improvement is very good.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Standards are above the national average.
- The mathematics department is fully staffed with well-qualified teachers.
- Pupils behave well and work hard.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
- The ends of lessons are too often not good enough; pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to discuss and reflect upon what they learn.

103. The standards of work seen during the inspection are higher than average and pupils' achievement in relation to their standards when they began in Year 7 is good. Pupils achieve well because they have positive attitudes to their work and are well taught.
104. Pupils in Years 7-9 are achieving well. When they join the school their skills and understanding in mathematics are slightly above average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above average compared to results for all schools and well above average compared to the results of pupils in similar schools. Boys and girls had similar results. Results for 2002 are higher than those in the previous year. Year 9 test results have improved in line with the national trend of improvement. Up to the end of Year 9, pupils' mathematical skills show good improvement. The work of higher ability pupils in Year 9 shows that many are capable of attaining high levels in end of Year 9 tests in 2003. They can work out compound interest earned over periods of up to three years, and are beginning to use powers and indices in algebra. Most pupils can express one quantity as a fraction of another, for example $\frac{1}{3}$ of a revolution takes the minute hand of a clock from quarter past the hour to twenty five minutes to, or 35 cm is $\frac{7}{20}$ of a metre. They recognise the equivalence of some simple vulgar fractions, percentages and decimals. Pupils with relatively lower attainment in mathematics can find a factor tree for three-digit numbers such as 200 and 240 and can perform long multiplication using Napier's bones or otherwise.
105. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was well above average; these pupil achieved well from the end of Year 9 in 1999. GCSE results, overall, are not as good as those for other subjects and boys' results are weaker than girls. Results in 2002 were adversely affected by staffing difficulties and therefore less good than in 2001, although still likely to be above average.
106. The standard of work in Year 11 is above average; more than three pupils in five are on course for the higher grades of A*, A, B or C at GCSE. More able pupils show understanding of direct and inverse proportion. Most pupils have made a good start with circle theorems and can solve equations by trial and improvement. Those who find mathematics most difficult have secure arithmetical skills, can use a calculator and can find the perimeter of shapes compounded from rectangles and circles.
107. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good progress in line with their peers. Good support by learning support assistants and teachers is a strong feature contributing to the progress they make.
108. Teaching is good in all years. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen but satisfactory lessons would have been improved if teachers used plenary sessions better for reflection and review at the end of each lesson, as is recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers' expectations and pace of lessons are almost universally good or better. Most teachers plan lessons effectively and manage pupils well so that no time is wasted. Most lessons begin with a short related activity that enables the pupils to settle quickly into their work. Pupils are given a variety of activities so that their interest and work rate are maintained at a good level.

109. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully. There is some very good practice; in addition to indicating whether the work is right or not, some teachers comment fully on how it might be improved, making good use of the school's reward system to motivate pupils to do better. An understanding, by teachers, of the National Literacy Strategy is to be seen in word lists that are on the walls in every mathematics classroom. However, these are not always used as effectively as they might be. Nor is the departmental policy for marking spelling and grammar mistakes fully implemented.
110. In an excellent lesson, pupils used laptop computers to check that they had correctly identified the equations representing lines of reflection for given triangles drawn on Cartesian coordinates. However, although the use of ICT is indicated in schemes of work, the use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning is not developed enough. The department has no graphical calculators and access to the school's computer laboratories is said to be restricted. The situation is not satisfactory.
111. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good. In almost every lesson, pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour were at least good and often better. Good behaviour stems from pupils responding well to effective teaching. Good relationships do much to contribute to pupils' progress.
112. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is an experienced and talented teacher. He is well organised and enjoys the support and respect of both colleagues and pupils. Departmental meetings focus on improving teaching and learning. There are effective arrangements for improving teaching performance based on regular monitoring and performance review. Only five classrooms are dedicated to the teaching of mathematics when there are sometimes as many as eight mathematics sets to be taught at any one time. This means that most teachers spend only three lessons in five teaching in their own classrooms. Inevitably, this adversely affects the quality of learning because it is more difficult for teachers to prepare and teach their lessons.
113. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Areas of concern, other than the need for increased use of computers, have been addressed and improvements made. Teaching is much better.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are well above national averages.
- Achievement by the end of Year 9 is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good and classroom management is excellent.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to science.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

Areas for development

- Further develop the provision in Years 7-9 to maintain very good achievement in the light of rising standards of attainment in science on entry.
- Increase the use of ICT as a tool to help learning.

114. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average, and pupils' achievement overall, in relation to their standards of attainment when they began in Year 7, are very good. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good. Very good leadership and management and pupils' very good attitudes to science also contribute to very good learning.
115. On entry to the school pupils' standards in science are above average and are improving. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, results were well above the national average on all measures for both boys and girls and were also better than results in English and mathematics. Results have improved significantly since 1999, particularly the proportion of pupils

attaining higher levels. They represent very good achievement based on pupils' attainment on entry to the school at the beginning of Year 7, including for those with special educational needs.

116. GCSE results in 2001 were well above national averages on all measures and well above similar schools based on free school meals and on prior attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 1999. Girls' results were much better than boys, in line with their higher attainment two years earlier. Results are very similar in 2002, and boys' results were in line with those for girls. Value added data provided by the school confirms this good achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, based on their standards at the start of Year 10.
117. Standards of work seen during the inspection are also well above average. In Year 9 the majority of pupils are working at levels above that expected for their age. They can use word equations for chemical reactions, and explain how pollution affects the abundance and distribution of life forms. Even the lowest-attaining pupils can describe methods for separating mixtures and can connect simple circuits. The highest attainers can explain processes such as photosynthesis in terms of chemical reactions and use quantitative definitions of speed and pressure. Standards of investigative skills are particularly good. For example, pupils can design, carry out and evaluate an experiment to see if double-glazing works. In Year 11, the majority of pupils can use Ohm's law to calculate resistance and use patterns of reactivity to make predictions about chemical reactions. The highest attainers can describe and explain organisms' responses to change such as negative feedback and homeostasis, and can write balanced chemical equations without help. The lowest attainers can write word equations for processes like respiration and recognise series and parallel circuits. Standards are slightly higher in life and living processes than in the other aspects of science.
118. The quality of teaching is very good overall and a quarter of the teaching observed was excellent. It is never less than satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements is very good and topics, sequences and lessons are well planned. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond to this with enthusiasm and learn at a very good pace. Classroom management is excellent, and relationships are very good, leading to very good attitudes and behaviour. Pupils enjoy science and want to learn. The very best lessons are very well organised and pupils are active. This leads to excellent learning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson with pupils of mixed ability, groups of pupils made dyes from a range of plants and planned how they would compare them as indicators in the following lesson. They were very motivated and learned a great deal. In a Year 10 lesson with higher-attaining pupils, a well-designed practical comparing the effectiveness of biological washing powders was linked to properties of enzymes, which pupils were studying in another science lesson. The teacher provided informative and challenging individual support, securing excellent learning. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants and make progress comparable to their peers.
119. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good or better, the work is not sufficiently challenging, especially for higher-attaining pupils. The pace is allowed to slow, particularly towards the end of the lesson. This is frequently a result of following a published scheme too slavishly rather than adapting the learning activities and written resources for the needs of the group. For example, in a Year 8 lesson with a top set, pupils' activities were confined to colouring in diagrams of the spectrum from a prism previously demonstrated by the teacher and reading about and copying sketches showing different wavelengths. Most pupils were capable of understanding the differential refraction of electromagnetic waves of varying lengths, including infrared and ultra violet, but were not challenged to do so. Their learning was limited. Some teachers use ICT effectively, but this is not yet consistent across the department. This, together with lack of access to resources, means that it is currently under-used as a tool for learning in science.
120. Overall, leadership and management are very good. Documentation is clear, setting out the aims of the department, and schemes of work support teachers' planning, especially in Years 7 to 9. Very good systems of assessing and monitoring pupils' progress provide them with clear evidence of their learning and how they can improve. The department is self-critical, its work is well monitored and a simple development plan identifies actions and responsibilities to further improve. This has provided a framework to secure improvements in standards. Although the department has

laboratories on two sites, there is good communication. Laboratory technicians ensure that resources are available where and when they are needed and provide excellent support to teaching staff. The split site limits opportunities to share best practice in teaching and leads to some lateness to lessons. Some laboratories are cramped, poorly furnished or used as corridors but teachers work very hard to prevent this detracting from learning. Nevertheless, accommodation is unsatisfactory in both quantity and quality.

121. Overall, very good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving examination results and in more flexible approaches to investigations. The very high commitment of teaching and support staff and the very good leadership of the department provide an excellent platform for further improvements in science.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and always very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Standards in recent GCSE examinations are well above average.
- The use of sketchbooks for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

Areas for improvement:

- There is a need to develop three-dimensional skills further.
- ICT is underused in Years 7- 9.

122. Teacher assessment shows that attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the national average; girls do better than boys. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades A* - C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was also above the national average. Girls' results were well above average, with over 50 per cent achieving A* or A grades. Although boys perform less well than girls at the higher grades, their scores are still in line with national averages. In 2002, GCSE results improved significantly.

123. The standard of work in Year 9 is above average. Pupils achieve well between the beginning of Year 7 and the beginning of Year 9, and here there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' work. These standards are achieved because teaching is always good and pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils are able to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings. They observe well from direct observation and evidence from sketchbooks shows that pupils successfully demonstrate their skills when exploring and assessing information. However, little evidence was seen of the creative use of ICT, although pupils make sporadic use of it in research for cultural and historical information. Work shows greater perceptual depth when pupils use first-hand observation as a basis for their work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do pupils with English as an additional language.

124. In Year 11, pupils' work is above average; they can develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work. Very good teaching motivates pupils well and their attitudes and behaviour are very good. This is a direct result of teachers' high expectations and very good use of work best suited to pupils of different ability. Well-annotated sketchbooks are used effectively and technical language develops well. Pupils show the influence of important movements in art and design and demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses, to their own and other cultures, through the work they produce. In a Year 11 lesson pupils were able to speak confidently about their work and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding; work from mechanisms and synthetic forms was being analysed well and developed in clay work and printmaking techniques. Pupils enjoy their art and design lessons and apply themselves purposefully. There is an effective working ethos and pupils behave and do their best and are eager to explain their work.

125. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-9 and always very good in Years 10 and 11. The difference is mostly due to teachers using a greater range of teaching strategies and making better use of homework with older pupils. Teachers know pupils well and plan their lessons

to meet individual requirements. They use their knowledge and subject expertise to very good effect and lesson preparation is very good at all stages. Teachers make very good use of praise to encourage the participation of all and good use of question and answer ensures that all pupils are actively involved. The use of clear introductions to lessons and time spent reviewing and reinforcing the work of the previous lesson enables pupils to build upon prior learning and recognise the continuity of topics. There is good emphasis on procedure, methods and care of equipment. In a Year 7 lesson on textural surfaces and pattern, the teacher showed the class how to develop natural form studies using different media techniques. The pupils fully understood the processes involved and the concept that recording information can be in any media. Homework is very good and appropriate in subject matter, being used to support project work well in Years 10 and 11. Well-constructed assessments make a significant contribution to the development and progress of pupils' work by identifying strengths and weaknesses.

126. Leadership and management are good and teachers work well as a team. The recent appointment of a newly-qualified teacher has had a positive effect on the department. Teaching schemes and departmental policies are clear and provide good guidance for staff. The head of department monitors the work of the department effectively, through classroom observations and work sampling. Assessment is effective and informs planning well. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of pupils' work. Technical support enables the teaching of a range of media activities to be possible. However, there is insufficient use made of working with clay and three-dimensional study. Storage and preparation spaces are still inadequate for the development of clay work.
127. Improvements since the last inspection have been good as a result of clear leadership within the department. Sketchbooks in Years 7 to 9 are now used for research and development. Strategies for raising standards at GCSE have been successfully implemented and entry numbers are now high. The behaviour and attitude of boys are now good and attainment is in line with the national average. Assessment procedures have been refined in order to ensure pupils have systematic opportunities to discuss their achievements and to set targets for future development more effectively.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Examination results in resistant materials and graphics have improved.
- Teachers have enthusiastically welcomed the opportunities provided by recently installed computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment and are already beginning to use it effectively with pupils.

Areas for improvement.

- Standards in food technology are not high enough.
- The management structure; combined responsibility for art and design and design and technology does not work well enough.
- The curriculum is not broad enough in any years.
- There is insufficient lesson time in Year 7.

128. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and are above average for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their level of attainment at the beginning of Year 7. Good pupil attitudes and behaviour, and good teaching in most areas enable pupils to do well in the narrow but well-structured courses.
129. Teacher assessments for Year 9 pupils are well above average and do not agree with inspection judgements. Better procedures for comparing pupils' work with national criteria would help to establish a more accurate picture. Overall, GCSE results in 2001 were well above average. This was significantly better than in 2000, when results were close to average. Provisional figures for

2002 are lower. This is because of difficulties in delivering short (half GCSE) courses to all pupils and the poor results they achieved. Results for pupils on the full GCSE courses were better. The school has refined the way the short course is taught and expects these results to improve in 2003. When the results for each area of technology are considered separately, resistant materials and graphics do better than food technology. Whilst girls' results are better than boys, they do not do as well in design and technology as they do in other subjects.

130. Pupils in Years 7-9 develop good practical skills and a good understanding of technical processes because projects concentrate on these skills. A Year 8 pupil, for example, fully understood the wide range of processes he had used to make a screwdriver. Because teachers emphasise the use of correct technical vocabulary, he was able to describe accurately the heat treatment of high carbon steel. Good graphic techniques are introduced at an early stage and pupils can produce, for example, two-point perspective drawings of their work. Many projects, however, do not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to develop design and planning skills. Consequently, many folders in resistant materials and food technology lack independent research and analysis, and limit pupils' individual and creative input into the work. By the end of Year 9 pupils' ability to work independently to collect and analyse information is not well developed. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the strong structure provided by course booklets but this structure works against challenging more able pupils; they have little encouragement to work on their own initiative. Pupils' work in textiles, recently reintroduced to the curriculum, is colourful, creative, and indicates that a good design methodology is being followed. Year 9 pupils, for example, were able to produce a range of initial ideas, select and develop a final idea, produce a pattern and use good practical skills to make hats. With good support from a learning support assistant, a pupil with special educational needs was able to participate fully in the lesson and made comparable progress with others in the group.
131. Pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 often relies heavily on direction from teachers. Pupils attain good standards in resistant materials and graphics by following a structured route, which ensures that pupils of all abilities are able to respond to all aspects of the assessment criteria. Recently installed ICT equipment is having a beneficial effect and is increasing sources of research and encouraging more individual work. Pupils' computer skills are good and it will be a challenge for teachers to devise appropriate activities to build on these and encourage pupils to adopt greater responsibility for developing their own work. In one very well taught lesson, for example, good computer skills enabled pupils to follow the brisk pace set by the teacher and resulted in good understanding of programming and using the laser cutter. The practical and visual nature of the work enabled two pupils, whose first language was not English, to understand the work and take a full part in the lesson. There is a need to incorporate computer-aided design and manufacturing into schemes of work so that pupils accept it as an integral part of designing and making. Since the reintroduction of textiles, good teaching and resources have enabled pupils to reach above average standards in a short time. Although pupils in a Year 11 food technology lesson were developing good powers of self-organisation, as they prepared recipes they had amended, many were unsure of the rationale behind the task; supporting planning and development work was insufficient to make this clear.
132. Teaching, overall, is good. Two thirds of teaching is good or better, the remainder satisfactory. Teachers manage pupils' activities well and this has resulted in the positive relationships and behaviour seen in most lessons. Pupils receive good individual help and advice and this is of particular benefit to those pupils with special educational needs. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, based on wide experience. However, in the areas where teaching is only satisfactory, there is a need to adopt a range of more flexible teaching methods and to strengthen techniques for promoting design skills and greater pupil independence. The quality of teaching has been monitored, but there is a need for more effective use of the process to identify and promote good practice, and to develop teachers' confidence in adopting new technologies.
133. Leadership and management of the area are satisfactory. The head of art and technology manages both areas. The lack of clarity in job descriptions and responsibilities is affecting development in technology subjects. To provide a more modern technological experience, the curriculum at both key stages needs to be broadened to include more electronics and/or systems and control.

Specific in-service training is needed to increase staff confidence and capability in managing this change, and in creating a climate where change is initiated from within the subject area. Curriculum time for Year 7 pupils is only half the national average and this is not sufficient to give pupils a quality start to the course. All Year 10 and 11 pupils follow a short course in technology and, in addition, some are allowed to take a full course; this leads to duplication and inefficient use of pupils' time. There are thorough procedures for assessing pupils' work but assessment information is not always used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and develop teaching. Resources for ICT and computer-aided design and manufacture are now good, but funding for general resources is very low. The development of more modern technology will require a redeployment of resources to sustain it.

134. Since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory; there have been improvements in health and safety arrangements, provision for ICT and computer-aided design and manufacture, and examination results in resistant materials and graphics. The reintroduction of textiles has been successful in broadening pupils' opportunities.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are now improving, especially for boys.
- Teaching is good, and often very good.
- Assessment procedures are good, with some very good features.
- The leadership of the enthusiastic new head of department is improving provision.

Areas for development

- Accommodation: one room is insufficient for the numbers of geography classes.
- Resources, equipment for practical work and more textbooks are needed.
- Schemes of work, so that they include spiritual and cultural development and citizenship.

135. Standards of work seen during the inspection are good; above average in Years 7-9, and well above average in Years 10 and 11. Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good overall, and often inspiring from the two specialist teachers. Pupils' attitudes are very good; they behave well in lessons, are interested and often enthusiastic about geography. They ask perceptive questions, and discuss issues well together. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
136. The proportion of pupils who attained A*-C grades at GCSE in 2001 was less than in previous years, and below average. More boys than girls were entered in 2001 and unsatisfactory attitudes to work are blamed for the boys' results being well below average. Girls' results were very high compared with the national average. In 2002, the proportion of A*-C grades was much higher, with boys and girls attaining roughly the same. The improvement in boys' results may be attributed to extra emphasis on raising boys' achievement.
137. End of Year 9 teacher assessments in 2001 were above average overall; boys' assessments were below average whilst girls' assessments were very high. In 2002, teachers' assessments show boys doing much better; most boys and girls were above average but more girls than boys did very well. Standards in the present Year 7 are above average; pupils have entered the school with increased literacy and numeracy skills compared to previous years. They are able to match key words to meanings after seeing a video on rivers, and discuss well with each other the possible effects of the river Severn flooding. Where the teacher set a fast pace, with time limited tasks and extension work provided for the more able, the quality of learning increased, and pupils accomplished more in each lesson. Years 8 and 9 are set by ability, with smaller groups for the bottom sets, where pupils with special educational needs of all types are helped to do as well as their peers by very effective learning support assistants. Year 9 pupils were learning about population growth during the inspection. The quality of learning in different classes varied, depending on the quality of each teacher's planning to match work to pupils' abilities and aptitudes. A complicated graph showing birth rate, death rate and population growth was

understood well by the class of most able pupils, who could clearly explain terms. Interesting discussion between pupils led into consideration of China's methods of dealing with population growth. The transition graph, however, was less well understood by pupils in lower ability classes, and this aspect is less well planned and delivered by non-specialist teachers. These lower-attaining pupils can show knowledge and understanding of key terms by verbally answering teachers' good questions, but they have difficulty with written work. Lower ability sets tend to consist of mostly boys; in other sets boys and girls achieve equally well.

138. Teaching overall is good, and better in Years 10 and 11 with specialist geographers who have greater depth and breadth of knowledge, and with pupils who choose to take geography. Planning of lessons is good, with learning objectives clearly defined. Where these objectives are shared with pupils, and revisited at the end of lessons, learning is better. A variety of teaching and learning strategies, utilising a range of good quality resources, move lessons along at a fast pace and lead to very good progress by pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well by most teachers, with an emphasis on key vocabulary, drawing and interpreting graphs; worksheets are produced by teachers to best match pupils' abilities, so lower attainers are supported and more able pupils challenged. Good examples were seen in Year 10 and 11 where three variations of the assignment worksheet helped pupils achieve well. Year 11 work on a decision-making assignment on 'New Housing in Shrewsbury' enabled pupils to practise skills of enquiry as well as presentation, and was well above average. Year 10 project work on the Aral Sea was helped to be excellent by teachers enabling pupils to search for and find information on the Internet, and providing additional printed resources and models. Five laptop computers in the main geography room, connected by a radio link with the school's network, were used well. Teachers recommend web sites to use for homework and research, but greater access to ICT would further improve the quality of learning in geography. Use of ICT has increased since the last inspection. Homework is set regularly by all teachers, but is not always completed satisfactorily by lower-attaining pupils. Marking is usually regular, but does not always indicate for pupils what they are doing well or how they can improve.
139. The new subject leader has vision and enthusiasm for geography, and is a good role model as a teacher, with relevant leadership and management skills. Plans for a review of the curriculum and for monitoring teaching and learning are appropriate but not yet established. Assessment procedures are good; an assignment or test each half term, which contributes to judgements on standards, also influences teachers' planning. The curriculum is structured well, although the detailed schemes of work are not yet complete. Explicit guidance is needed on how best to incorporate spiritual and cultural dimensions and citizenship. Fieldwork is developed well for all year groups except Year 8. Although there are very good and attractive new textbooks, there are not enough for all pupils. The display in and around the main geography base is excellent and helps learning, but many classes are taught in smaller or inappropriate rooms, with no geography displays or resources.
140. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, with higher standards, and better teaching overall.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The quality of teaching in many lessons is good or better.
- Very good assessment and monitoring procedures ensure good quality provision.
- Good attitudes and behaviour from the majority of pupils support good learning.

Areas for improvement

- Work given in lessons needs to be consistently well matched to pupils' needs.
- Boys could still do even better and their examination results become closer to girls'.

141. Standards of work are above average and pupils achieve well due to good teaching and their own good attitudes; they learn well in all years.
142. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is above average, with girls working at a consistently higher standard than boys. Strategies have been put in place to narrow this gap between boys and girls, such as shorter tasks and more use of source material, and these are beginning to take effect.
143. GCSE results for 2001 were above average, particularly in the higher grades, with girls' results better than boys'. These results were in line with those for other subjects in the school and in line with challenging targets for that particular group of pupils. The picture has been similar in previous years and there has been a steady improvement over time which has been carried through into 2002. A small number of students take a certificate of achievement instead of a GCSE and in 2002 all but one achieved distinction grades.
144. By the end of Year 9 pupils' achievement is good, building well on their level of historical skills and knowledge when they entered the school. They have learned to conduct research and present reasoned conclusions from source material. Higher-attaining pupils do this very well but lower-attaining pupils are held back by weak literacy and comprehension skills and as a result their work lacks depth and presentation is poor. In some lessons the work is not adapted to the needs of these lower attainers, which include many pupils with special educational needs; for example, in a series of lessons using a board game to assess the life of Lorenzo di Medici, pupils of all abilities were using the same version of the game though it was too complicated for members of one group to follow effectively. In other lessons, for example Year 7 lessons about the Roman Army, the work was varied according to levels of ability, with additional tasks for high attainers, and all pupils were able to learn very well at their own pace.
145. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is also good, adding some value to their attainment at the end of Year 9. With good teaching and positive attitudes, pupils learn well about such topics as the development of medicine and the displacement of the American Indians by early settlers. They are secure in the skills of analysing source material. For example, in a Year 10 lesson they used material about the medicine of Galen as a basis for role-play about ancient methods of diagnosis and treatment of illness. A high standard of coursework has been produced about the political development of Zaire and the history of Stokesay Castle. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the topics are well emphasised, for example in a Year 11 lesson where the teacher explained about the spiritual relationship between American Indians and the land.
146. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall in all year groups. It is good in lessons where the planning makes proper provision for their needs but weak in lessons where they are all expected to do the same work. Gifted and talented pupils are provided for in some groups by group work and additional activities but this is not yet fully co-ordinated.
147. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with no unsatisfactory lessons and three that were excellent, which is an improvement on the last inspection. The best lessons were characterised by detailed planning, effective development of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and well-prepared, appropriate resources. In one very good Year 10 lesson, two teaching groups were working together to use the department's small computer suite in such a way that all pupils had the opportunity to access the Internet for specific research. In weaker lessons, tasks were too open-ended or not well suited to pupils' needs and, as a result, they lost motivation, which limited learning. All marking is up to date, thorough and supportive and teachers constantly assess work through questioning. In most lessons pupils' attitudes were good or better.
148. The head of department has only been in post for a few weeks and in that time he has already displayed very good leadership and management. He has instituted a very good system of monitoring and evaluation, both of teaching and of pupils' progress, which adds to the good improvement since the last inspection. Schemes of work for Years 7-9 have already been partially re-written and many new resources prepared. A system for formal lesson observation, which would help to bring the standards of all lessons into line with the best, is not yet in place. An

experienced and well-qualified team of teachers ensures a commitment to continuing improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths:

- Standards of work are good.
- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils are keen and well motivated.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The curriculum is good and assessment is used very well to help plan teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement:

- Links between current work in ICT in Years 7-9 and current work in other subjects are underdeveloped.

149. In 2001, end of Year 9 teacher assessments showed standards were about average, with boys performing markedly less well than girls. Almost all pupils now follow a half GCSE course in Years 10 and 11, the remainder a certificate of achievement course. The GCSE was not available to pupils in 2001. In the 2002 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades reaching grade C or higher was broadly average, based on national results in 2001. Boys and girls attained similarly.
150. Standards of work have risen. By Year 9 overall standards are above average, being particularly high in Year 7. There are three times as many specialist teachers now compared to three years ago and a continuous programme is in place to improve resources. Pupils are now making good progress, whereas achievement has previously been just satisfactory. Girls are still doing better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of close support from teachers and classroom assistants. Pupils also make good progress in literacy through their work in ICT. Pupils in Year 7, for example, refer to captions, by-lines and subheadings in drafting their own newspapers. A minority of Year 7 pupils had little experience of using computers in their primary schools, but their work develops well during Year 7. They are able to use a variety of commercial office programs to word process, make reports and so on. Pupils in Year 8 obtain data, text and images from Internet weather sites. Their work contains good examples of the use of spreadsheets and databases. Year 8 pupils have created and displayed very good, animated presentations using a data projector. In Year 9, pupils develop skills in numeracy through using spreadsheets; they can, for example, format numeric cells to two decimal places and create formulae which calculate the total sum of the contents of a column of cells.
151. Pupils are now achieving well in Years 10 and 11. Good matching of work to the capabilities of pupils means pupils with special educational needs also make good progress in lessons; skilled support helps them move from one activity to another. Most Year 10 pupils can tell what acronyms such as RAM and ROM mean and know how to change the presentation of text through using software tools. Pupils find it easy to sort units of memory such as bytes, kilobytes and gigabytes in order of size and are very articulate in explaining their work. Pupils can grab images from Internet websites to paste and use in word publishing packages. Year 11 pupils are fluent users of a range of ICT software applications and appreciate the informed support, not just of their teachers, but also of the ICT technicians in day-to-day work.
152. Overall, the attitudes of most pupils to learning and their standards of behaviour are very good. Most listen attentively to instructions, concentrate well, react with enthusiasm, and handle resources with care. This is not only because of the very good teaching they receive but also due to their own desire to do well. As a result, most pupils in most lessons work at a good pace and acquire significant knowledge and understanding.

153. The quality of teaching is very good. The department is staffed by a dedicated and well-informed team. Over half the teaching seen was very good or better and all teaching was good or better. Where teaching is most effective, both in separate ICT classes and as part of lessons in other subjects, teachers know their material very well and communicate their aims clearly. They prepare work and resources very carefully, explain concepts clearly, manage groups effectively, and maintain a quick pace throughout. As a result, learning progresses rapidly. Pupils are not afraid to ask for help when they need it, knowing it will be provided quickly and knowledgeably. Higher attainers reach high standards due to well-informed, sharply-focused teaching. Good teachers ask probing questions well. Pupils develop a healthy, analytical approach as a result. Plenary sessions help to identify how much pupils have learned. In the few lessons where teaching is a little less effective, it is because pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to lead learning or because questions are asked of too few pupils. Learning support assistants and skilled technicians are deployed well to support pupils in their computer work, and are well prepared beforehand.
154. The curriculum is broad and balanced. The ICT scheme of work helps develop skills and knowledge in all years. The school's planning and provision for ICT fully meets statutory requirements throughout the school, which represents good progress since the last inspection. The curriculum makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, for example, by putting on courses that lead to a certificate of achievement in ICT. Teachers open computer suites up to pupils regularly at lunchtimes and these sessions are well attended. The school has widened the access to its computers into the community through the provision of daytime and twilight computer literacy courses for adults. It also ensures that Year 6 pupils in local partner primary schools can attend for taster lessons in ICT. The procedures for assessment are very good. Teachers track the performance of pupils carefully over time and pupils are aware of the targets they are set. Pupils have a number of opportunities to evaluate their own achievements; for example, in teachers' detailed written comments on their work, as well as through regular informal feedback.
155. Leadership and management are very good. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards through monitoring the outcomes of lessons and the quality of ICT teaching. The head of department also monitors and supports other subject areas, to promote their use of ICT. The head of department is also the ICT co-ordinator and the network manager. In a school this size some roles would generally be devolved to others. Network management is often the job of a skilled technician. The two ICT technicians already play a key part in ensuring that hardware and software works properly and lessons run smoothly. Pupils indicated that the technicians make an absolutely vital contribution to good teaching. Many teachers in the school have received lottery-funded in-service education and training in ICT, some of which they report was good but some of which was unsatisfactory.
156. Accommodation and the quality of machines are good. The number of computers is sufficient for the teaching of ICT in the computer suites but insufficient for the needs of many other departments. Broadband access to the Internet helps pupils use computers for research. The contribution made by other subjects to the development of ICT skills and in the use of ICT as an effective tool is often good. The monitoring and support provided by the ICT department for teachers using ICT in other subjects is very good. Subject usage of ICT is checked regularly and other subject teachers are able to use a range of ICT equipment both in their classrooms and centrally in the computer suite. Music, English, geography, modern languages, and design and technology are particularly good at using ICT. There is no forum for representatives from other subject departments to meet to discuss developments and get guidance on using ICT; consequently links between pupils' work in ICT lessons and their work in other subjects are underdeveloped. A lack of sufficient portable resources, such as laptop computers or interactive whiteboards, is hampering the everyday use of ICT as an integral part of lessons. Nevertheless, the provision for cross-curricular use of ICT has been hugely improved since the time of the last inspection and good plans are in place for further improvement.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

Strengths:

- The leadership of the department is excellent and its management is very good.
- GCSE results in French and German have been above average in recent years.
- Teaching is very good, with excellent subject knowledge, very good class management and assessment, so pupils learn very well.

Areas for improvement:

- Bring boys' attainment fully into line with the high attainment of girls.
- Further develop and extend the use of ICT for teaching and learning.
- Arrange for more pupils to sample both languages and study both in Years 10 and 11.

157. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in French and German. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good in both subjects. Pupils achieve very well in French and German; they make very good progress in both languages. Very good management has led to further improvement on the good standards noted at the last inspection.
158. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades in French was well above average and higher than in the previous year. Girls did better than boys although both girls' and boys' results were higher than average and similar to results in other school subjects. In German, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades was above average but lower than in the previous year. Girls performed better than boys, whose results were, unusually, below average. German results in 2002 show a restored upward trend. In both languages, all students entering in recent years have passed, gaining grades at A*-G.
159. Teachers' assessments and pupils' work show that pupils' attainment in Year 9 is above average. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with little or no knowledge of French or German. They initially study one or the other and higher attainers study both languages in Years 8 and 9. Pupils of all abilities, including some with special educational needs, soon learn to exchange greetings, courtesies and personal information. They follow lessons taught in challenging French and German, making brief, accurate contributions to teachers' presentations and summaries. In Years 8 and 9 pupils express their opinions simply about life at home and in school. They read with interest short accounts of teenage life in French and German-speaking countries, and adapt their writing to different styles for posters, dialogues or short informal letters. Many pupils use ICT for independent study or to produce bright displays for classrooms and corridors. They often use number for purposes such as dates, prices and surveys in class. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well in all aspects of learning. Pupils' knowledge of grammar and idiom is good, acquired in separate sections of their lessons. Higher-attaining and talented linguists make very good progress towards achieving national expectations in their second language, using the skills acquired in the first. Many pupils use past tenses to refer to recent events such as holidays or leisure activities.
160. Virtually all pupils study either French or German in Years 10 and 11 and a few continue with both. Current attainment is well above average, equating to recent GCSE results. Higher attainers use different tenses to describe their own career plans or suggest local activities for tourists. They talk and write more fully and creatively about topics such as healthy living and work experience. Pupils prepare short talks about personal interests and simulate predictable or unusual situations encountered abroad. Lower attainers, including pupils with special educational needs, consolidate earlier work, acquiring the basic language needed for living and working overseas.
161. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than satisfactory and overall it is very good. Teaching styles are varied but complementary, adding to the interest of pupils' learning. Teachers are fluent in French and German, presenting excellent models to copy. They pitch the language at a challenging or accessible level as required but have high expectations of spontaneity and accuracy in return. Teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum and examinations is very good, so they offer a broad, varied curriculum. Courses and lessons are well planned to present a

series of short, different activities that sustain pupils' interest and involvement. Teachers use conventional resources effectively, and pupils appreciate the recently acquired bright, relevant textbooks. Some teachers regularly use ICT but others are less confident in using computers in their lessons. Teachers relate well to their pupils, giving them individual attention and support as required. They mark written work thoroughly and regularly, using common schemes that their pupils understand. Many lessons are linked by relevant homework, providing continuity and a firm basis for the work done in class. Bright wall displays and neatly-presented exercise books show the patience and care that most pupils take. The work in a small minority of exercise books is poorly presented or incomplete due to pupils' absence or lack of commitment.

162. The leadership of the department is excellent and the subject area is very well managed through a strong concerted team effort. Documentation is clear and helpful, reflecting a consultative style and adherence to school values and principles. Teachers continuously improve the curriculum and their teaching methods through training as well as by observing and evaluating each other's work. Assessment and the use of ICT have developed well since the last inspection. Accommodation has improved, with a strong sense of identity in the small language suite, but too much teaching is still in scattered non-specialist rooms. Study and exchange visits enrich the learning of a minority of pupils, but further extension of e-mail and school links in Europe would improve provision for the majority.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning.
- The good use of ICT.
- The opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Raise the proportion of GCSE results at grades A* - C.
- Raise attainment in Years 7-9 even further.

163. The 2001 teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 were close to the national average. However, lesson observations and pupils' work show improvement with standards above average. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining A*-G grades at GCSE was above average but the proportion attaining A*-C grades was below average. The 2002 results show a similar pattern.
164. Pupils enter Year 7 with varying musical attainment from many different primary schools. They achieve well by Year 9. Standards in Year 11 are well above average; this represents recent good achievement due to inspirational teaching and high levels of commitment by pupils. All groups, including pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well in music.
165. Teaching and learning in Years 7-9 are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned, with aims and objectives clearly set out at the beginning, so that pupils know what they have to do. In the most successful lessons varied activities and confident teaching ensure that pupils are kept on task and remain interested. All pupils use ICT to support their improvising and composing. Because of the teacher's careful explanation of musical objectives, pupils in Year 7 lessons explore timbre, texture and dynamics and work in groups to plan graphic scores from which they perform rhythmic chanting. The performances of average and higher attainers are successful because pupils concentrate well and plan their rehearsals. Lower attainers need more time to get it right because of inconsistencies in reading their graphic scores and a lack of co-ordination. Pupils' learning improves due to emphasis on co-operation, good speaking skills and attentive listening and this is particularly noticeable in the regular appraisal by pupils that takes place in all lessons. Listening to arrangements of the tango and singing songs in the key of D minor helps Year 8 pupils understand the construction of simple minor scales. Good

teaching has a positive effect on reinforcing their knowledge of musical conventions. Although no examples of world music were heard in class lessons, this topic appears in the scheme of work for next term. Because of teachers' high expectations, Year 9 pupils quickly grasp the idea of variation form. They improve their understanding by discussing ways in which themes are transformed by adding notes, altering rhythms and playing in the minor key. However, in a lesson on variation form, the results were less effective through lack of time in summing up and listening to the work done. All abilities, including talented pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those few pupils with English as an additional language, are well catered for. This underlines the inclusive nature of the work taking place. Very good planning and management of pupils encourages positive relationships to be developed. Homework is set to reinforce work already done in the lesson.

166. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are excellent. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and much enthusiasm that leads to sustained learning by all. Year 10 pupils recognise changes in musical conventions when listening to recorded examples because of their wide background of knowledge built up over time. Inspired teaching of a Year 11 class encouraged pupils to reflect on the themes from Handel's Zadok the Priest, and how the religious and political background of the time influenced the music. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education was strengthened further by the way they discussed how the musical motifs were affected by the realities of the day. Pupils' work showed that there was a rich diet of musical experiences being developed and they were improving their knowledge and skills. Pupils work out their compositions using a wide selection of instruments and realise them on computer using sophisticated software. The inclusive nature of the subject becomes apparent through the high standard of work being done by all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The majority of pupils in Year 11 are predicted to get higher grades at GCSE.
167. The school is very proud of its musical tradition in taught lessons in the classroom, in the wide range of concerts taking place and in the extra-curricular music groups, which have been developed since the present head of department was appointed. There have been musical visits to London, Manchester and Birmingham and a concert tour in Strasbourg. Over 200 pupils and students have instrumental and vocal lessons and many have passed Associated Board examinations. The department is involved in a number of initiatives run by the Shropshire music service and all of this contributes to a very rich musical diet. The number of pupils choosing to take examinations in music has risen significantly since the last inspection.
168. Leadership and management are very good. Priorities are continued promotion of high standards and inclusiveness. There are very good working relationships both in lessons and in the many extra-curricular activities that take place daily at lunchtime and after school. Formal monitoring of teaching has taken place and plans for performance management are in hand. Marking is done regularly with work assessed and discussed with each pupil. National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades are used to give pupils a better understanding of how their work is progressing in relation to national criteria, thus helping to raise standards even further. The department is well equipped with computer hardware and software and all pupils are taught how to use ICT to improve their composing and arranging skills. The staffing of the department is good and the accommodation and resources are excellent. However, there are not enough library books to support pupils learning about music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in 2001 were well above average and standards in swimming are especially high.
- A very good extra-curricular programme involves around a quarter of pupils and pupils are particularly successful in football, swimming and athletics.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The quality of teaching and learning in examination classes is good and, at times, very good.

- Pupils behave very well in lessons and most have positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- The level of girls' participation in extra-curricular activities and in some lessons for older pupils, although improving, is not as good as that of boys.
- The good quality of teaching is not yet consistent across the department, especially in Years 7-9, and best practice is not shared across the department regularly enough.
- Lack of a dedicated room for teaching theory restricts the use of display and access to resources.
- Divided responsibilities between the subject and other parts of the school limit the focus on the subject for some staff.

169. Standards of work in physical education in Year 9 and in Year 11 are average and represent satisfactory achievement for pupils in relation to their prior standards. However, standards are above average in GCSE work, especially high in swimming, and pupils achieve well in examination work. Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 leads to good progress and achievement in GCSE examination work. However, pupils' achievement in National Curriculum physical education, in Years 10 and 11, is held back by the limited time, one hour per week, in which to teach the subject. The quality of teaching and learning is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because there is variation in its quality. Overall, pupils' positive attitudes towards physical education and their very good behaviour contribute to the good rate of learning in most lessons, although some older girls lack motivation and not as many girls as boys take part in extra-curricular activities.
170. Across the school the more gifted and able pupils reach high standards at district, county and sometimes national level in a range of activities, because they benefit from involvement in a very good programme of extra-curricular provision. Particular strengths lie in football, swimming and athletics. In Year 9, boys reach the expected standards in swimming and badminton. They perform, analyse and evaluate front crawl well. In badminton, boys use a range of strokes effectively to outwit their opponents. In some activities standards are not as advanced as expected because, at the start of new units of work, it is a long time since many pupils played, and previous experience is sometimes limited. In Year 9 basketball, boys' dribbling and passing skills are not yet consistently effective and their use of tactics in attack and defence is limited. Girls are at the very early stages of learning football skills and make good progress. Pupils reach the expected level of knowledge and understanding of health-related exercise. They know how to warm up and cool down, and understand the purpose of this. In the best lessons, pupils take responsibility for this part of the lesson. Year 9 girls identify elements of fitness such as stamina and suppleness and describe how best to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Higher-attaining pupils link training activities to different sports well. Pupils' ability to evaluate and suggest improvements is variable across lessons and depends on how well structured the opportunities to carry out evaluation are.
171. In Year 11, pupils following GCSE examination courses reach above average standards in practical and theoretical aspects. Standards are especially high in swimming where pupils perform four strokes competently and analyse performance in detail. Pupils have a good understanding of most theoretical aspects. For example, they identify different types of motivation, categorise them and make links to practical activities within their own experience. In 2001, GCSE results were well above the national average and represented good achievement. These results reflect the present standard of work seen in examination classes. A significant drop in results in 2002 is explained by staff absence, which led to a number of pupils not reaching their expected grades. The number of girls taking GCSE has been low but is increasing. In Year 10 and 11 National Curriculum activities, standards are not as high because there is less weekly lesson time in which to make progress and some activities do not appeal to a number of girls so they do not take part regularly.
172. High quality teaching and learning in the GCSE course are characterised by teachers' high expectations of pupils and a good variety of short, progressively challenging activities that move learning on at a good pace. Pupils frequently have to work out ideas for themselves and there is a good emphasis on the use of technical language. However, the use of non-specialist teaching rooms restricts the use of display. In National Curriculum lessons, teachers' frequent specialist guidance ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and so pupils behave very well and enjoy lessons. In

the best lessons teachers' expectations are high and so pupils work hard and maintain a good physical pace. Activities are well matched to pupils' learning needs and pupils are challenged, as was seen in a Year 8 lesson on heading the ball in football. Pupils often work independently and take responsibility, for example, for warming themselves up or advising others on how to improve, as was seen in a Year 9 swimming lesson. Pupils with special educational needs are well known by their teachers and make good progress. Class teachers and support assistants offer good and sensitive support to encourage independence.

173. There are some features of teaching that are not consistently good, mostly in Years 7 to 9. For example, teachers' expectations vary and pupils are not always expected to make enough progress. Pupils are not involved in evaluating themselves and others as well as they might be. Pupils not able to take an active part in lessons are insufficiently involved in learning through other means. There is sometimes not enough emphasis on using the technical language of the subject and ICT is not yet used extensively. Planning does not always make clear what is to be learnt.
174. The subject is well led and managed and has led to satisfactory improvement. The head of department provides an enthusiastic and positive role model. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement with a good emphasis on raising standards. However, best practice in teaching is not shared frequently enough to ensure consistently good teaching and schemes of work do not yet provide a basis for continuity in learning in all activities. Staffing levels are satisfactory but a number of staff have responsibilities in other parts of the school which divide the attention and energy that is brought to the subject. Although there are extensive playing fields, a swimming pool and a sports hall, there is limited indoor space and some pupils, girls in particular, lose motivation because of the number of activities that take place outdoors in the winter months. Since the last inspection, standards in National Curriculum physical education have remained average, but examination results at GCSE have improved. Teaching overall has improved and, although satisfactory in Years 7-9, is good overall. Risk assessment is carried out and health and safety procedures are in order. Concerns about staffing remain.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and classroom management.
- Good standards have been maintained in GCSE and more pupils now choose to take the course.
- Assessment procedures and target setting are good.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for religious education for pupils not taking GCSE in Years 10 and 11 is inadequate.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in the classroom.

175. The proportion of pupils attaining A*-C grades at GCSE was above average. Girls did better than boys. The previous year's results were similar though the trend is gradual improvement. More pupils are now choosing to take the GCSE course. A number of pupils with special educational needs do better than predicted. GCSE results in 2002 show that standards have been maintained.
176. Pupils enter the school with average knowledge and understanding overall; a small minority has a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Pupils' work is above average in Year 9 so they have achieved well.
177. Pupils in Years 7-9 have a good knowledge of Christianity and the main religions in this country. Year 7 pupils have looked at Muslim prayer and understand traditions; where the classroom became a mosque they washed their hands, removed shoes and covered their heads before entering. A short video captured their interest; pupils were curious and asked many questions. Pupils in Year 8 demonstrate a good understanding of ideas and traditions of Advent and the reasons behind them, whilst pupils in Year 9 cope with studying the philosophy of religion and questioning the existence of God. Pupils used their imagination and commented on problems that

may arise if God was alive and could be seen. They are familiar with Paley's watch theory and able to talk about it.

178. In Years 10 and 11, standards of work in GCSE classes are above average overall and a significant minority of pupils achieves high standards. Overall, pupils achieve very well. In Year 10, pupils are beginning to show an understanding of different religious attitudes towards eating meat. In Year 11, pupils are gaining an understanding of the reasons for different opinions and attitudes towards capital punishment. They are given good opportunities to express their own opinions both in writing and through discussion. The religious education provided for those pupils not taking GCSE does not meet statutory requirements.
179. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7-9 is good. In Years 10 and 11 it is very good, with features that are excellent. Strengths lie in teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Very good relationships in the classroom help to raise pupils' self-esteem and enable them to speak out and join in discussions with confidence. Teachers' planning meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the more able. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT and there is a system for booking laptops, but access to computers is limited in lessons. The department makes a valuable contribution to pupils' literacy skills in all lessons; in a Year 7 lesson, pupils wrote a letter to the Council asking for a Synagogue in Wem. Well-planned worksheets for this task met the needs of all pupils. The subject makes a very good contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a systematic study of Christianity and the major world religions. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to make comparisons between what they believe and the beliefs and values of others.
180. The department is well led and managed. Since the recent appointment of the head of department schemes of work are being re-written and revised to better meet the needs of pupils. Assessment is thorough. Pupils are aware of the standards at which they are working and have targets set for improvement. In their books and in lessons they are reminded of their targets and what they need to do to improve.
181. Since the previous report, the department has made good progress. Resources have improved and are now adequate; however, pupils do not have satisfactory access to ICT in the department. Standards have been maintained and are now improving.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies and Leisure and Tourism

Both business studies and leisure and tourism were sampled in Years 7-11. They have been put together in this section as it made sense to do so. There is also vocational education within a work-related curriculum and this is written about in other sections of the report, such as "How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?", and "How well are pupils or students taught?"

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well.
- The number of pupils opting for the GCSE courses is increasing.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach very well.
- Skills in the use of ICT and literacy are being developed as an integral part of the course.
- Very good use is made of the local area as a resource for learning.

Areas for improvement

- One classroom has limited provision for ICT.

182. In 2001, results in business studies were below average. Boys' results were significantly below. The number of girls taking the examination was small. 2002 results were significantly better and

standards in the present Year 11 are average. The subject attracts pupils of a wide range of ability and many are entered for the foundation paper. Pupils achieve well.

183. Leisure and tourism at GCSE has been introduced very successfully in Year 10 and pupils of low potential attainment and those with special educational needs are achieving well. The majority have problems with literacy but make very good use of ICT. They are acquiring really valuable skills, for example in using web sites and digital cameras to study local tourist attractions.
184. Business studies pupils in Year 10 have a good understanding of basic business-related vocabulary because teachers focus on this very well. Pupils use terms such as partnership and understand the difference between the public and private sectors, although lower-attaining pupils find the concept of 'PLC' more difficult. Higher-attaining pupils are using case studies well. In Year 11, pupils are organising their knowledge into appropriate answers to GCSE questions and to prepare coursework. The highest-attaining pupils show a clear understanding of the different sources of finance and all pupils make good use of resources from a local bank. Foundation pupils are producing course work that meets the examination board criteria and they show a clear understanding of questionnaires as a planning tool. Pupils with special educational needs show a particular aptitude for this type of work; they are making good progress because of the effective use of computers and other resources.
185. Pupils work hard in lessons and attitudes are good. Vocational subjects are gaining in popularity and more pupils, including girls, are choosing to take business-related subjects at GCSE. They enjoy the activities and visits that are a part of courses. Individuals are particularly proud of their ability to use web sites more expertly than their teachers.
186. Teaching and learning are very good. All teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subjects taught, although they do not have recent experience in the industry. Lesson structure and the range of activities clearly focus on pupils' learning needs and the pace of activity promotes a very good level of learning. There is good use of ongoing assessment through questioning and a good balance between consolidating existing skills and knowledge and the introduction of new information. This raises pupils' confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to learn very well. In lessons based on computer work a careful balance between instruction and time to practise skills resulted in a very good level of learning for all pupils. Pupils are taking responsibility for their own learning because they are given the opportunity to think for themselves. This challenging approach ensures that the highest-attaining pupils can do really well.
187. Leadership and management are good. Resources are well used and teachers work together well. Available computers are used particularly well but there are still not enough. The new leisure and tourism GCSE course has been introduced very effectively.

DRAMA

Drama was sampled in Years 7-11; consequently this section is shorter than most subject sections.

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

Strengths

- Standards are very high.
- Excellent teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Some Year 8 pupils do not have drama as they follow two modern languages.

188. Standards achieved in Years 7 to 9 are well above expectations of pupils of their age. Standards achieved at GCSE in 2001 were very high with 30 candidates out of 31 attaining the higher grades A* - C. Teaching by drama specialists in the lessons sampled was excellent. Teachers bring to these lessons excellent subject knowledge, very good planning, experience of professional

performance and rehearsal techniques. They have management skills firmly based on the delivery of a polished performance to meet a deadline. It is clear that pupils enjoy drama lessons and work hard to achieve high standards. Drama specialists are good role models because they show commitment, respect and application.

189. Drama makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils. Pupils enthusiastically explore issues, characters and situations, both individually and in groups, and evaluate together what they have achieved. Year 8 pupils following two modern languages do not have drama.

CITIZENSHIP

This subject only became a part of the National Curriculum in September 2002. A satisfactory judgement reflects that the school is meeting new requirements.

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

Strengths

- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been planned well.
- The school council is effective in involving pupils, and this and other initiatives very successfully promote participation in community activities.

Areas for improvement

- Some subject areas do not identify the aims of citizenship in planning.
- Pupils are not always informed about citizenship aims in lessons.

190. Some pupils of all ages participate actively in the school council and others in community activities, which also contribute to their Duke of Edinburgh Awards. In lessons there are some good examples of citizenship. However, in the majority of lessons, although citizenship is part of the lesson, pupils are unaware of the citizenship aims.

191. In better lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop informed opinions and challenge the opinions of others. For example, in a Year 10 religious education lesson, pupils watched a video and discussed ways of killing animals and the arguments for and against eating meat. The lesson was leading on to the customs and beliefs of different religions on the subject. Pupils were given the opportunity to bring in their own and local knowledge and were able to make a valuable and well-informed contribution to the lesson. In English, citizenship aims are made clear to pupils who enjoy discussing social and moral issues incorporated into fiction. In Year 9 PSE lessons, pupils debate about how a patient is selected for heart transplant, how tax payers' money is spent, and the rights of prisoners. In a Year 11 form time a discussion on how to handle difficulties that occur during prefect duty was successful. Citizenship contributes significantly towards to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the school's efforts to encourage good race relations and racial and gender equality.

192. Senior and middle managers have led the introduction of citizenship well. The school has carefully looked at the curriculum and identified existing work that can contribute to citizenship. Planning includes clear objectives and satisfactory coverage of the content of the National Curriculum. Although all departments have made contributions towards identifying citizenship in their curriculum areas, citizenship aims are not made clear in the planning of most lessons or to pupils.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects 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-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business Studies	7	71	76	-	12	1.29	1.69
English Language	6	67	-	33	-	2.2	-
Other sciences	13	77	78	31	27	2.6	2.3

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	7	100	87	57	43	6.7	5.8
Chemistry	11	100	90	18	43	5.5	5.9
Biology	17	94	88	41	34	6.2	5.2
Physics	13	100	88	15	40	5.2	5.7
Business Studies	17	100	92	29	32	6.0	5.5
Computer Studies	14	100	86	23	23	5.7	4.6
Physical Education	8	88	92	-	25	4.3	5.1
Art and Design	15	87	96	27	46	4.8	6.6
Music	3	67	93	33	35	4.0	5.7
Communication Studies	17	100	93	53	31	7.7	5.5
Geography	14	100	92	57	38	7.3	5.7
History	12	92	88	25	35	5.7	5.5
Religious education	13	92	92	23	38	4.5	5.8
Sociology	12	100	86	75	35	8.5	5.3
Other sciences - Psychology	6	100	90	67	30	6.7	5.2
English Language	33	100	91	61	30	7.0	5.27
English Literature	14	100	95	64	37	7.1	5.9

French	3	100	89	33	38	7.3	5.6
German	1	100	91	100	40	10.0	5.8
Spanish	3	100	89	100	39	8.7	5.7
General Studies	14	93	85	29	30	5.1	4.9

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	2	0	-	100	-	0	-
Health & Social Care	1	0	-	100	-	0	-
Health & Social Care (Post Sept 2000)	3	33	-	33	-	33	-

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The school offers courses in pure mathematics and mechanics leading to examinations at AS-level and A2-level. Sixteen students, a third of whom have joined the sixth form from other schools, are preparing to re-sit GCSE course in lessons outside of the normal timetable. The department also provides the teaching for 12 students who are studying for a key skills qualification at Level 1 or 2 in the application of number. Lessons in pure mathematics and mechanics were seen for Year 12 and Year 13. Samples of work for each year in each discipline were scrutinised. A representative sample of each group of students was interviewed. Neither the GCSE nor the key skills work was observed. Biology, chemistry and physics are all taught. Biology and chemistry were focused on. Physics is popular, a lesson was seen and standards of work in it are average and consistent with 2001 A-level performance. Teaching is excellent.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- The pupils' attitudes to their work and their teaching are positive, and especially so in Year 13.
- Results are well above average.

Areas for improvement

- Greater student participation needs to be encouraged in some lessons.
- Further improve technical language support for students whose first language is not English.

193. Results in mathematics over the last five years have usually been above average. More recently they have been well above. This represents a very good improvement since the time of the last inspection. In three of the last five years an A-level student has achieved recognition as being one of the best five examined in mathematics by the examining board used by the school.

194. The number of students choosing to study mathematics is invariably substantial. Twenty or more begin on the course leading to AS-level. Most of these continue through to take the examination at the end of Year 12. The failure rate is low compared with that nationally. There have been no

failures at A2-level in the last two years. In 2001, half of all students gained higher grades A, B and C compared with less than a quarter nationally. In 2002, 15 of the 24 who began the course obtained grade C or higher. Results in 2001 were well above average and 2002 results appear better.

195. The standard of work for A-level in Year 13 is currently above average. In mechanics they show a good understanding of kinematics, of the path of a projectile on an inclined plane and of the effect of limiting friction on a particle resting on a slope. In pure mathematics they can integrate logarithmic and exponential functions and have a secure understanding of the trigonometry associated with double and multiple angles. Students in Year 12, at the beginning of their sixth form studies, have a substantial amount of ground to cover if they are to be as successful as students in recent years. Their work is currently below average. They have made a good start with equations of motion in mechanics and were seen in a very good lesson coming to terms with the forces associated with pulleys. Weaknesses in algebra are evident, however, when they cancel fractions or multiply brackets. This is in spite of teachers' greater focus on improving algebraic skills and techniques, which has been built into their studies. Several, including some students with English as an additional language, are finding the concepts of function, domain and range difficult to grasp.
196. Teaching overall is good, with that provided by more experienced teachers in the department very good. Lessons are carefully prepared and well presented, providing the right level of pace and challenge. Practical examples and the use of models enliven learning in the teaching of mechanics. Teachers have an enthusiasm for their subject that is infectious. Students, especially those in Year 13, feel very well supported by their teachers. They feel free to approach them when they are in difficulties. They value especially the model answers to many of the examples they are set in homework and tests which they are given for comparison with their own attempts.
197. There are several students for whom English is not the first language at home, some of whom have come quite recently from abroad and live as boarders in the school. The extra individual help given to these, as indeed to all of the students, is very effective in raising the standard of their work. A student from Eastern Europe, for example, was at some pains to explain just how valuable this had proved and how much better the provision was than that on offer at home. Insufficient thought has, however, as yet been given to the sort of language provision needed for these students in lessons. Analysing and listing key vocabulary, extending the use of time for reflection and discussion in lessons, encouraging the pupils to take a more active part in their learning would help all students.
198. Leadership and management are good. Marking and assessment of pupils' work are very effective. The students are well informed, not least by regular testing arrangements, so that they recognise the strong and weak areas in their work and are aware of what needs to be done to secure improvement.

BIOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision in biology is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Results are consistently well above national averages.
- Students' achievement is very good in relation to prior attainment.
- Students have excellent attitudes to the subject
- Teaching is very good.
- Excellent assessment, monitoring, tracking and support systems ensure each individual secures excellent results in comparison to their prior attainment.
- Very good leadership and management underpin the work of the department.

Areas for development

- Further develop enrichment and extension opportunities.

199. Standards of work seen during the inspection, at an early stage of the school year, are above average and students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they began their sixth form studies is very good. These standards are achieved because of very good teaching, excellent assessment and tracking systems and excellent relationships. Students' excellent attitudes to their work also contribute to their very good learning.
200. Attainment on entry to A-level courses is around the national average. Results in 2001 were well above national averages on all measures and represent very good achievement for males and females. Results in 2002 represent a further improvement and continue the trend of results well above national averages in each of the last five years. Students of lower prior attainment achieve particularly well. Value-added data available in the school confirms that students' results are exceptionally good in relation to their prior attainment. Retention rates on both courses are very high and the majority of students progress from AS to A-level.
201. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average for this stage in the year, particularly in Year 13. For example, all Year 13 students can describe the main stages of meiosis in detail and use this to explain three causes of genetic variation. The highest attainers remember and use all the correct terminology, while lower attainers can describe the process but sometimes struggle with technical vocabulary.
202. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is never less than good and some is excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, use a very extensive range of activities and maintain superb pace and productivity in lessons. For example, Year 13 lessons on the three causes of genetic variation included a computer presentation with printouts for students to annotate, a sequencing activity using electron micrographs, and modelling of meiosis using plasticene or pipe cleaners. This led to very good learning of a difficult concept. Experimental work is well used to enhance practical skills as well as to develop theoretical understanding. For example, in a Year 12 lesson students were asked to identify a number of foods using food tests and to relate this to their theoretical work on biological molecules. Teachers develop outstanding relationships with students. This leads to excellent attitudes to the subject that contribute to their very good learning. A very thorough assessment, tracking and monitoring system ensures that all students learn the material and are very well aware of their learning. It also provides a tool for teachers to monitor progress and provide high quality individual support. This enables all students, including those with special educational needs or EAL, to make excellent progress. The curriculum provides full coverage of examination specifications. However, enrichment and extension activities beyond the timetabled lessons are currently relatively underdeveloped.
203. Leadership and management of biology are very good. Experienced teachers work well together to provide a seamless curriculum for students and to reinforce each other's work. A recent increase in the number of staff teaching biology has been used as an opportunity to share ideas to further improve practice. The work of the department is thoroughly monitored.
204. There was little mention of sixth form biology in the previous inspection report so no overall judgement of improvement since the last inspection is made.

CHEMISTRY

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

Strengths

- Achievement is good and higher attainers achieve particularly well.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject.
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers support students' good learning.
- Students enjoy very good relationships with their teachers.

Areas for development

- Develop greater variety in teaching and learning styles and activities.
- Develop strategies to improve the achievement of those of lower prior attainment, especially at AS-level.
- Consolidate the assessment, tracking and monitoring system to provide better information to students and staff on how well they are doing.

205. Results in 2001 were in line with national averages. Females' results were better than those for males, although the numbers were too small for valid national comparisons. Value-added analysis provided by the school shows that males and females achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. Results in 2002 are better, with students of higher prior attainment achieving particularly well. Retention rates are good within each course, although relatively low numbers choose to continue from AS to A-level.
206. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began their sixth form studies, is good. These standards are achieved because of good teaching, very good relationships and individual support. Students' very good attitudes to their work also contribute to their good learning.
207. All Year 13 students can remember the names of formulae and describe and explain the reactions of alkanes, alkenes and arenes. They can interpret infrared, nuclear magnetic resonance and mass spectra and use them to identify compounds. There is a wider spread of attainment in Year 12. The most able can carry out stoichiometric calculations of masses and volumes without help, while those of lower prior attainment find this difficult without model calculations to work from. Some lack confidence in using symbolic and ionic equations.
208. The quality of teaching is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about chemistry. In the better lessons, there is a variety of activities, which improves motivation and maintains a good pace of learning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on addition polymerisation, students had previously researched different polymers and made presentations to the class. They used models to construct the different forms of polypropylene and were then able to relate these structures to the properties and uses of the three structures. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, too much of the lesson is taken up with the teacher talking so that students do not learn so effectively. This is a particular problem for those of lower prior attainment in Year 12. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on periodicity with a large group of varied ability, the teacher spoke for most of the lesson, with occasional closed questions to students. The lack of opportunity to put the ideas into practice meant that some students did not understand the material. Teachers develop very good relationships with students and this leads to very good attitudes to the subject. A developing assessment, tracking and monitoring system ensures that students are learning the material and staff and students are informed about their progress against their target grades. This is not yet fully consolidated. The knowledge of individuals and the quality of support enable all students, including those with special educational needs or EAL, to make good progress.
209. Leadership and management of chemistry are satisfactory. Two experienced teachers co-operate well to cover the curriculum and share ideas to improve practice. The work of the subject is monitored through the developing tracking system as well as by observation of teaching and students' work. There was little mention of sixth form chemistry in the previous inspection report. Consequently, no overall judgement of improvement since then is given.

BUSINESS

The focus was business studies at AS and A2-levels.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is good.
- Management is good and available resources are used well.
- Students achieve well and they have positive attitudes to work.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not used as a regular part of teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Some lessons are too long and this affects the concentration and therefore the progress of students.
- Students should take a more active role in lessons.

210. In 2001 examinations, students achieved better results than average and their performance was similar in 2002. The trend has been one of improvement, although standards in the present Year 13 are close to average rather than above. Their results at AS-level were lower than expected because of the prolonged absence of a key member of staff.
211. Students make good progress because of good quality teaching and of their own good attitudes. Generally, they achieve well in relation to their results in previous examinations, though the current Year 13 achieved only satisfactorily at the end of Year 12; they are rapidly catching up. Males and females do equally well, although there are far more males in most classes. The subject clearly challenges the most able students but also supports those who encounter problems with some aspects of learning. Many students have English as an additional language and they progress well because of the inclusive nature of teachers' approaches to learning and the clear focus they make on business vocabulary.
212. Students in Year 12 show a clear understanding of the purpose of mission statements and the role of key individuals in a company. Some students found the conflict between the objectives of a trade union representative and the need for increased productivity difficult, but all were able to use case studies well. The highest-attaining students have clearly responded very well to the challenge of the subject and can speak confidently about corporate strategy and logistics. In Year 13, students have a clear understanding of human resource management and individuals have very detailed notes on different studies of motivation.
213. Lessons have pace and challenge and tasks are set which encourage students to apply their knowledge. Teachers' planning is generally good. However, some lessons are too long because of the way they have been timetabled. This adversely affects the concentration and learning of some students. Students are skilled in using computers as part of their learning, particularly in using web sites, but teachers do not use computer-based soft ware in class, for example to model the high quality of presentations in a modern business environment, because resources are not available in the main classroom.
214. Many students benefit from work experience and they attend conferences and go on visits to develop their understanding of the real world of business. The school has links with local industry but teachers do not have recent experience of business to share with students.
215. Leadership and management are good. Documentation and assessment information are readily accessible. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. This is a department that is functioning well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school offers AS and A-level courses in computer studies and Intermediate GNVQ ICT. In 2002, all students passed GNVQ and over half attained merit or distinction awards. The focus was on computer studies.

COMPUTER STUDIES

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

Strengths:

- Teaching is very good and students achieve well.
- Leadership is very good and management of resources is good.
- Assessment is very good.

Areas for improvement:

- In the last year too few students have gone on from Year 12 AS-Level to study A-level computer studies in Year 13.

216. A-level results were well above average in 2001. Standards were broadly similar in the 2002 examination.
217. Standards when pupils start in Year 12 are average. All achieve well and work is above average. They can use their developing expertise their expertise in programming in languages such as XBASIC. They can compare the advantages of this programming language with others such as Visual Basic. They have created some complex programs, spreadsheets, and a range of databases. Students improve their numeracy in their work on the binary system, as well as when making base conversions from hexadecimal to octal units. They develop a better understanding of the computer systems used in industry through the valuable commercial experience of their teacher in software development. They have a good knowledge of web design and electronic mailing. Students use commercial presentation software to compile good quality presentations, for example showing how the microprocessor works.
218. Teaching and learning are very good. There is a good partnership in learning between teacher and students. Teachers are knowledgeable and students respect this and want to learn more because the subject matter is made relevant to them. In a lesson on the use of computers for the blind, students got to grips quickly with the intricacies of writing elegant programs to translate English commands into Braille. Students use their ICT skills well in a range of other subjects; for example, presenting studies of genetics in biology lessons. Teachers ensure students improve their literacy well through their accumulation of a good technical vocabulary; for example, they can well describe work on mass spectrometry using ICT. Teachers' assessment of work in lessons is very good and students know how well they are doing and are encouraged to think for themselves and make some intellectual effort to move on.
219. Leadership is very good. Planning, monitoring and evaluation of standards and students' progress are good and enable students to know how well they are doing. However, most students who opt for ICT in Year 12 do not follow it through to Year 13 and this needs further investigation. Computer resources are good and network management is very good, consequently students are not held back by faults and system delays. There has been good improvement in provision for ICT since the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE.
- Students receive very good individual academic and personal support and guidance from their teachers.
- Good teaching expects students to take initiative in lessons, share learning and study independently.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of a dedicated room for teaching physical education restricts the use of resources.
- The library is not well stocked with appropriate books.
- ICT is not used extensively enough to support learning.

220. Students' achievement overall is good because they reach average standards from average and below average starting points. This is because the teaching is good and they receive very good guidance and support from teachers throughout the course. Excellent relationships between staff and students, students' very good attitudes towards the subject, and their willingness to work hard, all help them to achieve well.
221. In 2001, results were below average because although all students passed, few gained higher grades. Results improved in 2002 and more students gained A or B grades. These results represent good achievement for students who mostly start from average or below average standards at GCSE.
222. Standards in contemporary issues and historical aspects are good. Students analyse the effects of the industrial revolution on sport closely and produce well-structured essays on the subject. In other areas of the course standards are average. In one lesson, students analysed motivation in sport in depth and in their written work they relate personality traits to the requirements of different sports well. In an anatomy and physiology lesson, Year 12 students demonstrated secure knowledge and understanding of muscle groups and their actions through practical investigation and prompt answers to questions. Students' portfolios on their chosen practical activities explain the theory behind practical performance and training well, although the depth of analysis varies between students of differing prior attainment. Retention rates are good and most students stay on from AS in Year 12 to follow the A2-level course in Year 13.
223. Students benefit from teachers' secure subject knowledge and good planning. Teachers establish links between theory and practical work clearly for students, for example through investigating the links between muscle girth and practical performance. The inclusion of a good variety of activities in most lessons involves students in thinking and sharing learning in depth. Pair and group activities stimulate lively debate and teachers question students well. For example, in a lesson about motivation in sport, students presented their ideas to each other and were encouraged to ask critical questions of each other's presentations. Communication skills are taught well in most lessons and students are encouraged to use numeracy skills in carrying out investigations. Students appreciate the variety of approaches to learning and the very good individual support and guidance they receive. Students who have not taken the subject at GCSE are especially well supported. Homework is set and carried out regularly and marking gives clear guidance to students on how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Although students are encouraged to use the Internet for research and use ICT to present their portfolios, still more use could be made of ICT to support research, revision and investigations. In occasional lessons not enough is done to involve students in their own learning and they become passive recipients rather than active learners.
224. The subject is well led and managed with a clear emphasis on raising standards. Results are analysed closely and students' work is monitored regularly. Providing additional support for students checks underperformance. Teachers keep up-to-date with examination requirements and are developing teaching approaches to ensure students are fully involved in learning and are challenged. Although the department loans additional texts to students, the provision in the library is limited. The subject is taught in a number of different rooms so that display cannot be used easily and resources are not readily accessible. Since the previous inspection the subject has

maintained its high standards satisfactorily. The quality of teaching remains good and students continue to achieve well.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design and on music. Lessons in drama and in media studies were sampled. Teaching, in lessons seen, was excellent in drama and satisfactory in media studies.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Teachers and students enjoy very good relationships and students benefit from high levels of personal tuition and guidance.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good: lessons have very good integration of theory and practical work.

Areas for improvement:

- Group sizes are too large when Years 12 and 13 are combined.
- Students' opportunities for both two and three-dimensional work on a large scale are restricted by a shortage of storage space and inadequate accommodation.

225. In 2001, results in A2 examinations were well below average; under 30 per cent attained grades A – B. All students entered for AS-level passed. There was little difference between the performance of males and females. In relation to their prior attainment at GCSE most students achieved satisfactorily. Standards are now rising. Results in 2002 appear to be above average for A2; 70 per cent of students attained A – B grades. AS-level examination results provide a good foundation for A2; the retention rate of students into the second year is good.
226. Standards of work are above average. Students speak eloquently and with confidence about their work and demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding. Their independence and maturity enables them to manage their own studies in completing coursework and working towards examinations. Students display some ability and understanding of the creative use of ICT in their assignment work. Work in sketchbooks shows very good annotation and an understanding of compositional principles and techniques needed for project development. Students' preliminary sketches show a good understanding of design principles and are developed into good quality finished products. In a Year 13 lesson, students were able to present, disseminate and discuss how they arrived at their final choice of specialist projects. Very good sharing of ideas and opinions on the influence of styles, genres and approaches to their own work and the work of other artists were evident. The challenging demands of the work and very good levels of personal tuition and guidance ensured very good progress. Students' achievement is now good in comparison with their previous attainment at GCSE.
227. Teaching is always very good. The four art and design teachers have very good subject knowledge and technical skill. Many students speak well of the support provided by teachers. Teachers' expectations are high and lessons have very good pace and productivity. Teachers integrate theory and practical work most effectively. Project briefs are well designed and students are informed of how work can be improved. Some good quality visual resources are used in the teaching of critical studies. Teachers give appropriate attention to presentation skills and monitor students' work thoroughly. Assessment criteria are well defined and deadlines for completion of work are made very clear. A variety of methods are used to build progressively on students' knowledge and give them confidence to undertake more demanding tasks. Students' knowledge is extended with visits to galleries locally and in London that include aspects of contemporary practice.
228. The department is led and managed well. The absence of technical support undermines the teaching of such a range of media activities. The present accommodation is inadequate for courses with such a range of media choice and hence inhibits further potential expansion. For the

development of students' three-dimensional skills, facilities and provision for work using clay are insufficient. The library provision of good quality reference books is satisfactory. Improvements since the last inspection have been good. Overall, this is a successful area of the sixth form and it is becoming increasingly popular.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good overall: teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Students are highly motivated and show commitment to the course and to other musical activities.
- The department is well organised and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to improve the number of students reaching the higher grades at A-level.

229. The examination results in 2001 showed eight students gaining A – E grades at AS-level with one candidate's work being unclassified. In the A level examination only two of the three candidates passed. In the two years leading up to the examination there were a number of different music teachers and because of this very few students reached the higher grades. Since then there has been the appointment of a dynamic head of music whose planning and organisation has rejuvenated the department. The results for 2002 show all students being successful with two thirds of AS-level candidates reaching the higher grades. This improvement has been due to very good teaching and a commitment to the subject from the students. In relation to their GCSE results students did very well, with female students achieving better than male students.
230. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, and are achieving much as expected. In this class of six students two have taken GCSE music but the others are included because they are all capable performers. This is particularly true of one student who has English as an additional language who has reached Grade 8 standard on the piano. There are more male than female students. Work seen indicates the three students in Year 13 (all female) are making excellent progress and should achieve very well in examinations next year.
231. Teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. The principle features of teaching are clear objectives and planning together with a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show excellent subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set. In one Year 12 lesson, where Mozart's Minuet in G major was being analysed, because of the teacher's careful preparation students were able to recognise modulations, cadences, phrase structure and anacrusis. They could discuss how these conventions would support their own compositions. In a Year 13 lesson on how musical features inspire and enhance composition, the teacher's excellent musical knowledge guided students in their listening. They considered how the musical ideas in Tavener's Song for Athene are influenced by a belief in orthodox Christianity and convey a sense of calm and mystery to the listener.
232. Students are exposed to a rich and varied diet of music and they learn well because of teaching that is carefully matched to their needs and interests. They are challenged to experiment with their own creative ideas in all areas of study. Similarly, high expectations encourage students to give of their best. All students use ICT competently and some have music software which they use when composing at home. In talking to students in Years 12 and 13 it became obvious that many are keen to work in music-related professions. They are enthusiastic about the subject and feel that they are receiving a worthwhile musical education that will serve as a basis for future study. One past student is now studying music at Oxford and another is about to have an audition for the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Gifted and talented students take the lead in the many extra-curricular activities that take place in school and they take part in centrally organised bands, orchestras and choirs.

233. This is a well-run department with good documentation that is used to monitor and evaluate students' work. Challenging targets are worked out with the students and effective strategies are planned which moves learning forward. Monitoring of teaching on a formal basis also takes place and moderation of the music curriculum ensures that all teachers are working to the same standards. The excellent accommodation and learning resources make a major contribution to the high standards achieved, though there are not enough specialist library books to foster theoretical study.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history, sociology and religious education. Lessons in geography and in psychology were sampled. Standards are high in geography, reflecting well above average examination performance in 2001. Teaching and standards are good in psychology.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Standards are high and students achieve well.
- Student response is very good.
- The department provides a valuable study guides for its students and library resources are used well.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not used in the classroom as a regular part of teaching and learning.
- Although essays skills are taught very well there is not enough focus on basic literacy and key vocabulary.

234. In 2001, A-level results were above average. In AS, all students passed in 2002 and many attained the highest grade. Most students achieve well in relation to their results at GCSE and there is no significant difference between the results of male and female students. Retention rates are good; the majority of students stay on to A2. The overall trend in results is upward. Students judge their experience in the subject to be very good and they enjoy their studies. Many intend to take the subject to degree level.

235. Work in Year 13 is above average and shows that students have a good level of knowledge and real maturity in their approach to the subject. They can understand complex issues, for example when examining the revolutionary movements in Tsarist Russia. They all show the ability to conduct independent investigations and can use computers very effectively. The highest-attaining students can establish the extent to which a source provides real evidence, for example about the response of the peasantry. Average students show a good level of understanding about the way in which anti-Semitism was deliberately encouraged by the Russian government of the day. In Year 12, the oral and written work of the highest-attaining students already shows a very analytical approach and the ability to use apt quotations well. Most students show a good level of knowledge of the different personalities of the Edwardian period and can compare and contrast the political personalities of Asquith, Campbell Bannerman and Balfour. Students with English as an additional language achieve well.

236. The key skill of communication is generally developed well in written work, discussion and in role-play in class. However, in some lessons in Year 12 and 13, lower-attaining students are insufficiently well prepared for the challenge of using unfamiliar vocabulary; some have problems with spelling, including spelling the names of key historical figures. Students use ICT very effectively to present work and to help research, but computers and overhead projectors are not available in the teaching base. A particular feature of work in both year groups is that students are active participants in lessons because of teaching styles and the valuable study guides provided. Teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. Teachers are using strategies that

make students take responsibility for their own work; they have to research different themes and then report back to the group. Students are encouraged to make decisions about the past based on what they have read rather than relying on class notes. Teachers are really knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject, consequently questioning is particularly effective and it focuses classroom discussion very well. Assessment procedures are good. Students know how well they are doing and are made very clear about examination criteria.

237. Leadership and management are good. Procedures and documentation are good. The library is a valuable resource and is used well by students. Teachers work together effectively as a team. The subject has improved well since the last inspection.

SOCIOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision in sociology is **excellent**.

Strengths

- 2001 examination results are very high.
- The standard of teaching and learning is excellent.
- Students' attitudes are excellent.
- Assessment procedures are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

238. Standards of work seen during the inspection are very high and students' achievement overall, in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form, is excellent. These standards are achieved because excellent teaching and student attitudes lead to excellent learning.

239. In 2001 A-level results were very high and in the top five percent in the country. They were also significantly above results in other subjects in the school. There has been a consistent improvement in results over the past five years though there was a fall in 2002 due to a prolonged spell of unavoidable teacher absence. AS-level results have been creditable; in 2001 74 per cent of entrants gained A or B grades and in 2002 40 per cent, the fall again being due to the teacher absence. However, 2002 results are still likely to be above average. The work of present Year 12 and Year 13 students also indicates that high standards will continue to be maintained. Overall, there has been no difference between the results of male and female students, though in most years more females than males have studied the subject.

240. In 2001, 37 per cent of AS-level students did not continue to the A2-level and in 2002 the figure was 46 per cent. Reasons for this non-continuation are all known to the department, varying between those who had too high a workload, those who never intended to do the two-year course and those who discovered that the subject was not relevant to their developing career plans. All these students were counselled by the subject head of department and by their personal tutors before dropping sociology.

241. Students' achievement is excellent by the end of Year 13. Examination targets in 2001, based on students' previous GCSE performances, were all exceeded, most of them by a wide margin. Because of well-planned and extremely knowledgeable teaching, students have come to understand about the conventions of sociological research and can carry out their own research projects. The teacher's excellent discussion skills clarify students' learning and build independent thinking skills. Students are therefore effective independent learners, making informed judgements about social issues. They have learned to assess their own and other people's work objectively and have a detailed awareness of the requirements of the examination syllabus. The teacher's emphasis on discussing points individually with the students enables them to move forward at their own pace with thorough mastery of each point as they go along. Learning time is extended for those who need it by lunchtime clubs and access to resources and information after school. A student with special educational needs is making excellent progress, supported by a laptop

computer that enables him to work at the same pace as his peers. Excellent student attitudes ensure that the best possible use is made of all learning opportunities.

242. This excellent teaching and learning go hand in hand with excellent management, as the department consists of one teacher who teaches all but one of the lessons. The curriculum provision is very good, only lacking an overall plan for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the subject. Although these aspects are taught, as in a lesson where the ethics of sociological research were being discussed, they would be better delivered if they were written into what are otherwise extensive and detailed schemes of work. Resources are very well managed, providing a rich range of texts and model answers to guide students' work. ICT is very well used as a tool for research and also for presentation in the classroom. Subject performance and individual student performance are closely monitored to identify any weaknesses and the emphasis is on constant improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good with excellent features.
- Students achieve well and standards in lessons and work seen are improving.
- Students show a good understanding and in Years 12 and 13 are able to articulate their views with confidence.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop the use of ICT for learning and in lessons.

243. Results have fluctuated since the previous inspection. In 2001, GCE A-level results were below average, principally because of the low proportion of A-B grades; there were no A grades. These results were weaker than in 2000 when there were more students and a higher proportion of females. Students who completed A-level in 2001 achieved well based on school records of their GCSE results, two years previously. 2002 A-level results show an upward trend with close to half of students gaining A-B grades. Females tend to do better than males but the proportion of males to females is often small.
244. Work is above average and students achieve well. They show good understanding of their critical analysis of texts. They demonstrate a good level of understanding of religious language, terminology and concepts. They relate the material clearly and effectively to issues in religion and ethics, sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view. Good examples of this were found in their work on *Argument on Abortion*, where students had discussed philosophical and theological viewpoints and then written their own perspective. Their files are very well organised and include an appropriate use of ICT, though insufficient use is made of ICT in lessons.
245. Year 12 students are studying developments in Christian thought, for example Feminist Theology. They are developing a fluency in debate, and are learning to rely less on the teacher as the sole source of accurate information. Most students are able to use appropriate vocabulary with ease and maturity. Year 13 students, the first year to follow this course, are studying black theology. In an excellent lesson, a few students demonstrated a high knowledge and understanding of the subject; students chose to play the role of King, Cone or a racist. One student found it difficult to put forward the viewpoint of a racist. After successfully doing so, she felt that the experience had strengthened her personal belief, which was different to the role she was playing. All students were able to compare and contrast black theology and black power.
246. Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. Lessons move at a brisk pace and make effective use of a variety of activities to develop understanding. For example one lesson started with a fast review of previous work on modern feminist theology, students then organised themselves into groups and discussed the writings of scholars and theologians, for example, Elaine Storkey and Mary Daly. Students were challenged and inspired

by the teacher's excellent up-to-date knowledge of this subject. Teachers provide helpful summaries for students who need extra support and use resources well to help all students learn. For example, videos and well-prepared tabletop exercises enrich students' experiences and are used well at appropriate times.

247. The subject is well led and managed. The two subject teachers who are involved in the sixth-form course work together, sharing views on successful ways of teaching the varying groups. The recently-appointed head of department has written a good development plan and thorough assessment systems are in place. Students are aware of their predicted grades and, together with teachers, have set themselves realistic targets for improvement.

248. Since the previous report, the department has made good progress.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English language and French were the focus subjects.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Overall, the quality of provision in English language is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is excellent; students are intellectually challenged as teachers pass on their subject expertise.
- Students receive high quality support throughout the AS-level and A-level courses, which they recognize and value.
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- There are no areas for improvement.

249. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average, and students' achievement overall in relation to their standards when they begin in the sixth form is very good. These standards are achieved because teaching is excellent. Students' attitudes and teachers' high expectations also cause the quality of learning in English to be excellent.

250. In the 2001 GCE examinations three out of ten AS-level English language students attained the higher grades of A and B. In the A-level English language and English literature examinations six out of ten students attained the higher grades of A and B. This was well above the national average. At this age females' attainment is higher than that of males. Students did better in both English language and English literature than they did in several other subjects. In A-level English language the trend from 1997 to 2001 has been one of continual improvement. This is because teaching is excellent; students are intellectually challenged and receive high quality support.

251. Students are very good at analysing texts. In a Year 13 lesson, students used Grice's theory of conversation to analyse text. Through analysis and the presentation of results students developed their ideas, tested them on their peers and increased their understanding. Students enjoy speaking and listening. Most make significant contributions to oral work. They express their viewpoints and ideas clearly, explaining and illustrating them with evidence. By Year 13, students have developed in greater depth the skills of speculation and forming hypotheses, as seen in their work on editorial writing. Students write effectively, showing skilful control and great confidence when expressing their ideas. They produce well-structured essays, draw on a wide vocabulary and use technical literary terms well when conveying their response to texts.

252. Teaching was excellent in all lessons observed. Teachers adopt a scholarly approach to prepare and deliver intellectually challenging lessons. The use of talk is central to all lessons as teachers extend students' communication skills and encourage them to adopt a critical approach. The skills

of intellectual enquiry through research, effective questioning and assessment are particularly well used in lessons.

253. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The department is well established and its members have a shared commitment to teach students a love of language and literature as serious critics aiming for a high standard. Planning for success is at the heart of the department's work. The department monitors students' achievement and provides appropriate advice about how to improve and succeed. Students' attainment has improved since the previous inspection.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, with excellent subject knowledge, so students learn very well.
- The continuous, detailed assessment of students' work is very good.
- The planning and organisation of AS and A-level courses is thorough and supportive.

Areas for improvement

- Provide further enrichment of courses, including work and study abroad.
- Plan and promote courses so as to recruit and retain more students, including males.

254. Small numbers of students entered for A-level French in the last four years. Results were higher than average although trends are not discernible. Over half the students have gained the higher grades A-B and all have gained grades at A-E. The latest results were above average. One student attained grade A and two attained grade C.
255. Inspection evidence shows good standards being maintained. Attainment in Year 13 is above the national average. Most students are confident speakers, conveying their views effectively, if sometimes briefly in classroom discussions. The accuracy of their spoken French is generally good. Some aim for grammatical perfection, which for others takes second place to fluency. The students understand the challenging authentic French spoken by their teachers. They are prompt and perceptive when answering questions. Their written work is good overall. The best discursive writing is accurate, stylish and convincing. Students quickly absorb and apply new language required for writing essays on social and moral issues, such as the environment and the media. They use the authentic materials their teachers produce very well, analysing lengthy texts and interpreting statistics with good understanding and insight.
256. Much of the work in Year 12 is of a similar standard, but the attainment of a minority is lower. Most students soon achieve a wide range of grammar and vocabulary, building on their good achievements at GCSE. Whether they are fluent or still hesitant, they volunteer to present grammar topics or engage in lively discussion of themes such as family relations, education and personal finance. The best essays are idiomatic and fluent, but a few reflect the difficulty students have at the early stage of post-16 study. Reading comprehension skills are very good. Students use dictionaries well or infer meaning from context or their personal knowledge. Most use the Internet to research their work, or to present their essays for assessment.
257. Teaching overall is very good and some of it is excellent. As a result, in both Years 12 and 13 students' achievements are high, as in previous years. Teachers speak demanding, fluent French and expect spontaneity in short contributions, or detailed written preparation for longer presentations. Units of work are carefully planned, so that a study of grammar and source material leads logically to finished, persuasive writing of a usually acceptable and often accomplished standard. Teachers encourage students to relate their work to their own experience. They in turn extend the range of their opinions from domestic, educational and personal concerns to wider issues such as rights and responsibilities, social problems and life in Europe today. Teachers overcome the constraints of the small groups with stimulating, varied activities such as brainstorming, debate and simulations. The style of language and the content of lessons are constantly refreshed and students' interest is very well sustained. Only a minority continue their

studies in Year 13 or specialise in French at university, but others expect to use the language in their professional careers.

258. The bond between teachers and students is strong. Students are mature and show interest in the subject. They concentrate well and try hard to contribute to their lessons. Interactive teaching methods and sympathetic support, combined with close monitoring and counselling, bring out the best in many of them. Most lessons are clearly directed and well organised, but teachers also expect students to prepare and follow up the work in class. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly in relation to their agreed targets and the requirements of the A-level examination. Resources are limited but usually chosen or written by teachers to suit particular purposes. Students benefit from contact with a native speaker, but there is no foreign language assistant. Study visits and work experiences abroad are not yet offered.
259. The organisation of the subject is very good. Good standards are achieved by a consultative approach to planning, teaching and assessment. Several teachers have management responsibilities but they all devote much time and energy to preparing lessons and giving good support and guidance to students. Their lively personalities add much to the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Teachers work hard to do well by each individual student and largely succeed in terms of examination results and providing skills for life. They have yet to present students with a sufficiently rich and appealing course to recruit larger numbers of students, including males, and retain them all over the two-year course.