

INSPECTION REPORT

**ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC
VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOL**

Anstey Lane, Leicester

LEA area: Leicester

Unique reference number: 120306

Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Fields

Reporting inspector: Ian Stuart
19298

Dates of inspection: 18 – 22 November 2002

Inspection number: 249818

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 Aided
Age range of pupils: 11 - 18 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Anstey Lane
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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs G Keville

Date of previous inspection: 19 – 23 May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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19298	Ian Stuart	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements; How well are the pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9756	Kenneth Parsons	Lay inspector		Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22958	Terence Bayliss	Team inspector	English	
15268	John English	Team inspector	Mathematics	
31441	Margaret King	Team inspector	Science; Chemistry	
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	French	The adequacy of accommodation and learning resources
32080	Brian Dutton	Team inspector	Psychology	
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art; Special educational needs	
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Physical education; Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music	Assessment and the monitoring of pupils' and students' academic progress
8692	Martin Trevor	Team inspector	Design and technology	
15262	Clifford Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography; Business studies	
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT); English as an additional language; Educational inclusion	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

English Martyrs School is a Catholic Voluntary Aided comprehensive school with just over 1000 pupils, including 110 in the sixth form. Its size is average for secondary schools. It is situated on the north-western side of Leicester, but the vast majority of its pupils come from Catholic families living in a large area to the north, west and south of the city and in surrounding country areas. The pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, which, overall, are similar to the national picture. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Although the number speaking English as an additional language is higher than most schools, none are at an early stage of acquiring English. Less than ten per cent of pupils come from ethnic minorities. There have been variations in the attainments of pupils on entry over the years; they have generally been a bit above average. The intake of 2002 was above average in English and mathematics and broadly average in science. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly average, although that of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with many strengths. It provides an effective education for nearly all its pupils. Most pupils achieve well. Although average in mathematics and science at GCSE, present standards, overall, are above average, and, in some recent years, results at GCSE have been well above average. Pupils tend to make more progress in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11; sixth form students achieve particularly well. The school strongly promotes its Catholic ethos, and its emphasis on respect for and understanding of others has a positive impact on the quality of relationships, and, in most cases, pupils' behaviour. Generally, pupils are very pleasant young people, with whom it is a pleasure to be. Teaching is good overall. The school provides sound value for money, although, in recent years, it has not fully embraced some of the more significant developments in education. However, there is now a determination to move forward; the school is now well poised to build on its traditional strengths so that it can become an even more effective school in the future.

What the school does well

- The good quality of most teaching, and the high expectations teachers have of pupils, lead to well-motivated pupils who achieve well.
- Overall standards are above average and are particularly high in drama, English and food technology, and with very good achievement in art.
- Relationships between pupils, and between adults and pupils, are very good.
- The ethos and values of the school community contribute to pupils' very good spiritual and moral development.
- Pupils are very interested and involved in activities; they enjoy the good range of extra opportunities available outside and inside school, including the library.
- The school is a caring community, catering well for pupils' welfare.

What could be improved

- A lack of coherence and clarity in the overall leadership and direction of some key areas of the school's work has hindered its rate of progress.
- Although good in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory overall, pupils' achievements in mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11, lacks the necessary breadth to cater fully for the needs of all pupils. Arrangements to teach numeracy skills are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 11.
- The inflexibility of assessment procedures restricts the value of assessment as a means of improving pupils' achievements.
- Despite some improvements, inadequacies in the school's accommodation limit pupils' achievements in some subjects, and mean that pupils and adults sometimes work in sub-standard conditions and surroundings.

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 five and a half years ago in May 1997; the report described the school as giving its pupils a good education in a supportive and caring environment, marked strongly by its Catholic ethos. That is still the case, and, during a period of very major changes in education, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved by slightly more than the national rate, have been broadly maintained at GCSE and have improved at A level. There has been good improvement in information and communication technology (ICT), although some omissions remain, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Most annual department plans are thorough, but strategic and financial planning lacks coherence. The library and the support it offers are greatly improved and appreciated, however, pupils are still passive learners in many lessons, limiting their opportunities to be independent and creative learners. Despite improvements to the buildings and grounds, there is still a great deal to do to bring all accommodation and facilities up to acceptable standards.

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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	B	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	B	A	n/a	

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

Over the last four years, the results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 have been above or well above the national average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Overall, they have been well above average until 2002 when the overall results were just below the 'well above average' benchmark. However, some aspects of the results in all the core subjects were well above average. Results have been rising faster than the national trend. Standards of work seen during the inspection by the end of Year 9 are above average, showing good achievement from pupils' starting points in Year 7. Pupils are making good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding and in improving their literacy skills because of effective strategies in subject areas. Their progress in developing their numeracy skills is patchy because of the lack of a whole-school strategy for teaching numeracy skills. Whilst pupils' ICT skills have improved considerably recently, there are still gaps that limit their attainments in this key skill.

GCSE results at the end of Year 11 have fluctuated more than the test results at the end of Year 9; the trend in the school's results has been below the national trend. Results have been above or well above average dropping in Year 2000 and in 2001 from the high point of 1999, and with below average progress in Years 10 and 11 between 1999 and 2001. Results in 2002 recovered and are just into the 'well above average' benchmark, although results for mathematics and science are lower. Work seen during the inspection by the end of Year 11 shows above average standards. Achievement is variable, but, overall, is sound. Whilst girls are achieving better than boys, the difference between girls' and boys' attainments is similar to the difference found nationally. At present, the school is likely to meet its appropriate targets for 2003.

AS and A-level results were well above average in 2001. Complete national comparisons are not yet available for 2002, but the school's results in 2002 are higher than those of 2001. Most students attained grades better than would be expected from their standards on entry to the sixth form. Work seen during the inspection is above average, showing good achievement from most students.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils are proud of their school and know what it stands for. They want to do their best, and are well motivated when the teaching is challenging.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school; there is misbehaviour in a few lessons, which disrupts learning.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. These are real strengths of the school. Pupils and adults alike are deeply committed to developing high quality relationships.
Attendance	Good. From levels similar to national averages, attendance is now above average. There is some lateness, but it is not a significant problem.

The positive attitudes, good behaviour and very good relationships are notable features of the school. Any problems, including rare instances of bullying, are dealt with effectively.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, their generally high expectations of pupils and their good relationships with pupils are major strengths of good teaching, which leads to good learning. About 30 per cent of teaching is very good or excellent. Less successful teaching is often characterised by weaker classroom management and the neglecting of the differing needs of different groups of pupils in the class. In some lessons, pupils are too dependent on their teachers to direct their learning, reducing their opportunities to develop intellectually and creatively. As a result, pupils, particularly higher attainers, are not always challenged sufficiently. However, there is only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, none of which is in the sixth form where teaching, overall, is at its strongest. Teaching is good in English; it is good in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics and science, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Most subject areas, including English, make good arrangements to teach literacy skills so these skills are well taught overall. This is not the case with numeracy skills. Some subjects teach some numeracy skills as part of their scheme of work, but this is variable and the absence of a whole-school strategy means that the teaching of numeracy skills is unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Whilst the curriculum meets all statutory requirements except for ICT in Years 10 and 11, it is unusually limited in breadth, and provides too few opportunities for vocational pathways for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is good quality specialist teaching and classroom support, and good management of special educational needs across the school.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The good provision means that the achievements of these pupils are similar to other pupils; none are at an early stage of acquiring English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Spiritual and moral development are particularly good and pupils are very conscious of their individual responsibilities for each other. There are, however, considerable inadequacies in the provision for developing pupils' awareness of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school takes its responsibilities seriously and provides a caring environment. There are good procedures for child protection and welfare.

The school's partnership with parents is generally good; the quality of information provided for parents, including information about pupils' progress is variable, but is satisfactory overall. Pupils benefit from good extra-curricular opportunities, including visits and residential events. The Excellence in Cities initiative is contributing well to the personal development of the pupils who are involved. Very good links with primary schools help to ensure that pupils get a good start in the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. There has been a lack of clarity in strategic planning. The arrival of a new headteacher gives a valuable opportunity to reassess leadership roles, and how best to achieve an agreed set of priorities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and show a sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school analyses its results thoroughly with established review procedures. Its whole-school assessment arrangements lack adequate flexibility and provide unsatisfactory links with National Curriculum targets and standards.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. The links between the school's budget and its priorities are not clear; the allocation of funds to subjects to resource their work lacks transparency.

Day-to-day financial management is good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's high expectations of the work pupils will do. The school's approachability when problems arise. The good progress pupils make. The good range of activities outside lessons. The way the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of information provided by the school about how individuals are getting on. The way the school works with parents The amount of homework set.

Relatively few parents responded to the questionnaire, made written comments or attended the parents' meeting. Most of those who did are very supportive of the school. Inspectors agree with the parents' assessments of the school's strengths. With some exceptions, homework appears to be set

appropriately. Copies of most reports seen by inspectors are good, although they have concerns about aspects of assessment procedures. Generally the school works well with parents and makes good efforts to get parents' opinions at regular intervals. However, the inspectors suggest that the areas, where a relatively small minority of parents have expressed concerns, are areas for review in consultation with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 110 students; it is considerably smaller than the average school sixth form. Numbers have fluctuated, and there are only 35 students in Year 13 at present. Slightly more than 40 per cent of last year's Year 11 entered the sixth form. No vocational courses are offered, so all students take courses leading to A-level (AS and A2) examinations for which the minimum entry qualification is five or more higher grade GCSEs. About two-thirds of students from last year's Year 12 continued into the present Year 13. Most students continue into higher education after Year 13, with proportionately more than average going to local institutions of higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful for its students. It provides them with an effective education, and most students achieve well in relation to their starting points in the sixth form. Standards have risen in recent years, and A-level results in 2001 were well above average, with those in 2002 higher. Present standards are above average. The sixth form is well managed, and the quality of teaching and learning is good. Although relatively small, the sixth form is cost effective. The sixth form offers academic subjects, but it meets successfully the needs of students for whom such courses are appropriate.

Strengths

- The students are delightful young people with very good attitudes to their studies and the school.
- Good teaching and the very good relationships between teachers and students promote above average standards.
- There is good support for most aspects of students' personal development.
- Students make good progress, adding value to their previous attainments.
- Provision for A-level business studies is excellent.

What could be improved

- In some lessons, the opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning are limited.
- Students have few opportunities to take the initiative in managing their own affairs and in contributing to the life of the school as a whole.
- A relatively small proportion of Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Good teaching, combined with hard working students, results in good achievement and above average standards, although independent creative thinking is less well developed.
Chemistry	Satisfactory. Results are average with satisfactory achievement. Relationships and support for students are very good, but there is not enough independent learning by students.

Design and technology	Satisfactory. Good teaching and very good relationships are resulting in above average standards, although inadequate resources and accommodation limit levels of achievement.
Business studies	Excellent. Excellent teaching is leading to very high standards and very good achievement. Students are highly motivated, and assessment arrangements are a particular strength.
Art	Very good. Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent, and students' research and creative work are of a very high quality. The teaching team is strong, although resources are limited.
Music	Good. Good teaching leads to good learning with well-motivated students achieving average standards in Year 13, but above average in Year 12; performance is better than creative composition.
History	Good. The very good relationships and high quality questioning and good teaching raise the level of students' confidence and understanding; they achieve well, reaching above average standards.
Psychology	Good. Good teaching, based on strong subject knowledge and lively class discussions, contributes to above average standards and good achievement from students in this popular subject.
English literature	Good. Students are achieving well with above average standards. Good, imaginative teaching is supporting their academic and personal development very well so that they make good progress.

Nearly all other sixth form courses were sampled. Standards are similar to subjects inspected in depth with most above average. Teaching and learning are good or very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Procedures for assessing students' work are very good, and the overall levels of support and guidance are good, reflecting the ethos of the school.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Most subjects are well or very well led. Overall management of the sixth form is effective with thorough systems to monitor and evaluate performance. A clear, reflective view of future priorities would give a sharper direction to the development of the sixth form.

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"> Most students enjoy being in the sixth form and are pleased with their experiences. They are well taught and encouraged to do their best. Their teachers are accessible when difficulties arise. They have good access to computers and the resources of the library. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They lack a sixth form council and have few opportunities to take the lead in developing their role as sixth form students. Advice on careers is less good than advice on higher education. The range of courses open to them is restricted.

Because of internal school examinations, there were relatively few opportunities to talk to Year 12 students. However, inspectors talked to a large number of Year 13 students, some in considerable detail. Inspectors were impressed with the students' openness and maturity. They agree with the students' views, both of the sixth form's strengths and of the areas that the sixth formers feel could be improved. They acknowledge the difficulties of providing a very wide range of courses in a relatively small sixth form; an opinion also accepted by sixth formers.

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 school has extensive information about the standards of most pupils when they enter the school. As well as the results of national tests at the end of Year 6, the school uses cognitive ability tests (CATs) and another test it has used for many years. An analysis of all the available information indicates that standards on entry are a bit above average, although higher in English and mathematics than in science. There are been variations between different year groups; the standards on entry of the present Years 8 and 9, for example, were lower. The differences between boys' and girls' attainments on entry are similar to the national difference.
2. By the end of Year 9, the average points score of boys and girls in English, mathematics and science in the national tests have been above or well above average for the last five years, with results rising faster than the national trend. Taking the results as a whole for the last four years, they are well above average, although, in 2002, they were just below the 'well above average' benchmark. However, using other criteria to judge performance; for example, the proportion achieving Level 5 or above, results were well above average. Compared with schools in the same free schools meals category, results were well above average, and very high in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science. These results represent good achievement given pupils' starting points in Year 7, and indicate good preparation of pupils for the tests.
3. At the end of Year 11, the overall average GCSE points score over the last five years has been above or well above average. The trend has been below the national trend because, from a peak in 1999, results were lower in Year 2000 and dropped further in 2001. However, results in 2002 recovered and, overall, they were just into the 'well above average' category. GCSE results have fluctuated more than the test results at the end of Year 9, and, within this overall fluctuation, there have been marked variations between different subjects. Patterns are not clear, but in the last two years, pupils have tended to do better in food technology, business studies, music, art, religious education and English and less well in science, mathematics and resistant materials. The results show that achievement in Years 10 and 11, in relation to standards at the end of Year 9, was satisfactory overall in 2002. Whilst it was good in some subjects, it was unsatisfactory in mathematics and science. Whilst girls are achieving better than boys, the gap between girls' and boys' attainments is similar to the gap found nationally.
4. In work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9, standards are above average, showing good achievement from pupils' starting points in Year 7. Although there are variations between subjects, progress in Years 7 to 9 is more even than it is in Years 10 and 11. For example, achievement is good in English, mathematics and science for all groups of pupils, but this is not the case in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are making good progress in extending their knowledge and understanding and improving their literacy skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Although whole-school strategies are not fully in place, most individual subjects make effective provision for developing pupils' literacy skills, and, as a result, their standards are above average. Pupils who use English as an additional language are achieving in line with other pupils because none of them are restricted by limitations in their understanding of English. Pupils' numeracy skills are less secure; higher attainers' numeracy skills are high enough for them to deal successfully with the use of number in all areas of the curriculum, but this is not always the case with middle and lower attainers whose skills are sometimes insufficient. Pupils' ICT skills have improved significantly in Years 7 to 9 recently, but there are still some gaps, which means that achievement is satisfactory rather than good. However, in a number of subjects, pupils develop a range of skills in researching information and communicating what they have done, including word-processing and presentations that combine pictures, text and simple animations.
5. Standards in work seen by the end of Year 11 are above average overall, with satisfactory achievement. As with the GCSE results, there is more variation in attainment and achievement

than there is in Years 7 to 9. There is good achievement; for example, in English, particularly for higher and some middle attaining pupils who make significant progress in developing analytical, close-reading skills; achievement is somewhat less good for lower attainers. In mathematics and science, however, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. In mathematics this is mainly due to the insufficient emphasis that is placed on problem solving, the lack of challenge in some of the teaching and because of the unsatisfactory attitudes of a significant minority of pupils, particularly in higher attaining sets. In science, achievement is less in Years 10 and 11 because, unlike Years 7 to 9, planning of the course has been left more to individual teachers rather than being done through a comprehensive scheme of work; pupils' motivation has been lower, particularly when there have been several changes in the teacher. Whilst these problems are now being tackled, pupils show less motivation and interest than in earlier years because there is less variety and some lessons lack challenge. On the other hand, standards in art, which are average at the end of Year 9, are above average in Years 10 and 11; pupils are achieving very well with work that shows confidence and good technical skills. Pupils taking business studies respond very well to the stimulating teaching; as a result, standards are above average and pupils are achieving very well. Pupils are also achieving very well in drama, with high standards of practical work in individual and small group activities. As well as subjects already referred to, standards are above average with good achievement in citizenship, physical education, music and geography. Because not all pupils receive the necessary experiences in ICT in Years 10 and 11, standards overall are below average with unsatisfactory achievement.

6. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress. This is a result of the class teachers' awareness of their needs as set out in the individual education plans (EPs). Where pupils benefit from the very good support of teacher assistants (TAs), they make very good progress against the targets set in their IEPs. Where they are withdrawn in small groups for support with literacy or numeracy, they make very good progress in their understanding and use of the skills required in number operations or the understanding and use of words. Those who join the reading club on one morning a week during registration make good gains in their reading scores under the support of SEN staff and three Post 16 students. The close support of SEN staff for pupils on the autism spectrum has enabled them to develop more appropriate communication skills and settle more readily into most lessons.

Sixth form

7. Students' overall levels of attainment on entering the sixth form are somewhat above average in relation to the starting points of students embarking on A-level courses nationally. This reflects the above or well above average results that are achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11. Recent advanced level results have been well above average overall, and this represents good achievement for the vast majority of students. At the time of writing, complete national comparisons for 2002 are not available, but information provided by the school indicates very positive 'value added' between students' GCSE results in Year 2000 and their A2 results in 2002. Only four students seem to have done less well than would be expected, whereas 20 did better than would be expected, some of them by a significant amount. The others did at least as well as would be expected. Encouragingly, students from very different starting points have achieved equally well in relation to those starting points. An analysis of results from earlier years shows that, whilst there have been variations in performance between subjects, none show any particular cause for concern, and some, such as mathematics, have done consistently well for students. The numbers taking individual subjects vary considerably as have the total numbers in the sixth form in recent years. Numbers in some subjects remain low, but retention rates in most subjects are high. Few students fail to complete courses once they are fully committed to them, and, because of this, most achieve well.
8. The positive picture shown by examination results is confirmed by inspection evidence, although there is still some way to go if well above average standards are to be reached overall by the end of Year 13. Standards seen in the subjects inspected in depth at this inspection are above average with students achieving very well in business studies and art. Standards are above average with good achievement in psychology, technology, mathematics, English and history. Standards are in line with national standards with sound achievement in music and chemistry. There are no

noticeable differences in achievement between male and female students, although in some courses, there are unequal numbers of males and females taking the subject.

9. The standards being reached in particular subjects and in aspects of individual subjects reflect many factors, including students' prior attainment, the quality of teaching and students' attitudes. In mathematics, for example, students are more comfortable learning standard processes, relying on memory, rather than working out solutions to problems from first principles. Standards in chemistry are very variable; some students reach the very highest standards whilst others struggle with advanced work. Very good relationships in information and communication technology enable lessons to proceed with a good pace and students to make good progress. Students taking business studies are achieving particularly well because of their very good progress in acquiring knowledge and developing their analytical skills. Students in art are responding enthusiastically to the teachers' high expectations; as a result, they are achieving very well, with rising standards as they gain in confidence and in their expressive skills. In music, some external and other factors mean that standards are average rather than any higher, but students are capable performers. The above average standards in history are seen in clear and fluent essays and high quality coursework. In psychology, students successfully draw on a wide range of research evidence in their essays, but are less confident in discussing the implications of their own research findings. In English, students show a perceptive understanding of the literature they are studying, although they do not always bring knowledge from their own reading to their work. In lessons sampled in other subjects, the standards reached broadly matched those seen in other subjects, although, in some cases, courses are confined to Year 12 at present. There are no students with special educational needs in the present sixth form, but there is evidence of appropriate and successful support given to such students in the past.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are good overall, a fact noted with approval by parents, although, especially in Years 10 and 11, poorer attitudes in some lessons and subjects means that some pupils are not always achieving as well as they should. The pupils understand what the school stands for and most agree with its standards and values. The vast majority of pupils are happy in school and are prepared and keen to participate in lessons. For these pupils, their attitude is an important contributory factor in their learning. In lessons that provide a stimulating learning environment, these pupils contribute well by asking and answering questions and are keen to progress. For example, in a Year 11 class discussing a D H Lawrence poem, pupils engaged enthusiastically in the lesson and their strong personal responses contributed well to its success. Another example was a Year 10 French class, where pupils displayed real enthusiasm and a shared sense of fun in learning, with a general eagerness to answer questions. There are a few exceptions to this picture. For example, in a Year 9 basketball session, the immature behaviour of a small group disrupted the lesson. Some disaffected pupils are supported in small mentored groups; in one of these, five Year 11 girls dismissed working for their physics mock GCSE examination because, as one of them expressed it, 'revision does my head in'. More positively, pupils' level of participation in what the school offers them out of lessons is very good; for example, a significant number of pupils attend the range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. A majority of pupils are proud to be members of the English Martyrs community and subscribe to the values it upholds. They are uncomfortable with some of the more conservative aspects of the school, a good example being the girls' near-universal dislike of being made to wear skirts as uniform, but they do accept it as part of the package that the school offers.
11. A majority of parents think that behaviour in the school is good. Inspection evidence confirmed that behaviour is in fact good overall. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good or good in a high proportion of lessons. In most of them, teachers do not have to spend too much time maintaining order and pupils' behaviour contributes positively to their learning. For example, in a Year 10 French lesson, pupils were eager participants, with all of them focused on the task, working in pairs. Good behaviour does not always depend on good teaching; in some mathematics lessons in Years 8 and 9, pupils responded well despite the lacklustre teaching. Behaviour around the school is also generally good. The school buildings pose their own challenges in terms of congestion in corridors and stairwells at lesson changeover times. Pupils respond very well, usually behaving

very sensibly and safely in difficult circumstances. A particularly impressive example was the way that Year 9 pupils filed into the gymnasium for a year assembly in total silence, recovering their bags very sensibly from the crowded lobby afterwards. Pupils are trustworthy – leaving bags in corridors is not a problem. The level of litter around the school is very disappointing, as it was at the time of the last inspection, despite the number of litter bins provided. No bullying or harassment were seen during the inspection. Both parents and pupils recognise that there are some incidents, but they are relatively rare; they share a confidence that the school deals with incidents brought to its attention. In 2001/2 the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions was broadly in line with national averages, most relating to violence or persistent disruption of lessons.

12. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. The school has a large number of personable and mature young people whom it is a real pleasure to meet. Many have sufficient self-confidence to relate well to each other and adults. They can understand the impact of their actions on others very well; for example, in a Year 7 personal, health and social education (PHSE) lesson, they were able to empathise not only with the victim, but also to discuss the motivations of the bully. They can share resources well and are prepared to help each other in lessons. English Martyrs does not offer as many opportunities for pupils to take initiative and show personal responsibility as many other schools, but when opportunities do occur, pupils respond well. They know that they can organise things, rather than wait for teachers to do so; for example, charity events. However, much of their learning is quite teacher-directed and, as a result, pupils display a quite passive approach to it. Hence the level of initiative and personal responsibility they display is sound. The school's PHSE programme contributes positively to pupils' personal development. Pupils in all years are prepared to do the little jobs – sorting out textbooks, collecting in books, clearing up materials after a practical session and the like – that help to ensure that lessons run efficiently. The school does not have a pupil council or system of prefects; a real missed opportunity.
13. Relationships in the school are very good. Form tutors know the pupils in their tutor groups well and build a close relationship with them, and where it works well, this contributes to mutual respect and a partnership in learning. Pupils' relationships with other teachers also reflect the relative stability of the teaching staff in the school. The heads of year contribute well to relationships in the school, with pupils valuing their role. They stay with a year group as it progresses through the school, allowing them to get to know the pupils and to provide a stable influence in the lives of those pupils who need this help. Most pupils respect each other as individuals and understand the impact of their actions on others, with little friction evident. Pupils often empathise well. In group or paired work, they can share resources and co-operate with each other, respecting each other's beliefs. Low and high attaining pupils are often able to work constructively together and no pupil is excluded from the groups. Boys and girls usually work together unselfconsciously, an aspect often encouraged by the way that teachers organise the seating plan in classrooms.
14. Attendance is now above average. Last year, it was in line with the national average for a school of this type, as was the level of unauthorised absences within that overall picture. Against a local Leicester City context, last year the school showed the fourth best attendance figures out of 16 secondary schools in the LEA. Attendance has improved from levels that used to be unsatisfactory because of significant steps that have been taken and continue to be taken by the school to improve attendance. There are no marked differences in the attendance figures for pupils from different groups. Holidays taken in term time are one quite significant factor that lowers attendance rates. A number of pupils arrive late in the morning, although most are in school by the start of the first lesson.
15. The standards of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance have been maintained since the last inspection of the school, with the same strengths and areas for possible improvement.

Sixth form

16. Most students think that the school treats them as responsible young adults, although a significant minority think that it does not listen to their views. Despite this, their attitudes to their learning and to life in the sixth form are positive. They are happy and contented. They participate keenly in most lessons, demonstrating a clear interest in understanding the new concepts being presented to them. In almost all lessons, most show sustained concentration and a willingness to persevere even when tasks are initially difficult. Students' behaviour in lessons is very good. Within the sixth form area, despite the somewhat limited facilities, there is a good, friendly atmosphere. Students are relaxed and confident and willing to talk, with little prompting, about the subjects they are studying and what they have learnt.
17. The students' personal development and relationships are very good. This is reflected in lessons and in the wider life of the sixth form. Students show considerable interest in the lesson content, sustaining concentration and persevering when they encounter difficulties; this positive approach helps them to make progress in their studies. For example, the small Year 13 art group is made up of well-motivated students who are keen and responsive, enjoying the demands of their lessons. A Year 13 English lesson was actually taken by two students to help them to develop responsibility and independent learning. Some have been trained to act as mentors to younger pupils; a productive scheme for both parties. Students have also recently redecorated the sixth form common room.
18. Relationships are very good, both amongst the students themselves and with their teachers and tutors. The students show a good level of respect for the views of others and participate maturely in debate. For example, in a Year 13 critical thinking lesson, students discussed the issues in a mature manner in pairs, and then contributed very well to a class-wide debate, with individuals putting forward their views confidently, listening to others and then coming back with counter arguments. The light touch from the teacher, treating students as co-learners, combined with their own qualities to create a very positive climate for learning. Students' attendance is satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Although there are significant differences between the best and the weakest teaching, teaching is judged good overall. Indeed, in nearly three out of every ten lessons, teaching was judged very good or excellent, excluding the sixth form where teaching is even stronger. Excellent teaching was seen in a Year 8 science lesson; geography and French lessons in Year 9; French and art lessons in Year 10; and history and food technology lessons in Year 11. Unsatisfactory or poor teaching was seen in nine out of the 133 lessons observed in Years 7 to 11; about seven per cent. Tackling inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that all aspires to that of the best will ensure further improvement in the learning and achievements of pupils.
20. There is a very close link between the quality of teaching and learning. Both are very good in art and drama; teaching and learning are good in all years in English, music, citizenship, French and geography. Whilst, overall, there is little difference in the quality of teaching between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, it is noticeable that, in mathematics and science, it is better in Years 7 to 9 than it is in Years 10 and 11. This is the major factor in determining pupils' achievements in these subjects; in both subjects, the overall judgement on teaching and learning is satisfactory. In physical education and history, teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, but is judged good overall in both subjects. In design and technology, although teaching and learning are judged good overall, this masks very considerable inconsistencies between the different material areas and within the weaker area of resistant materials. In Years 10 and 11, for example, teaching in particular lessons varied from excellent in one food technology lesson to poor in one resistant materials lesson. No teaching was seen in business studies, which is only taught in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, however, the high standards, with pupils achieving very well, indicate high quality teaching and learning.

21. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach are considerable strengths of much of the teaching. Where this is the case, their infectious enthusiasm stimulates pupils' learning. This is particularly noticeable in art where excellent demonstrations, along with very good personal skills, generate a productive learning environment that makes for very good progress by pupils. In lessons in most subjects, teachers are totally confident in their subject knowledge and, as a result, explanations to pupils are clear. Even when the learning is passive, it is usually good enough for adequate progress to take place. On the rare occasions when teachers are less secure in their subject knowledge, this has a noticeably negative impact on learning.
22. Other characteristic features of better teaching are the high expectations teachers have of their pupils, and their good classroom management. Where these are not present, the quality and pace of learning generally are lower. There were a few lessons where pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes meant that, despite fundamentally sound teaching methods, adequate progress did not take place, and there were also a small number of lessons when pupils' very positive attitudes carried them through despite indifferent teaching. When teachers have high expectations, their lessons are inevitably well planned with a variety of teaching styles and learning methods that engage pupils' attention, resulting in a fast pace of learning and the rapid development of creative and intellectual skills.
23. Less successful teaching is often characterised by weaker classroom management and less effective planning, which usually means that the needs of different groups of pupils in the classroom are not sufficiently catered for. This is also the case with homework; generally, teachers make good use of homework, but, rather too often, it is merely a continuation or finishing off work, rather than an opportunity to take the learning further and provide different and challenging tasks for different groups of pupils. Another weakness of some less successful lessons is the over-dependence pupils have on their teacher for information and for their learning processes. When this is the case, pupils have few opportunities to develop creatively and intellectually, and this often means that different groups of pupils are insufficiently challenged. In such lessons, there is also a tendency for teachers to assume that, because they have given pupils some information, they will automatically remember it and understand it. Indeed, generally, teachers are less good at checking understanding on an ongoing basis in lessons than they are in marking and testing pupils retrospectively.
24. Most teachers make good arrangements to teach literacy skills because they acknowledge its importance. Sometimes, there is more emphasis on listening rather than speaking, but most teachers make good use of reading and encourage its development, and a variety of written work is used to develop a range of skills from note-making to posters and essays. Teaching of numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. Relatively little is done in mathematics and there is no systematic, whole-school strategy that is followed up in subject areas. Some, such as geography and physical education, include teaching some numeracy skills as part of their schemes of work, but this is not common. Teachers are increasingly using ICT as a tool in their teaching and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, teaching of ICT skills is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 because too much depends on pupils' choice of subjects. In some cases, they get extensive and valuable learning experiences; in other cases, they get few.
25. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. For the small groups of Year 7 pupils, who are withdrawn for support in literacy or numeracy, it is sometimes very good. Learning support teachers (LSTs) have specialist knowledge, as well as a very good knowledge of the needs of the pupils they teach. They use resources, often developed or modified by them, very effectively to ensure that pupils understand and learn from the teaching. The more practical lessons are particularly successful as pupils learn from the practical application of the skills they learn. Teacher assistants who support pupils with SEN in the classrooms give very good support in the subjects they work with. They know the pupils well and use their individual education plans (IEPs) very effectively to accelerate their progress in lessons where they would otherwise struggle to keep up. Where IEPs have subject specific targets added to the general learning targets, in geography and French for instance, support is more effective, because it is more tightly focused. Not all subjects provide either subject specific targets or a subject analysis of the targets in the light of the skills and resources available to them. This is a

developing area of teaching and learning that is informed by the revised Code of Practice. Where pupils are withdrawn because of more complex special educational needs, they are taught and supported well. Very positive and supportive relationships are a strength of this teaching.

26. There are many examples of very successful and less successful teaching in the subject reports. A few specific examples here illustrate the best practice that is found in the school. For a Year 8 science lesson, the teacher had an excellent range of elements and compounds displayed around the room; pupils circulated around deciding which were compounds and which elements they contained. It was a first-rate activity that challenged all pupils and extended higher attainers; pupils had to think whilst they wrote down their responses, and the teacher was constantly going around, asking further questions to take their thinking forward, making good use of praise. There was excellent attention to detail, very brisk timing and plenty of further activities for those who finished earlier activities. Everything was brought together in an excellent whole-class session in which all pupils were enthusiastic participants. A Year 9 geography lesson on trade and industry was excellent because it combined very thorough and effective planning, excellent use of a wide range of resources and first-rate management of the pupils. The teacher skilfully used a production model of crisp manufacture to enable pupils to focus on different roles in the production process. There was paired work, a task sheet and plenty of support from the teacher, but, throughout, pupils were challenged in their thinking; each stage was timed, with progressive development of reasoning skills. Expectations were very high and the teacher consistently set challenges appropriate to different groups in a class with a broad spectrum of ability.
27. A Year 10 French lesson was highly successful because of excellent relationships and a vast range of humorous approaches to support the learning; this enabled pupils to have extensive practice without obvious repetition. There were choral phrases, lip-reading, hidden words and many others; there were high levels of involvement by the pupils and opportunities to succeed. Paired work was highly productive and there was plenty of challenge from the fast pace and sustained use of the French language. All this and much more led to high quality learning. There was real enthusiasm by pupils and a shared sense of the fun of learning; all were eager to answer and there was no feeling of low self-esteem from this class of lower attaining pupils. They reacted positively to the homework set, and were keen to applaud the successes of others in the class. In a Year 11 food technology lesson, it was clear from the start that pupils were used to working very hard and had the highest standards of work and self-motivation. The range of food being prepared was very wide, showing an extensive multiethnic mix, including Italy, India and Cornwall. The products, once cooked, were of the highest standards; pupils motivated themselves, and the pace of their working was as fast as it could possibly be. They were very mature, answering questions clearly and easily about their recipes, ideas and the reasons for their choices. The real success of the lesson was the high quality, independent work and learning sustained throughout the lesson by the pupils. However, this was only possible because of the very high quality teaching in this lesson, and, clearly, over a long period of time. The teacher exuded confidence and the pupils had absolute confidence in her, listening with rapt attention when she spoke to the whole class. This was teaching and learning at their very best.

Sixth form

28. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and is more consistent in its quality than in the rest of the school. Along with the very good attitudes of students, it is a major contributory factor to the good learning that takes place and to the above average achieved by sixth form students. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and, in only nine per cent of lessons, was teaching less than good. In one half of the lessons seen, it was judged good; in nearly one third it was judged very good, whilst in three of the 34 lessons observed, it was judged excellent. Of the nine subjects inspected in depth, teaching was judged excellent in business studies, very good in art, good in English, mathematics, music, history, psychology and information and communication technology and satisfactory in chemistry.
29. As in the main school, one of the major strengths of the teaching is the depth of the teachers' knowledge of their subjects. They are enthusiastic about their subjects and their knowledge and enthusiasm mean that students' intellectual curiosity is stimulated and their understanding is

thorough. In business studies, for example, the teaching inspires confidence in students and, as a result, their learning is exceptionally good. In art, the teachers work very well as a team and play to their strengths. The result is a very well balanced programme of teaching that promotes very good learning. The teaching is imaginative and this allows students to explore and experiment and so build up their knowledge and skills. This imaginative approach is also seen in English, encouraging students to develop their thinking and take responsibility for their own learning. Indeed, the degree to which students have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning is one important factor that distinguishes the best teaching from other teaching which, whilst satisfactory or even good, does not take students' learning forward as quickly. In some lessons, students' learning tends to be too dependent on their teachers. Planning does not create sufficient opportunities for students to develop their skills as independent learners.

30. Planning is a key factor in the quality of teaching, contributing much to the pace of learning. In a very good geography lesson, highly-detailed planning was essential to its success because, although the group was very small, the students' needs were very different. In order to cater well for all needs, the teacher provided a very wide range of resources, broke up the lesson into a series of varied, but interconnected activities and achieved a commendable balance between providing a basic core of knowledge and opportunities for independent work that challenged students at an appropriate level. As a result, the students' knowledge of their own learning was high. This is also one of the many strengths of the teaching in business studies; the ongoing assessment is excellent, with marking very effectively identifying strengths and weaknesses so that students know how to improve their work. In subjects where ongoing assessment in individual lessons and marking is not as good, students have fewer opportunities to know how well they are doing, and, hence, fewer opportunities to focus on areas that need improvement.
31. The use of ICT in sixth form teaching is variable; students do use the Internet for their research, although sometimes this is not independent because they are following up suggestions from the teacher. However, there is much encouragement to students to use ICT to present their work, and the good ICT facilities provided for students help them to develop their skills. Although it was not possible to see a lesson and, therefore, not possible to judge the quality of teaching, a key skills course in ICT is available.

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

32. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory throughout the school. However, statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11 in ICT, as elements such as modelling, monitoring and control are not covered insufficiently for all pupils. Generally, the curriculum is broad and balanced throughout the school and there are some enrichment activities outside curriculum time. The curriculum in most subject areas is sound, although it is good in art, history and geography. However, there has been little development of the whole-school curriculum in recent years. One consequence is that the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is not sufficiently meeting the individual needs of all pupils, as there are insufficient pathways into a range of Post 16 courses within and away from school. The implications of the bid for performing arts status is of considerable importance for the school's curriculum, because, if the bid is successful, curriculum review and replanning will be essential features of the process of implementing the aims of the bid.
33. In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow a common curriculum. All subjects of the National Curriculum are provided, together with drama and religious education. A higher than average amount of time is given to religious education, as would be expected in a Roman Catholic school. Unusually, only one modern foreign language is taught, but the good achievements of pupils in French indicate that the school's provision is sound. The rotational arrangement with modern foreign languages, which allows for the teaching of a personal, health and social education course (PHSE), with guidance and elements of citizenship specifically included, is satisfactory, although breaks in the continuity of the course mean that it does not have as full an impact as would be possible in a course running throughout the year. Whole-day courses for groups, however, successfully provide the 'big dimension' to important topics; for example, a Year 10 enterprise day. Statutory requirements for physical education are now met, which was not so at the previous inspection.

34. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a common core curriculum, which includes English, mathematics, double science, French, design and technology, religious education and a non-examination course in physical education. Pupils choose one subject from each of three option blocks to supplement the core programme; as a result, pupils take ten GCSE subjects. Choices for Years 10 and 11 pupils are very limited in scope. Business studies is the only course that has a vocational focus; there are no GNVQ courses. However, within the physical education programme, a large number of pupils successfully follow the Junior Sports Leaders Award of the Central Council for Physical Recreation – a worthwhile broadening of the curriculum for these pupils. There are also some very positive enrichment opportunities outside the timetabled curriculum; for example, pupils can study Spanish and Polish. Whilst the curriculum provision is broadly balanced, it is restrictive both in its overall provision and in a degree of inflexibility to meet individual needs.
35. Strategies for the effective teaching of literacy and numeracy skills are not coherent enough. In practice, literacy skills are well taught because individual subject areas recognise the importance of doing so and have their own policies and strategies that are reflected in schemes of work and other ways, such as the display of key words in classrooms. However, practice is not consistent across subjects. The lack of clear lines of responsibility for implementing the strategy, and the absence of a whole-school policy, are the main reasons why strategies used in the school are not coherent enough to have their full impact. The lack of coherence of strategies for the effective teaching of numeracy results in unsatisfactory provision. Individual subjects do much less to teach numeracy skills than they do to teach literacy skills. Because of this, and the relatively little that is done in mathematics, many pupils' numeracy skills are relatively weak, particularly with lower attainers. Some subjects do make effective use of numeracy, but the lack of effective whole-school policies and strategies to teach numeracy means that many pupils are insecure when confronted by slightly unusual numerical problems. Despite shortcomings already referred to about ICT curriculum provision in Years 10 and 11, the school's provision overall and use of ICT across the curriculum has improved very significantly since the last inspection. Recent developments in the provision of networked computer rooms have increased opportunities, and the very good training and in-class support that teachers have mean that they can make effective provision in their areas of the curriculum for pupils to use ICT.
36. Curriculum provision and support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Strong support is given by the learning support department through its learning support teachers (LSTs) and teacher assistants (TAs). The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) visits primary feeder schools to clarify curriculum needs and individual education plans are drawn up for all those pupils on the register of special needs. These are given to every subject and teachers are asked to add subject specific targets to them, although this process is still developing. All subjects have a named liaison person as another step towards the effective curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs. There is also good provision for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need, although the present lack of transparency in the financial provision for them means that the SENCO cannot be certain about the provision and deployment of her staff from year to year. The ability of different subjects to provide an effective curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is helped by the very useful booklets provided by the learning support department that explain the key categories of special need, and these are available in subject areas and the library. Resources are generally good, but there is a need to improve resources for supporting pupils with specific learning needs.
37. The provision for PHSE is good. Close integration with religious education and the citizenship curriculum means that this work is set in a wider context that reflects the school's values. The programme is well planned to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, contributing well to pupils' personal development, including all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness. The blocks of lessons are well timed to develop pupils' understanding of issues directly relevant to their lives. For example, in a Year 9 drugs education lesson, pupils were learning of the dangers of solvent abuse at an age when this problem peaks. The co-ordination of the subject is effective. However, although workbooks are provided for form tutors to teach PHSE topics in the morning tutorial periods, this approach is not effective, because the 20 minutes

available is insufficient for this and other tasks that are undertaken at this time. Similarly, the impact of assemblies is also diluted by the rush that is imposed by time restraints.

38. The careers education provided by the school is satisfactory. There is a satisfactory programme of support starting in Year 9, helping pupils to decide on their strengths and weaknesses. The work experience provided to pupils in Year 10 allows them to develop their ideas on future directions further, with useful support from careers advisers for those who request it. A five-week block of lessons in Year 11 completes the programme. Pupils feel that sufficient advice is there if they ask for it. A key development, of offering some pupils the possibility of taking vocational courses, has yet to be put into place.
39. The local community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Local businesses currently support the school well by providing work experience opportunities for the pupils. Links with local Catholic parishes are very strong and contribute enormously to the school's ethos, with local priests acting as chaplains to various year groups and providing a frequent church presence in the school. Volunteers recruited through the local Education and Business Partnership act as mentors to 14 pupils in the school; an effective and very worthwhile support for those involved.
40. A good range of extra-curricular sporting activities is provided and is attended by both boys and girls. All physical education staff give freely of their time to provide extra-curricular sporting activities. Many subjects provide additional clubs to support students with their studies; for example, art and music. In modern foreign languages regular visits to Normandy involve over 40 pupils. English enrichment is provided through theatre visits. Workshops at the Leicester Haymarket Theatre enhance the quality of drama. Pupils are encouraged and very successfully undertake charitable work.
41. The school has very constructive relationships with partner institutions. There are very good induction arrangements with the four main feeder primary schools, with the primary liaison officer visiting them regularly. Pupils in Year 6 spend several days in English Martyrs before they join the school, and there are some productive links with some different subjects. In 2001/2, these covered five subjects. The school uses information from feeder schools to plan Year 7 tutor groups and to assess special educational needs. The primary schools benefit from use of the specialist facilities such as ICT rooms available in the senior school. The Excellence in Cities scheme has brought the secondary schools in Leicester closer together in a number of programmes, to the benefit of all their pupils.

Educational Inclusion

42. The school is keen to support, help and integrate boys and girls from all backgrounds, including different racial groups. It does this successfully, ensuring that the academic, spiritual and social needs of all individuals are taken into account. Attempts to monitor the progress of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds have been limited by many parents not declaring their ethnic origin. However, the school does monitor behaviour and social groupings as part of its policy on racial and sexual equality. There are no unusual patterns in the achievements of different groups of pupils, with differences, for example, between girls' and boys' achievements being similar to national differences.
43. Gifted pupils of all backgrounds are identified so that all teachers know whom they are. Subject departments also identify pupils who show a particular talent, sometimes giving extended work or more difficult tasks. The amount of extra support given to these pupils varies between subjects and is not effectively monitored. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in extra visits or activities, such as a recent lecture on 'forensic science'. Overall, in relation to their abilities, gifted and talented pupils make similar progress to most pupils. There are some unsatisfactory aspects of the school's inclusion arrangements in Years 10 and 11. The structure of the timetable in design and technology means that not all boys can choose food or textiles when they want to do so, and ICT does not provide equal opportunities to study the full curriculum for all pupils because the ICT they are taught depends on the subjects they choose.

44. The school makes good provision for the 40 pupils that the school has identified as speaking English as an additional language; they achieve well, although none, at present, are at an early stage of learning English. The school has help from the local education authority in the form of advice and support. A programme of English lessons is arranged through the special educational needs department and other subject areas are advised on how to help pupils in class. In a science lesson, for instance, a recently arrived pupil was helped by extra explanation and support from another pupil. The school has made suitable arrangements to obtain extra funding to deal with any extra influx of pupils with English as an additional language in the future.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

45. The school's commitment to the Christian faith supports its concern for the development of the whole person. Provision for the spiritual development of the pupils is very good. During services of reconciliation, pupils made good use of the opportunity to reflect on their possible contributions to others and to meditate on the concept of forgiveness. The new chapel in the heart of the school provides a place of calm and quiet that is freely available for the pupils to use. School retreats to Ampleforth are oversubscribed and the 'Rock Solid' group provides a forum for pupils to discuss issues related to faith. The quality of 'morning prayer', in tutor time on days when pupils do not attend assembly, varies in quality and delivery, however, pupils receive it with respect. In some lessons pupils have the opportunity to reflect on what they learn, as was demonstrated in very sensitive writing by history pupils about their response to the film 'Schindler's List'. Religious education lessons in particular are conducted in a reflective spiritual atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to form their own beliefs. Through art, pupils have good provision for creative expression and their work is celebrated in display. In some other subjects, however, some opportunities to wonder at the world in which they live are missed.
46. The school makes very good provision for the moral development of its pupils. The ethos of the school encourages pupils to feel part of a community and to consider the welfare of others. They demonstrate this through the fund-raising for good causes; the support for fellow pupils in Ghana and India is an excellent example to them of the power of the individual to make a difference. The ongoing connection with these centres encourages pupils to be aware of the value of education to all and the need to support them. Pupils have clear understanding of right and wrong, based on the Christian message. Teachers are good role models and expectations of attitudes and behaviour are high. Pupils have the opportunity to discuss moral issues in many subjects, and a drama production in collaboration with the science department enabled pupils to explore the ramifications of IVF treatment, and gained regional success.
47. Provision for the social development of pupils is good. The school has a well-organised system of mentoring to support pupils, and the anger management course enables pupils to develop more secure social skills. The 'happy to help' scheme is a very good way to encourage pupils to support and welcome new entrants to the school, and emphasises the community spirit. Good opportunities for group work are provided in many areas and in the range of extra-curricular clubs available. School productions and sports teams provide good opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively and to take responsibility. However, there are very few opportunities for pupils to develop leadership and management skills, and there is no forum that enables pupils to have a voice in the organisation of the school, although there are now plans for one. Their opinions are heard, but only informally. As a result, they do not feel responsible for the direction of their school or that they are able to take a lead in its development. Change is viewed as led by teachers, although pupils are generally compliant with it. In discussion with pupils, few had considered how their school could be improved, and problems such as dissatisfaction over the apparent inflexibility of target setting, for example, were considered insurmountable. The level of litter and, in particular, the amount of chewing gum on the floors, indicates that pupils do not generally feel responsible for their school environment. Where pupils are been empowered to act, as part of a new environmental group in Year 10, they are able to make a real improvement to the quality of the environment, such as the decoration in the learning support room.
48. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to appreciate the culture of Britain through visits to the theatre, art galleries and concerts including a recent visit to the opera at Glyndebourne. The

school supports a range of music groups including chamber choirs and orchestras that enable pupils to develop their talents and confidence, performing for their schoolfellows and parents. The annual 'Menphys Concert' combines spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as pupils perform with those from other schools in a concert to raise money for charities that support the mentally handicapped. The annual French visit to Normandy for Year 8 pupils is a valuable cultural experience. Although food technology reflects the diversity of diets, and in art and textiles pupils consider designs from other cultures, opportunities for pupils to celebrate the variety of cultures in Britain today are very limited outside the range of the syllabi. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to experience the multicultural nature of Leicester, so, whilst overall provision for cultural development is satisfactory, there are inadequacies in the provision for developing pupils' awareness of other cultures. Music, for example, predominantly reflects western classical music, and there is little regard in mathematics for the traditions and heritage of the subject that would reflect the major contributions of other cultures. Opportunities are missed to involve members of staff from different cultural backgrounds in contributing to first-hand experiences for the pupils.

Sixth form

49. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. The lack of vocational courses is explained by the fact that the school has made a conscious decision to complement other provision in the area at colleges of further education and other schools.
50. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that the courses available in the sixth form meet the academic needs of their students. Recruitment of students from the main school is very variable; there is a minimum entry requirement of five A* - C grades. The school provides 19 subjects at AS and A2 level; two additional AS courses are provided in critical thinking and key skills. An AS and A2 sports studies course was introduced in 2001. In Year 12, all students take at least four subjects at AS level with one third taking five AS levels. There is also a weekly tutor period which includes lessons in study skills. Most Year 13 students take three courses at A2 level with about one third doing AS critical thinking. Religious education is a weekly lesson for all sixth form students; there is also a weekly tutor period and a lesson of study skills. The school has plans to introduce some vocational subjects in order that students can continue to study the subject of their choice at their preferred institution. The range and quality of enrichment courses are good. Three-quarters of students in Year 12 attend a very valuable three-day residential course. There is a wealth of opportunities to develop photography, sporting activities at a leisure centre, business studies and keyboard skills, and to support younger pupils with their reading.
51. Within the sixth form, all courses are open to all students, and most courses are studied by both male and female students. If the application to become a Performing Arts College for art, music, drama and dance is successful, there will be significant opportunities to expand the curriculum to include a range of vocational subjects to complement the academic programme.
52. The quality of the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They feel part of a close-knit community and are well known to their form tutors. Opportunities for reflection take place in some registration periods and 'morning prayer' is received with respect by the students. The quality of this time varies and is dependent on the tutor. Services of reconciliation in preparation for key periods of the religious calendar are well received and the chapel is freely available for students' use. During the religious education period in Year 12, they have the opportunity to consider human rights' issues through the AS-level course on ethics. Students appreciate the visits to Ampleforth at the start of the year, where they have the opportunity to strengthen their sense of community as a sixth form and share in prayer and team building. Good opportunities exist for students to visit theatres, galleries and the opera to support their studies and widen their cultural experience.
53. Students give support in some curriculum areas in the main school, such as in food technology classes for Year 7. They are being trained to act as mentors for younger pupils. They support pupils in the reading club and provide information for Year 11 on their experiences of courses in the sixth form. When students have the opportunity to organise activities for the main school such as a disco, they respond well. However, they have no clear responsibility or leadership in the school

other than that of being a member of a community, and younger pupils do not look to them for leadership. There is scope for students to become more involved in the wider community and to develop their understanding of the multicultural world they are likely to meet when they go on to higher education or the world of work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. Most parents think that the school is helping their sons and daughters to become mature and responsible. The school provides a caring and supportive environment in which pupils can feel safe and valued, allowing them to concentrate on their learning. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The senior member of staff responsible for child protection is experienced and has received suitable training. The school follows local guidelines and liaises with the local social services departments as required. Adults in the school are made aware of their child protection responsibilities and proper records are kept. There is good provision within the PHSE programme to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own safety. The school site generally provides a safe environment and routine health and safety procedures and testing are in place. Governors have been actively involved and individual departments have conducted their own risk assessments to augment the school-wide procedures. A very recent audit has highlighted that much of the machinery in the information and communication technology department has to be out of use because it needs safety-related work. Procedures in the science department are safe, but they need to be formalised through proper risk assessment documentation. Risk assessments in physical education are very thorough. No unsafe practice was seen in lessons during the inspection. There are good risk assessment procedures in place for school trips. The school's Internet policy lays down effective procedures for protecting pupils accessing the Internet, including an acceptable 'use agreement' that pupils have to sign.
55. All teachers are active in the pastoral care of their pupils. The senior management team and teachers at all levels make considerable efforts to address the welfare of individual pupils. Pupils believe that the staff are approachable, are genuinely concerned to help them when they need it and that they do their best to resolve any problems they have. The school is effective in helping pupils to become mature and responsible individuals, assisting them to face the challenges in their everyday lives. The school has a good mentoring programme in place, developed as part of the Excellence in Cities initiative, to support disaffected pupils and those who find it difficult to learn in a class environment, teaching them strategies to help them to cope.
56. The school has good and much improved procedures to monitor attendance and encourage pupils to come to school regularly. An attendance officer is employed to identify problems as they emerge, using the computerised data collection system. She follows-up attendance problems quickly by contacting parents, with a first-day telephone response when identified pupils are absent. The school is served well by two education welfare officers who have meetings with heads of year on a weekly basis. There is an effective system of awards to individuals and tutor groups to encourage good attendance.
57. There are good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour. The school has a satisfactory and clear code of conduct backed up by a system of rewards and sanctions, which are well known to pupils. In most lessons, the behaviour management skills of the individual teacher are evident and sufficient to control pupils effectively. However, the practice in the school is based on the assumption that this will work and that formal systems are, in a sense, a fallback rather than a first line of management. In reality even the best teachers can experience problems when a significant proportion of a class decides not to co-operate. During the inspection, there were examples of the same teacher delivering the same lesson to different classes; in one case it worked well, in the other the lesson was a struggle to maintain order. In these circumstances clear, school-wide expectations and systems can provide crucial support to the teacher. Currently, teachers do not have a clear line to hold. For example, in one lesson a teacher was seen giving pupils lines as a punishment, in another extra homework was used as a threat, in a third aspects of a formal discipline code were being applied. Discipline in a school of this size inevitably involves developing a clear pattern of liaison between the subject departments delivering lessons and the pastoral teams. Although the heads of year are effective in dealing with significant problems,

liaison between the various teams is more variable when it comes to more day-to-day misbehaviour. A clearer view of where responsibilities lie and consistent implementation would improve the current systems. Fixed-term exclusions are rightly used sparingly as a punishment, although most are for four days or more – a more limited exclusion can sometimes be useful for some pupils. One particularly positive programme is a series of group sessions, run by a teacher within a Behaviour Support Services' initiative, to help chosen groups of pupils to focus on productive classroom behaviour. The school's written policy on behaviour and discipline is too vague and it needs to lay down clear expectations and procedures for the benefit of staff, parents and pupils.

58. Procedures for dealing with oppressive behaviour are good. Pupils do believe that the school will help them and are usually prepared to approach somebody when problems occur. In this, actual practice is better than the school policy statement, which is very short and lacks any detail. A couple of parents who had concerns with regards to isolated cases of bullying would be more reassured if the school's response to such issues was clearly laid down for staff, pupils and parents to see. Bullying as a topic is covered well in the Year 7 PHSE curriculum, enabling pupils to understand it and giving them strategies to deal with it if it occurs.
59. The school has maintained its provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils since the last inspection, with the same strengths and areas for possible improvement.

Assessment

60. The school's procedures for assessing the pupils' academic progress are satisfactory, although there are variations; for example, it is unsatisfactory in ICT, but very good in English and geography. The assessment policy dates from before the time of the last inspection, when it was described as good, with excellent potential. There are still many good features that include: the thoroughness with which data from tests at the end of primary school are combined with tests given on entry to the school to help to inform targets for pupils to aspire to and exceed; the use of such information to allocate pupils to special support groups; the analysis of GCSE results in relation to targets set in schools in Leicester as well as across the country and the breakdown of GCSE results by gender. However, the original policy has undergone several changes since 1997 and these have not been formalised into a coherent new policy.
61. The concept of setting a minimum target in Year 7, for which pupils should aim to attain in Year 11, leaves little room to accommodate changes in the pupil's circumstances. Furthermore, by using the same scale through the National Curriculum Years 7 to 9 and through the GCSE Years 10 to 11, the intended clarity and simplicity obscures the issue of how pupils are progressing against national measures. This, in turn, leads to a degree of inflation of results in some subjects' assessments in Year 9, giving a false picture to teachers in their preparation of courses and lessons and causing some concern to pupils, parents and teachers. At present many subjects see the need to review their assessment policy, including the way target and predicted grades are set. Some use National Curriculum measures, others develop their own. For example, in history there is no clear system of assessment to enable secure judgements of the National Curriculum Levels. There is good practice in English, but targets for improvement could sometimes be more specific and more closely linked with assessment criteria. However, the use of National Curriculum Levels in art allows for the successful tracking of specific progress. In the school as a whole, the lack of overall co-ordination means that the considerable amount of accumulated assessment information is not being put to the most purposeful use, namely of enabling 'reliable' comparisons to take place either with other schools or between subjects. The tracking of the progress of pupils of different ethnic groups and of gifted and talented pupils is insubstantial, partly because many parents do not give information on the ethnic origins of their children.
62. The school's policy, to be implemented in 2003, is to issue assessment information to parents, pupils and staff once each term, with a full report yearly. By setting this against the five-year target grade, the school is able to identify underachievement and to take action to address this. Although there is a school marking policy, there are several different arrangements in different subjects, making for inconsistencies across the school. There are opportunities for pupils to make self-

evaluations of their progress in the yearly reports, with interviews in Years 9, 10 and 11, and in Year 7 within the pastoral programme. Overall, the procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory.

63. The school's use of assessment information to influence planning and teaching is unsatisfactory overall. By not assessing directly to National Curriculum criteria in Years 7 to 9, application is inconsistent across the school. It is not, therefore, possible to identify adequately how well various subject areas are performing to influence whole-school planning. The rigidity of the system also means that at the end of Year 9, when parameters change due to subject options, the unrevised minimum target grade is no longer reliable for assisting planning within subject areas. Several subjects have identified assessment as an area for improvement in subject development plans.

Sixth form

Assessment

64. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress in the sixth form are very good. At the beginning of Year 12, students and their tutors agree minimum target grades for each subject, using their GCSE grades and national data on progress from GCSE to A level. Each of the three units of the AS and A2 courses is assessed by tests at appropriate times and, to ensure that students are on course, mid-unit reviews are undertaken too. These inform interim grades for each subject, helping to predict possible final grades. The annual reports include statements from tutors, heads of year and the headteacher. Before receiving these, students are required to undertake a self-evaluation exercise, considering a series of well-formulated questions to review their perceptions of their progress. A further self-evaluation is made to encourage students to reflect on issues not so directly academic in nature to both inform their attitudes positively and assist teachers in planning and in their relationships with the students. Most students feel that they know how well they are doing, although some Year 13 students are unaware of their predicted grades, despite the initial agreements with their tutors. Others feel that the target grades based on GSCE results are too high and consider them as goals in themselves, rather than indicators of levels that can be exceeded in advanced level examinations.
65. Teachers provide a good level of one-to-one attention and know their individual students' learning needs well, although this does vary from subject to subject. The use made of assessment information to guide teachers' planning is again good overall with some inconsistencies between subjects. Part of the reason for this is that there is good oral and informal assessment in very small groups in several subjects. However, a consequence of this is less effective use of assessment at whole-school level.

Advice, support and guidance

66. The school provides a caring and supportive environment in which students can feel safe and valued, allowing them to develop as young adults and to concentrate on their studies. Procedures for child protection and ensuring their health and safety are in place.
67. Sixth form managers and tutors are active in providing guidance and help when students need it, and this is appreciated by members of the sixth form. The relatively small number of students helps teachers to know them well as individuals and to provide personal support, although there were very mixed opinions amongst students on how much they could rely on such help. Induction arrangements to support the students as they move into the sixth form are effective, helping them to settle quickly and feel confident in their new learning environment.
68. Some students indicate that they do not think that they receive good advice on what path to follow once they leave English Martyrs. The school is stronger on university choices compared with other pathways, and there are good developing links with the local universities to give students a good idea of university life. Most students do go on to higher education and, to some degree, the programme is, therefore, geared to their needs in terms of support for application to higher

education, but the needs of other students are also important. Overall the careers guidance is sound.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

69. Only a few parents attended the parents' evening and the response to the questionnaire was also disappointing, meaning that only a minority of the parents took the opportunity to express their views of the school. The majority of those who did so were positive about all aspects of the school. In particular, parents believe that their children work hard and make good progress, that the school is approachable and helps children to become mature, and has a good range of activities outside of lessons. A few would like to see improvements in the information they receive on their child's progress, the way the school works with parents and the amount of homework set. Inspection findings generally support the parents' views on the school's strengths. With some exceptions, homework is set appropriately. Information on pupils' progress is given to parents through the written reports that, although good, could be improved in detail, and through parents' evenings, where the same criticisms of lack of time have emerged in this inspection as they did during the last one. The very wide catchment area for the school inevitably makes it difficult to work with parents closely, but the school does make good efforts to work with parents and enlist their views. Overall, parents have a good opinion of the school and it has their confidence. The strength of English Martyr's reputation is reflected in the fact that there are more applications than there are places within it.
70. The information that the school provides for parents is satisfactory. Parents are kept informed about the life of the school through good regular newsletters. The prospectus is a very glossy and well-produced document that gives a good flavour of the school, whilst the latest 2001/2 governors' annual report to parents meets requirements. The information booklets provided for each year group hold useful information and are surprisingly quirky – a bit out of character for this school. The annual report of pupil's progress has good features, particularly the way each subject uses a common format for their page within it. Teachers' comments are usually relevant and often perceptive. The school uses its own grading system to measure attainment on a 1-10 scale, with a translation to convert it to National Curriculum or external examination grades. It would be far easier to understand if these grades were expressed directly. There is a high turnout for the annual meeting with teachers.
71. Pupils' homework diaries provide a good way for parents to keep track of homework and also to communicate in an informal way with form tutors. Diaries are being used and taken seriously by pupils and teachers, with most being signed regularly by both the form tutor and the parent. The school places emphasis on involving parents when a pupil is having problems conforming to the school's expectations, and this approach is often productive in getting a good partnership to support the individual concerned. Many parents contribute to children's learning at home, assisted by the information that they can access via their child's student planner. The school has an active friends association, which meets regularly to discuss ways of supporting their young people and the school. Overall, the impact of parents' involvement with the school is good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

72. The vision of the school to ensure that it is a living Christian community concerned with the Christian formation of each of its members is very clear in its mission statement and in its published aims. There are thorough procedures for reviewing examination results at whole-school and subject level, and for generating targets, objectives and tasks for the school and subjects in an annual development planning cycle. However, there are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school. The principal weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school are a lack of clarity in strategic planning that links the vision with the implementation of specific objectives and a lack of coherence in the overall leadership and direction of some key areas of the school's work. These weaknesses mean that, whilst the school is generally well managed, it is not moving forward as many schools, and is not, at present, realising the full potential of all its pupils, students and teachers.
73. Because strategic development planning is unclear, the necessary link, over a number of years, between the school's budget and its overarching aims is not apparent. This has resulted in financial decisions that are not part of a strategic or transparent rationale. There are many very capable and committed leaders at senior and middle management level in the school. The success of the school in very many ways is testimony to their work and dedication. The arrival of a new headteacher presents a valuable opportunity to reassess leadership roles, management structures and how best to achieve an agreed set of priorities over a number of years. At present, the leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory, but they have the potential to take the school further forward in its task of fully preparing pupils and students for their lives in the 21st century.
74. Earlier sections in this report on teaching and learning, the curriculum and assessment refer to areas where strengthening leadership and management should bring about further improvement, and later paragraphs on staffing, accommodation, resources and efficiency also highlight aspects of leadership and management. This paragraph sets out the key issues from these areas in a series of short statements. Variations in the quality of teaching and learning between and within subjects raise questions about the effectiveness of present systems to manage the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the sharing of good practice. Similarly, despite elaborate procedures, the assessment systems are not as effective as they should be, with the school at present operating a system in need of overhaul at whole-school level. The limited breadth of the curriculum restricts the number of pathways that are open to pupils. It highlights the need to manage the curriculum as a developing continuum from Years 7 to 13, based on the needs of pupils and students now and in the years to come, and of the need to have a strategic staffing policy that is led by the needs of the curriculum. Part of an active staffing policy, in a time of a national shortage of teachers, needs to include strategies for recruitment, induction and retention. With the inevitable tensions in the school budget, especially between the costs of staffing, learning resources and the buildings and grounds, a logical and rational balance to financial expenditure, including a long-term buildings strategy, is essential to ensure the most efficient use of the school's financial resources.
75. The inspection team takes the view that a crucially important step in taking the school further forward is the production of a high quality, strategic development plan. The present annual development plan, both at whole-school and subject level, contains many objectives and tasks, but does not have key aims that then lead to objectives. The objectives lack costings, timescales, measures of success, clear lines of responsibility and evaluation procedures. The links between the development plan and longer-term aims are not clear, and there is no longer-term financial strategy to ensure the viability of particular objectives. One weakness is the lack of clarity in the identification of key people who are responsible for leading and managing whole-school matters, and few senior staff have had recent professional development and training in the complex issues of leading and managing large schools.
76. All subjects are effectively or soundly led, and leadership and management is particularly good in art, English and geography. The school is also well served by its pastoral managers, with heads of year working effectively as a team, although liaison with heads of subject is not so good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) gives the learning support department strong,

committed and experienced leadership. The complex task of managing and organising the provision is done without clerical support; something that is needed now that the school is working effectively to the guidelines in the revised Code of Practice.

77. Governors fulfil their role satisfactorily. They are very proud of 'their' school, and many have long associations with it. The nature of a Voluntary Aided school necessitates their close involvement with buildings, and the collaborative financial arrangements between the Catholic schools in the area also requires the close involvement of some governors in these negotiations. Governors play their part in these arrangements and have an effective structure of committees and full meetings to undertake their role successfully. Governors are well informed through the large amount of information they receive, and the link arrangements with subjects are also a helpful way in which governors have a feel for what is going on. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which was particularly important in the appointment process of the new headteacher. However, they are less involved than some governing bodies in strategic planning, a role that will become increasingly important in determining the school's priorities.

Staffing

78. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good overall. It is good in most subjects because they are fully staffed by subject specialists. However, it is unsatisfactory in aspects of design and technology because there are gaps in expertise in teaching graphical design; this is having a detrimental effect on pupils' attainment and progress in this area. In some subjects, such as art and geography, standards are rising as a result of very good staffing appointments recently or in the last year or so. There has been a high turnover of teachers in the last two years, much of it due to promotion and, although the school works hard to appoint replacement teachers, there are currently temporary teachers in some subjects. The absence of whole-school planning for recruitment and retention of staff means that the long-term staffing needs are not being identified and planned for early enough. The level of technical support in science and design and technology is satisfactory and makes an effective contribution to learning because teachers are able to devote more of their time to pupils in lessons. The absence of a language assistant in French, however, reduces opportunity for pupils to practise and improve their speaking skills.
79. Arrangements for the induction of teachers new to the school are satisfactory, but much better for newly qualified teachers than for experienced teachers who join the school. There is a clear structure of support, led by a senior teacher, to meet the needs of newly qualified teachers, and this works well in informing them about school routines and supports their professional development. Progress is well monitored through lesson observations and meetings throughout the year. The provision for other new teachers, however, relies on the initiative of the heads of subjects and the quality of support received is variable. The school has links with local universities, but the links are insufficiently developed in contributing to the training of future teachers and potential recruitment of teachers to the school.
80. The school's procedures for performance management are satisfactory. There are established procedures to monitor teaching on a regular basis and whole-school initiatives provide opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching skills. This has been successful; for example, in improving teachers' competence in using ICT in lessons, with the result that, although there is still some way to go in several subjects, more teachers now regularly use computers to support learning. However, the variability in the quality of teaching indicates that, whilst monitoring of teaching is taking place, its impact as a powerful tool to improve teaching and to share good practice is less than is found in many schools. The school has a policy for professional development of staff, and teachers are given opportunities to update their professional skills, but the uptake is variable. Over an extended period, teachers of English, for example, regularly updated their knowledge and skills through attendance on training courses and this has contributed well to the achievement of high standards in the subject. On the other hand some teachers, including senior and middle managers, have not taken the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge of educational developments through attendance on training and other professional development courses. The same opportunities to participate in the performance

management process are not yet available for support staff, such as those with responsibilities in administration and premises.

Accommodation

81. Although, in many ways, the school adapts well to the limitations of its buildings, overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory despite the positive aspects. The number of teaching areas is adequate for the curriculum, subjects tend to be taught in adjacent or nearby rooms and most teachers have a regular base. This helps the organisation of teaching and the management of subjects. There is good provision of offices for subject and pastoral leaders. There have been major improvements in the provision of new rooms for ICT. These are bright and well equipped; they are having a major impact on the improvements in ICT in the school. The library, which had been unsatisfactory at the last inspection, has been developed into an excellent resource. It is an attractive environment for work and study, with a book stock that has been updated and with good ICT provision. There is now a full-time librarian whose enthusiasm has made this area a popular and well-used resource for staff and pupils throughout and beyond the school day. The teaching areas for pupils with special educational needs have been made attractive by some self-help decoration; this helps to maintain a good quality learning environment even though this teaching area is rather isolated, being off the top corridor in the school.
82. For the teaching of textiles and the theory in physical education, the rooms are too small for a full range of teaching and learning methods to be employed. There is a pleasant drama studio, but the size is inadequate for larger classes. Provision is poor for teaching physical education; offices for physical education are inadequate and the changing rooms are sub-standard and unpleasant. There has been no improvement in this area since the last inspection. One half of the physical education lessons take place in the school hall; a large amount of time is lost during the year when there are assemblies and examinations. Together with the limitations of the outdoor facilities, there are severe constraints in the teaching of the subject. The limited outdoor facilities also restrict the amount of recreational space for pupils, and the totally inadequate parking facilities and poor condition of roadways and paved areas further contribute to the unsatisfactory environment around the school.
83. The use of the hall for physical education is not only unsuitable for that subject, but the hall is a bleak, uninviting space for its other many functions. Its ambience for assemblies, acts of worship and school functions is poor because of the poor state of decoration, the dreadful curtains on the stage and windows and the lack of attractive art work and other celebratory displays. There are a large number of temporary classrooms to which there is no covered access. Conditions for pupils and teachers in poor weather are most unpleasant, with very muddy areas around the rooms adding to the problems. Teachers adapt well to using these areas, but the provision of blinds and improved ventilation would improve those rooms and, therefore, make the work of pupils and teachers more productive. Blinds would also improve the provision in art. In both art and food technology, ventilation is an issue, and, in resistant materials, the variable quality and small size of some of the rooms restricts the range of activities that can take place and is unsatisfactory overall.
84. There has been refurbishment of some pupils' toilets and these are now pleasant areas in contrast to the other toilets that are not pleasant. Several areas of the school are unattractive through the lack of routine maintenance. There are damaged walls, missing floor tiles and areas in need of redecoration. In some subject areas such as music, modern foreign languages and geography, the quality of display creates a stimulating learning environment and acknowledges pupils' achievements and activities. By contrast, several areas are uninteresting with few attempts to relieve the unattractive environment and celebrate pupils' achievements. Whilst the absence of damage and graffiti reflects well on pupils' attitudes, the school has a serious problem with litter, adding to the unattractive environment.

Resources

85. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory, although there is no clear rationale for the allocation of funding to subject areas that enables priorities to be established in relation to needs. Recent high expenditure in ICT has resulted in good provision of computers, both in specialist suites and in the library. As a result, all subject areas can have good access to these facilities. However, a recent survey has shown the facilities to be underused at present. The situation will change as and when National Curriculum requirements for ICT are fully introduced in Years 10 and 11; because there is limited ICT provision within subject areas, and none in the temporary classrooms, classes have to use the special ICT rooms. In several areas, such as science, mathematics and geography, there are insufficient textbooks for each pupil to have their own and this places some restrictions on the quality of homework. Whilst basic provision is satisfactory, some subjects lack equipment to enhance their teaching programmes. In art, there is a shortage of equipment for printing, and the pottery equipment is in poor condition; in geography there is a lack of apparatus for weather recording and in mathematics there is a shortage of smaller items for use in Years 7 to 9. In design and technology much of the equipment is outdated. All these factors restrict the learning opportunities of pupils.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

86. Overall, the leadership and management of the sixth form as a whole and of subjects in the sixth form are good. Most subjects are well or very well led with a clear focus on rigorous standards, matched by good quality support and guidance for students studying the subject.
87. Within the sixth form as a whole, there are effective, thorough systems to monitor and evaluate performance, which have been developed over many years. These systems enable individual students' progress to be tracked and appropriate action taken. There are good processes to discuss each student's performance and to take action when necessary, and sixth formers' views are sought through a questionnaire once a year. Management structures within the sixth form ensure that it is administered smoothly and effectively. Information about the sixth form gives potential sixth formers every opportunity to know what to expect from joining the sixth form, and after that, there is a careful and much appreciated induction process, with many sixth formers taking part in a residential course at Ampleforth. All these things, and more, illustrate the thoroughness and sensitivity of those with responsibilities for the sixth form.
88. What is less successful is the creative, strategic leadership of the sixth form. Whilst there is a general view and commitment to increasing the size of the sixth form, there is less clarity about how this should be achieved. Whilst students' views are sought and provision made for their academic and personal needs, there is little sense that the sixth form is a natural partnership between teachers and students. Opportunities for sixth formers to be the real leaders of the school community are limited, and little appears to be done to make joining the sixth form a major aspiration of younger pupils or to encourage sixth formers to be role models whom younger pupils look up to. A clear, reflective view of future priorities, including future curriculum provision, would give a sharper direction to the development of the sixth form.
89. The same good match of teachers to subjects apparent in the main school exists in the sixth form. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach and this is an important factor in the above average standards that students reach. In art and business studies, for example, the subject expertise of the teachers ensures that students consistently make very good progress in the AS and A2 courses. Arrangements for the professional development of teachers is sound with opportunities provided for them to become familiar with the new AS and A2 courses. In particular, teachers of English, religious education, design and technology and ICT have taken full advantages of opportunities to attend courses to increase their professional expertise. The same systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning operate in the sixth form as for the main school. Teaching is monitored through lesson observations; strengths and areas for improvement are identified, but there is insufficient sharing of very good and excellent practice as part of a drive to further improve standards.

Resources

90. As in the main school, resources for the sixth form are satisfactory. However, the same limitations also apply to the sixth form with no clear rationale that links the allocation of funding for resources to identified needs. Nonetheless, students generally have a sufficiently wide range of books and other resources to successfully undertake their courses.
91. The library is a very good resource for students, and the adjacent ICT room, exclusively for use by sixth formers, is also valuable, enabling students to use computers as a tool in presenting their work, or for research. Some sixth formers express frustration about the restrictions put on the use of the Internet by the school. The blocks put on certain key words, designed to prevent inappropriate use of the Internet, can, on occasions, limit legitimate attempts by sixth formers to research topics that are important to their courses.
92. As part of their overall sound involvement in the school, governors take a keen interest in the sixth form. The sixth form as a whole is cost effective, despite the very small size of some classes. The cost of running and resourcing the sixth form is a little more than the income its students generate, however, this does not have any noticeably detrimental effect on the rest of the school, and, as there is no separate sixth form accommodation, both the benefits and disadvantages of the school's overall facilities and organisation apply equally to the sixth form and the rest of the school.

Efficiency

93. Day-to-day financial management is good; this is part of ensuring that the principles of best value are well applied and that money allocated to different areas is properly and efficiently spent and accounted for. However, the strategic use of the school's resources is unsatisfactory because the links between the school's budget and patterns of expenditure on the one hand and its priorities on the other hand are not clear. Furthermore, the allocation of funds to subjects to resource their work lacks transparency in linking funds with identified needs and priorities. With the additional responsibilities in the management of finance that the school's Voluntary Aided status brings, the need for very careful strategic financial planning is, arguably, even more important than it is in all schools.
94. Although the school has produced figures that suggest that the school receives less money per pupil than many other secondary schools in Leicester, the basic funding formula, without additions for particular items, is the same as other Leicester schools. Additional funds directly from the government to support initiatives such as Excellence in Cities are effectively used. Compared with similar schools nationally, the school is now well funded. Nonetheless, the pressure on its resources is intense, not least because of the underinvestment that is apparent in the buildings and grounds. For these reasons, the necessity to ensure good value for money from investment in staffing, resources, buildings and services is paramount. There is little evidence of systematic evaluation of the use of resources in the past. For example, staffing costs seem to be based on historic levels of staffing rather than being led by the needs of the curriculum. One important consequence of this has been a higher than usual amount being spent on teaching staff at the expense of learning resources, some support staff; for example, in special educational needs, and buildings and grounds.
95. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Pupils continue to achieve well, with above average results, and the quality of their personal development and relationships is very good. Teaching is good, and there is a positive climate for learning. Although it has not fully embraced some of the more significant developments in education recently, the school gives a good education to its pupils and has many strengths. Given its level of income and achievements, the school is judged to give sound value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

An asterisk (*) after a key issue denotes that it is already included in the current annual development plan. To improve further, the school should give attention to the following issues:

- (1) review leadership and management structures, roles and responsibilities, to bring more coherence to the strategic direction of key areas of the school's work, including the following:
 - a. improved strategic planning that links actions and finances to clear priorities for the school's future development;
 - b. greater clarity in the allocation of the school's financial resources;
 - c. improved monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to improve consistency of their quality;
 - d. development of the curriculum to meet better the needs of all pupils;
 - e. increased participation by some senior staff in further professional development opportunities.
(paragraphs 5, 19, 20, 32, 48, 57, 72-77, 79, 80, 85, 90, 93-95, 120, 143, 146, 159, 166,170)

- (2) raise the attainment of pupils in mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11 by:
 - a. identifying the subjects' strengths and weaknesses, and building on the strengths;
 - b. reviewing the overall curriculum and schemes of work in these subjects, and their relevance to the needs of all pupils;
 - c. identifying and undertaking professional training and development, including sharing of good practice, which will improve the quality of teaching.
(paragraphs 3, 5, 20, 116, 118-120, 123-128)

- (3) undertake a comprehensive review of the school's curriculum to ensure that it successfully meets the needs of all pupils, including, in particular:
 - a. the breadth of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11;
 - b. arrangements to ensure that numeracy skills are well taught throughout the school; (*)
 - c. arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements for teaching ICT in Years 10 and 11 are fully met;
 - d. the coherence of the whole curriculum to ensure high quality progression and pathways between the different stages within school and beyond school.
(paragraphs 4, 24, 32-35, 37, 38, 48, 117, 120, 121, 126, 127, 143, 162, 166)

- (4) review and improve assessment arrangements as a means of improving pupils' achievements by:
 - a. analysing the strengths and weaknesses of present arrangements;
 - b. consulting widely amongst teachers, pupils and parents for their perceptions of assessment arrangements;
 - c. investigating examples of good practice elsewhere, including the use of National Curriculum Levels and level descriptors;
 - d. producing a new assessment policy.
(paragraphs 60-63, 127, 133, 144, 157, 165, 169)

- (5) review all possible options for improving the buildings and grounds by:
 - a. implementing as soon as possible present schemes to improve the buildings and grounds; (*)
 - b. spending as much as is reasonable from the school's budget on improvements to the buildings and grounds;
 - c. investigating, with other interested partners, all possible sources of funding outside the school's normal budget.
(paragraphs 81-84, 94, 145, 175, 180, 193)

Sixth form

- (1) increase opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning by:
 - a. including opportunities to take responsibility in subjects' schemes of work;
 - b. identifying and sharing the good practice that already takes place in some lessons and subjects.
(paragraphs 9, 29, 183, 184, 188, 209)

- (2) provide more opportunities for sixth formers to take the initiative in managing their own affairs and in contributing to the life of the school as a whole by:
 - a. increasing the profile and responsibilities of sixth formers around the school;
 - b. encouraging their participation through consultation processes such as a sixth form council;
 - c. discussing with sixth formers how they feel they could contribute more fully to the life of the school.
(paragraphs 53, 88)

- (3) endeavour to increase the numbers of pupils staying on to study in the sixth form by:
 - a. regularly reviewing the range of curriculum provision within budgetary constraints;
 - b. consulting with pupils and parents about their perceptions of the sixth form, and taking action if appropriate;
 - c. ensuring that leadership and management of the sixth form are responsive to the courses that students aspire to study and to what is available in other local schools and colleges.
(paragraphs 50, 51)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

As validated data about the school's results for 2002 are not yet available, 2001 statistics are shown in the results and some other tables.

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	133
	Sixth form	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		167

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	7	30	50	37	8	1	0
Percentage	5.3	22.6	37.6	27.8	6.0	0.8	0

Sixth form

Number	3	11	17	3	0	0	0
Percentage	8.8	32.4	50.0	8.8	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 nearly three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	892	111
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	104 (inc. 6 th)	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	174	0

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	3

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
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9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	76	94	170

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	53	52	55
	Girls	83	75	74
	Total	136	127	129
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (85)	75 (79)	76 (76)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (54)	54 (52)	44 (44)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61	53	46
	Girls	85	77	60
	Total	146	130	106
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (74)	76 (78)	62 (80)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	51 (38)	49 (48)	26 (45)
	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	67	85	152

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	32	63	65
	Girls	46	81	84
	Total	78	144	149
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	51 (54)	95 (94)	98 (97)
	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	42.1 (43.6)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

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 and Irish	467	41	2
White – any other White background	41		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean		2	
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian	12		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background		1	
Black or Black British – Caribbean	7		
Black or Black British – African	3		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	6		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	40	3	
No ethnic group recorded	426		

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)	58
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	319

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26.7
Key Stage 4	25.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	2,766,270
Total expenditure	2,767,746
Expenditure per pupil	2,830
Balance brought forward from previous year	80,112
Balance carried forward to next year	53,750

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	1003
Number of questionnaires returned	183

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	49	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	45	2	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	51	6	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	54	12	3	2
The teaching is good.	43	49	5	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	53	12	7	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	1	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	56	13	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	39	44	2	2	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	40	5	2	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	42	5	2	8

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Most comments made by parents were supportive of the school, with most elaborating on their responses on the questionnaire. The balance of written comments almost exactly reflects the returns of the questionnaire.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Results of national tests and examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is good throughout the school, with high expectations for pupils' achievements.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They respond well in lessons and show high levels of interest and concentration.

Areas for improvement

- The standards of lower attaining pupils in GCSE examinations are not as high as they could be.
- The best practices in the teaching, particularly sharing clear objectives for learning with pupils at the start of lessons and reviewing progress at the end, are not consistently used.

96. The profile of attainment in English when pupils enter the school is above average. In 2002, the results of the national tests taken at age 14 were well above the national average for pupils reaching Level 5 and above, the expected level. They were very high compared with similar schools. At the higher levels, Level 6 and above, results were again well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. In recent years, results have been consistently well above the national average. In comparison with national attainments in each subject, pupils do better in English at this stage than in mathematics or science, although more gain the highest levels in mathematics. Girls outperform boys, but the difference is in line with that seen nationally.
97. The proportion of higher-grade passes in GCSE English in 2002 was well above the national average, and above the average for similar schools. The results at higher grades in English literature were broadly in line with the national average, but slightly below average for similar schools. However, almost all pupils at the school are entered for the examination. This is not the case nationally, or in most similar schools, where some 80 per cent of pupils take it. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grade passes in English has been maintained consistently over the last three years. Within the school, pupils do better in GCSE English than in most other subjects. Girls again achieve better results than boys, but the difference is less than that seen nationally.
98. Given that standards in English on entry to the school are above average, achievement by individual pupils is good overall in Years 7 to 9. In 2002, the school's own analysis of test results at the end of Year 9 shows that the majority match or exceed expected rates of progress. Achievement is also good in Years 10 and 11. Comparison with national value-added analyses shows that pupils make above average progress compared with others who start their GCSE course at broadly the same level of attainment. Achievement is very good for higher and some average attaining pupils, with the proportion gaining A* and A grades higher than that seen in comparable schools. Achievement is satisfactory for lower attaining pupils, but comparison with similar schools shows that some make less progress than could be expected. These trends were confirmed in some lesson observations during the inspection. However, most pupils with special educational needs make good progress by the end of Year 11. Almost all gained at least an F grade pass in GCSE English in 2001 and 2002. This represents a good level of achievement overall.
99. Pupils' attitudes in English lessons are very good. They pay close attention to teachers and are clearly interested and engaged by tasks set. This makes an important contribution to learning in the subject. Teachers, in turn, emphasise the need to respect others and to listen carefully to views expressed. As a result, with few exceptions, listening skills are very good throughout the school. Speaking skills are good. Pupils are willing to make constructive contributions to discussions in a range of contexts, including whole-class, paired and small group work. In Years

10 and 11, pupils across the ability range put forward and develop ideas clearly. One lower attaining group in Year 10 contributed well to a discussion of J B Priestley's play, 'An Inspector Calls', justifying their opinions thoughtfully when challenged to do so by the teacher.

100. Standards of reading are above average. In Years 7 to 8, pupils have occasional timetabled lessons in the library and are encouraged to establish sound habits of wider personal reading by maintaining reading logs. The library is a well-managed and valuable resource. A satisfactory range of fiction for this age group is available. Year 9 pupils begin to come to grips with more demanding texts, in preparation for the end of key stage tests. In one lesson observed, pupils studied a speech from 'Macbeth' closely and were able to comment with understanding on how the specific choice of words and images created a sense of dramatic irony. In Years 10 and 11, reading skills are developed further through the study of literature specified for the GCSE course. Higher and average attaining pupils in particular make significant progress in developing analytical, close-reading skills. These are demonstrated to a high level in many GCSE coursework essays.
101. In Years 7 to 9, pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences; narrative essays, poems, autobiography, letters and writing for information. They also have the opportunity to produce more extended writing. Teachers employ a range of strategies to develop skills effectively, including proofreading and redrafting from Year 7 onwards. By Year 11, all pupils make good progress. Skills in personal and imaginative writing are consolidated and developed. Most pupils are able to write with understanding about literature studied. For higher and average attaining pupils, essays are usually developed in sufficient depth, with good use of textual detail to substantiate arguments. Writing of lower attaining pupils is less secure technically and lacks a sufficiently developed commentary on literature studied, however. standards of work seen during the inspection were above average overall. Further improvement should be expected for most pupils in test and examination classes before the end of the year to maintain the well above average standards achieved in recent years. Work is marked thoroughly. National Curriculum Levels and GCSE grades are awarded for key essays. Throughout the school, handwriting and presentation skills are good. Most pupils take considerable trouble to present work neatly and carefully, especially GCSE coursework. Word-processing and desktop publishing skills were developed well in two lessons observed, and are used to good effect in presenting pupils' work for display and in coursework. However, access to computers is limited during lesson time, and there remain some inconsistencies of approach between classes. There could be further development here to help pupils to use new technology still more effectively to improve literacy skills.
102. Teaching is good throughout the school. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Some very good teaching was seen throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers manage pupils very well in most classes, and constructive relationships are forged. They have high expectations of pace and productivity, for higher attaining pupils in particular. Strengths are also seen in teachers' good subject knowledge and use of a range of teaching methods to generate interest. One Year 11 lesson, on D H Lawrence's poem 'Last Lesson in the Afternoon', was particularly well paced and structured, with a mixture of whole-class and paired discussions, individual reflection and writing. Pupils were clearly engaged by the work, and helped by the variety of approach, but these strengths were not seen consistently. In a minority of less effective lessons, objectives were not communicated clearly at the beginning of the lesson and teachers tried to cover too much ground. The end of lessons was often rushed as a consequence, and insufficient time was allowed to evaluate progress made. The level of difficulty in tasks was also sometimes wrongly pitched, and was too demanding or complex for lower attaining groups. There was generally not enough difference in the work expected from these groups, especially in GCSE classes. Teaching here needs to be more closely linked to pupils' needs.
103. Overall, good teaching in the school helps to promote good levels of learning. Most pupils are conscientious and try hard to improve their work. Teachers help them further by ensuring that all understand the process of assessment as fully as possible, and suggest targets for improvement. These could at times be more specific and more closely linked to assessment criteria, in order to help pupils to understand their own learning better.

104. Leadership and management of English in the school are very good. There is a strong commitment to further improving standards of teaching and learning in the subject through a well-planned programme of in-service training and evaluation of classroom practice. Clear and relevant objectives for future development are also set in the subject's action plans. Long-term planning, to ensure curriculum coverage, is effective. Teachers are well qualified and the team is now more firmly established than in recent years. However, long-term sick leave for one teacher during the inspection entailed some timetable reorganisation and supply cover. Teachers coped well in view of the difficulties created, and learning was not disrupted. Currently, there are no extra-curricular activities in English, so some opportunities to involve and engage pupils are lost. However, there are special events to enrich the curriculum for each year group. Theatre groups visit the school to do work on Shakespeare and older pupils have visits to the theatre and opera.
105. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection. Areas of concern identified then have been addressed. Well above average standards of attainment have been maintained in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, and at GCSE. If the best teaching practice can be developed consistently, the subject is well placed to make further improvements in standards of teaching and learning in the future.

Literacy

106. Pupils' literacy skills are above average throughout the school.
107. The school has begun a staff training initiative, which addresses some of the central objectives in the National Literacy Strategy for Years 7 to 9. This has started to improve techniques for teaching literacy in many subjects. However, practice is not yet fully consistent between subjects. Further action is required to ensure this, through careful monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice and subject action plans; a school literacy policy would also develop clear guidelines for staff. Co-ordination of the initiative is shared between three members of the senior leadership team, but lines of responsibility are not always clear to other members of staff. The head of English has led whole-staff training sessions. Effective strategies observed during the inspection include the use of writing frames, to help pupils to develop their ideas logically, in English, modern foreign languages and history. Pupils also keep glossaries of technical terms in design and technology, science and music. Teachers create classroom displays of key words in most subjects, including art, ICT, modern foreign languages and music, as a way of successfully extending pupils' technical vocabulary. Written work is usually marked thoroughly, with the requirement for corrections generally observed.
108. Speaking and listening skills are above average. The great majority of pupils, including lower attaining groups throughout the school, show confidence in answering teachers' questions. Teachers also make good use of effective questioning techniques to develop pupils' response. They require pupils to give reasons for their views, and encourage them to answer in complete sentences rather than single words or phrases. There are many opportunities for discussion in pairs and small groups, particularly in English, history, physical education and French, but opportunities to develop speaking skills are more limited in mathematics and music. Pupils listen well to teachers and to their peers. Their response shows that they value and respect each other's contributions. Very high standards were observed in one Year 11 drama lesson. Pupils spoke particularly well and expressively. They paid close attention to practical work by others, and listened carefully to each other's comments and explanations. They were able to articulate their understanding of performances seen, using technical vocabulary with precision.
109. Reading is well developed by the attention given to it throughout the school, particularly in English lessons. Pupils have good experience of reading from a range of texts and for a variety of purposes. The importance of independent research, using the school library and new technologies, is emphasised in a number of subjects including English, music, history and art. Pupils have a good introduction to the school library, as part of their work in English, during Years 7 and 8. The librarian makes a valuable contribution to this, taking an active part in lessons. Pupils appreciate the library and show enjoyment and application in their reading when spending time there. In all years, pupils read aloud to the class without embarrassment. Teachers create opportunities for

them to practise, and give them good support and encouragement in this work. There is good progress in developing analytical, close reading skills, particularly in English lessons during Years 10 and 11.

110. Standards of writing are also above average, with some higher and average attaining pupils achieving very well. Handwriting is generally neat and most pupils take considerable care over the presentation of work. Spelling is sound and good attention is given to accurate punctuation, although technical accuracy is weaker for lower attaining pupils in each year group. Pupils have opportunities to write in a variety of styles and for different purposes in a range of subjects including history, geography and English. Good examples of extended, creative writing were seen in science; for example, letters to the local MP on drugs legislation in Years 10 and 11, and stories about the journey of a water molecule through a plant, with younger pupils. Similarly, in music, pupils write imaginative stories personifying the different elements of music. There are few opportunities for extended writing in mathematics and art, however. In English, pupils are also successfully taught to describe and analyse styles of writing and understand the conventions suited to writing for different purposes and audiences.

Drama

111. Drama activities are an integral part of English lessons in Years 7 to 9, and pupils may choose drama as one of their GCSE subjects. Drama activities in Years 7 to 9 successfully help to develop pupils' confidence. In one specialist drama lesson, Year 8 pupils participated well in improvised work on the theme of 'conflict', and were able to speak in role with some fluency and expressiveness. Results in drama at GCSE were well above the national average in 2002, with the proportion of higher grade passes at GCSE also well above the national average. Work in one Year 11 lesson observed during the inspection confirmed these high standards; the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Pupils contributed enthusiastically to practical work in small group performances of scripted scenes. Use of voice and body language was confident and expressive.
112. Teaching in the two lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 was also very good. Practical work was very well organised, with excellent management of pupils in the limited physical space. Pupils responded well and were fully engaged by tasks set; as a result, their learning was also very good. The very good leadership and management of drama contributes significantly to the high standards being achieved.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- All teachers are well qualified and the subject is fully staffed.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- Standards by the end of Year 9 were well above average in 2002.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11, because a significant minority have unsatisfactory attitudes and some teaching does not challenge them enough.
- There is a need to improve the quality of some teaching by better planning with clear objectives, greater pace and variety, and with work more closely matched to the pupils' needs.
- Too much emphasis is put on learning processes by rote, rather than promoting a better understanding of key concepts.

113. Standards on entry to the school are above average. Standards in mathematics in the first three years are above average. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the proportion of the pupils attaining the expected Level 5 or above was well above the national average. The proportion of those achieving Level 6 was also well above average. There has been no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

114. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, both the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A*-C, and of pupils gaining grades A*-G were in line with the national average. Mathematics results have remained relatively stable for several years.
115. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have been maintained in all years. The pupils' achievements, which is the progress they make in the long term, have been maintained in Years 7 to 9, but have declined in Years 10 and 11. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils have improved in the first three years, but have deteriorated in Years 10 and 11. Although there is still good and very good teaching, there are now more lessons in which there are weaknesses, largely because the subject has not fully implemented national improvements that have been introduced over the last few years.
116. The achievements of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are good. In lessons, progress is never less than satisfactory, and in most cases is better, influenced by the good attitude of the majority of the pupils, together with mostly good teaching. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory, because of unsatisfactory attitudes of a significant minority of the pupils, particularly in some of the higher attaining sets; some teaching does not sufficiently challenge pupils. In general, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, supported by smaller classes and good individual help from learning support assistants.
117. Pupils cover all areas of the curriculum at an appropriate level. Standards in algebra are generally good. Pupils in higher attaining sets in Years 10 and 11 can solve quadratic equations, whilst in the early years, pupils are able to solve simple linear equations and use simple formulae. Standards of numeracy are generally good in higher attaining sets, but not as good as they should be in the average and lower attaining sets. Too many pupils do not know their multiplication tables fluently enough, and many pupils are unable to use strategies for working out unusual numerical problems in their heads, because they are not given enough opportunities to practise. Problem solving is underrated, and tends to be taught as an occasional activity; for example, after examinations are over in Year 9. As a result, most pupils do not see mathematics as a problem solving activity and tend to get confused if asked to solve a problem for which they have not recently been taught a process. All pupils become familiar with the basic properties of shapes, and learn the basic principles of handling data at a level appropriate to their set. ICT is not yet effectively used to support learning. Use of calculators for complex calculations is good, but many pupils are over-reliant on them when they should be working problems out in their heads.
118. The pupils' attitudes to the subject and behaviour in the classroom are good in Years 7 to 9, but less so in Years 10 and 11. In most classrooms there is a relaxed and business-like atmosphere, with the pupils clearly there to work. Standards of presentation in exercise books are generally good, and most pupils take a pride in the quality of their work, and try to be precise and accurate. A few lower attaining pupils leave work unfinished. Most manage to do a reasonable amount of work in each lesson, and for homework. The pace of learning is often reduced because the majority of pupils seem more comfortable to be relatively passive receivers of knowledge and understanding, and only a minority actively contributes in most lessons. The pace of some lessons is also disturbed in some Year 10 classes because they are too noisy during whole-class sessions, and there are pupils in these classes who do not concentrate on their work sufficiently well, preferring to chat to their neighbours.
119. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although there is some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 10 and 11. All the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is at least satisfactory, and one half of it is good or better. In Years 10 and 11, one lesson in three is good, one in three is satisfactory and one in three is unsatisfactory. The teachers are all good mathematicians, and they explain the mathematical processes very carefully to the pupils and make sure that they understand the meaning of key words. They all have created a good relationship with the pupils, so that in most cases there is a good atmosphere in mathematics lessons, where the pupils feel comfortable, and can contribute or ask questions if they want to. There are well-developed systems to assess the progress of the pupils in periodic tests. In one very good lesson with a small group of pupils

withdrawn for special help in Year 7, the teacher used a wide range of techniques to ensure that all the pupils were actively engaged in learning and, by skilfully assessing the progress they were making at each stage of the lesson, matched the work closely to their needs. Lesson planning is often unsatisfactory. It is not based on clear objectives, and so the activities do not always meet the needs of the pupils or the curriculum. Pupils sometimes are set work that is too easy, and left to work on it for too long, especially in Years 10 and 11. Assessment of learning in lessons is inadequate, so pupils' mistakes are often not addressed. Cases were seen in exercise books where pupils made repeated uncorrected mistakes. In general, pupils are still not given enough opportunities to become actively involved in lessons, or to explain in their own words how they work out answers. Mathematics in too many lessons is taught as an activity where pupils learn processes for answering routine questions, rather than as an active problem solving activity. Although a start has been made to implement the National Numeracy Strategy for in Years 7 to 9, important teaching and assessing techniques have yet to be fully introduced.

120. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject is effectively organised, and manages well on inadequate financial resources. It is fully staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers. The head of subject monitors the professional standards of his colleagues; for example, through lesson observation, but as yet this has not led to the improvements in teaching quality seen elsewhere in schools across the country. The curriculum fulfils national requirements, but there should be greater emphasis on the role of mathematics as a problem solving activity, and there is insufficient use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning.

Numeracy

121. Standards of numeracy are generally good for higher attaining pupils, but insufficient for the average and lower attaining pupils to support learning in mathematics and in other subjects of the curriculum. Standards, relative to general progress in mathematics, tend to decline as pupils move up the school. In particular, many pupils are insecure when they are confronted by a slightly unusual numerical problem. They lack a range of strategies to solve such problems, and so they give up rather too easily. However, there are some effective applications of mathematics in different subjects, but these are not effectively co-ordinated, or supported by systematic teaching in mathematics. Good examples of use of numeracy occur in physical education where pupils were required to measure and record in a fitness session. There is some good use of measurement in art, and a range of graphical applications supports learning in geography. In science, there is less use of numeracy and applications of mathematics than would normally be seen.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average.
- The commitment and enthusiasm shown by the new team of teachers are good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, covering the full spread of scientific disciplines, is good.
- Resources and activities are well developed for Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations are below average.
- Insufficient challenge is provided to higher attaining pupils in all years.
- More variety of learning activities in lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11, is needed.
- There is a need for more systematic planning of priorities, strategies and actions to address underachievement, making use of information from monitoring the work of the department and pupils' progress.

122. Standards of attainment in science are average when pupils enter the school in Year 7. Pupils' standards in English and mathematics are above average. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average overall. They were well above the national average for the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level and this improved significantly from 2001. The results were similar to results in mathematics. The proportion attaining higher levels was in line with the national average and dropped significantly from 2001. The results represent good achievement overall, very good for those of lower and average prior attainment. Boys and girls achieved equally well.
123. In GCSE examinations in 2002, results were below the national average especially in the proportion attaining higher grades. Results improved significantly from 2001, but only in line with pupils' improved standards at the end of Year 9 two years earlier. The results in both years were below those for similar schools based on prior attainment and below pupils' results in other subjects. They represent unsatisfactory achievement given pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. There was no difference in results for boys and girls.
124. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Years 7 to 9. They are in line with national standards in Years 10 and 11, and are higher than recent GCSE results because recent improvements in planning the curriculum are beginning to have an impact. In all years there are relatively few pupils working at standards much below the expected level. In Year 9, the highest attainers give accurate descriptions of photosynthesis and can use word equations to describe chemical reactions. Even the weakest pupils can describe the properties of metals and explain the effect of forces on an object. Progress made through Years 7 to 9 is good for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. Standards of literacy are consistently high and support pupils' learning in science. Pupils can read, understand and use extended text and can write at length about topics such as where a nuclear power station should be sited. In Year 11, relatively few pupils have very high standards. For example, higher attainers can explain the function of sweat, but cannot describe the importance of negative feedback in maintaining body functions. There is some difference in standards in different topics. For example, higher attaining pupils can use symbol equations for chemical reactions, but are less successful at using formulae for calculating quantities such as energy. Overall progress through Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory given pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9. Progress throughout the school from attainment on entry is satisfactory.
125. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and some is excellent. Very little unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this in clear explanations and in answering pupils' questions. In Years 7 to 9, lessons and sequences are well planned to include a variety of activities, and resources are well used to build pupils' understanding. In the best lessons, secure classroom management, high levels of challenge and a good pace ensure that pupils' work rate is high and they learn very well. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, a quick test confirmed pupils' knowledge of elements and compounds. An excellent activity required pupils to identify and describe compounds and to find and describe the elements from which they were made from a range of samples. Extension was provided through challenging questions. Pupils' motivation was very high; the teacher maintained a cracking pace and pupils' learning of the differences between a compound and its elements was excellent. Most teaching is satisfactory rather than good or excellent. In too many lessons, there is insufficient challenge for pupils, especially those of higher prior attainment, and a lack of pace. For example, in a mixed ability class in Year 7, pupils were

asked to write about how they might separate pure salt from rock salt. The teacher then gave them a method to copy, when many had successfully produced an adequate plan of their own. Some lost interest, the pace slowed and their learning was limited. Where extension work is provided it is usually no more difficult than the main task.

126. In the early years at the school, pupils are attentive, interested and want to learn science. By Years 10 and 11, pupils show less motivation and interest, in part because there is less variety in learning activities and because they have not been sufficiently challenged. Some activities, such as visits to the National Space Centre, have been introduced for those with particular talent in science, but less attention is paid to their needs in lessons. In some lessons, teachers do not successfully manage poor behaviour and attitudes so that these have an adverse effect on learning. Safety precautions are incorporated into schemes of work and worksheets and pupils work safely. However, risk assessments are not sufficiently formalised. Some attention is given to the development of literacy through reading aloud, definitions of technical vocabulary and extended writing. Much less attention is given to either developing or using pupils' numeracy or their skills in ICT.
127. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The subject has experienced a number of difficulties over recent years. For example, there have been very significant staff changes and all but one teacher is relatively new to the school. There has been an acting head of the science faculty for part of the last year. At least one post has been filled on a temporary basis throughout the last two years, leading to a lack of consistency in the teaching provided and disrupted learning for many pupils. The more comprehensive schemes of work and central resources for Years 7 to 9 have helped to combat the effect of staff turnover. The effect has been more marked in Years 10 and 11 where pupils have had several teachers, planning is left more to individual teachers and pupils' motivation is lower. As a result of these difficulties, the task of the head of faculty in moving the subject forward has inevitably been problematic. Through a number of changes, a start has been made to improve pupils' achievements. For example, extra activities have been provided for pupils working below the expected level in Year 9, resulting in higher standards in national tests. Monitoring of the quality of teaching has been introduced and where teachers have remained in the school, there have been some improvements. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 has been adjusted to more closely match pupils' needs and some monitoring of pupils' progress across the subject has been introduced. However, these systems are not yet fully developed, so their impact has so far been modest. Planning and monitoring are not systematic enough and there has not yet been sufficient action to address the underachievement in Years 10 and 11.
128. There has been an improvement since the last inspection in the results at the end of Year 9, but deterioration in GCSE results. Unsatisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 and a lack of challenge and pace in lessons were also weaknesses in the previous inspection report. Overall progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. The department now has a stable team who show commitment and enthusiasm. It has the capacity to address these issues.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils are achieving very well and make very good progress in lessons.
- Pupils respond very positively in most lessons.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good, and there is a strong teaching team.

Areas for improvement

- There is only limited provision for and use of computers.
- Resources for learning are unsatisfactory, restricting the range of learning opportunities.
- Some aspects of the accommodation hinder the quality of pupils' work.

129. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was above national averages and broadly in line with other subjects in the school. Results in 2002 were also above average and show a rise over the previous year with a slight narrowing of the performance gap between girls and boys, although the number of boys opting for the GCSE art course remains relatively small. The subject has undergone a major change this year, with the appointment of a very experienced and knowledgeable head of subject and a newly qualified second teacher. The very good teaching, coupled to the very good leadership evident during the inspection, indicate the potential for significant improvement in standards in the years ahead.
130. In work seen during the inspection, standards are above average; they are around the national average at the end of Year 9, and above average by the end of Year 11. Pupils are now achieving very well in all years. Pupils arrive in Year 7, having had a very mixed experience of primary school art. Overall, standards at that point are below average. Schemes of work have been rewritten and ensure that all pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a sound experience of the basic art skills of line, tone, texture and colour, with tonal exercises to build up their understanding of the modelling of light on form. Pupils in Year 7 successfully learn to achieve different levels of opacity using colour, building their studies of Australian Aboriginal symbols in layers using a restricted palette of earth colours. Lower attaining pupils tend to use naïve symbols from popular culture, rather than the powerful ancestor worship symbols of the Aborigines. By Year 8 pupils are able to control tone in their paintings and show a good understanding of the terms 'tint', 'hue' and 'tone'. There is provision for supporting literacy through annotation and note taking, but teachers do not yet pay sufficient attention to the pupils' written work and it is a weakness that is evident in all years. Pupils with general learning difficulties make similar progress to others. Their special educational needs are well known to teachers and they settle to work and achieve well. Very high levels of colouring skills are evident amongst the higher attainers in Years 10 and 11. Using impressionist techniques to build on their mark making skills they learn to mix colour on the page and introduce tonal effects as they work. Using a carbon transfer technique to work from photographs they take of themselves, they achieve impressive results very quickly and are spurred on to learn more. Year 11 pupils work confidently, blending, overlaying tissue and stippling paint to achieve the soft natural effect of the forms they study. Lower attaining pupils lack the observational skills that are needed to see the tonal and textural range of the forms, but, nonetheless, show good technical skills in their finished work.
131. Pupils are generally well behaved, with some exception in a few lessons in Year 9, where restlessness and low-level disruption spoil the lessons. They are generally positive in their attitudes and enjoy lessons of art. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 listen attentively and watch demonstrations with interest. They put a lot of creative energy into their work and make very good progress.
132. The quality of teaching is very good. Lesson planning in the earlier years is very detailed and leads to well paced and lively learning experiences. Excellent demonstrations were seen during the inspection, showing a high level of subject knowledge and very good personal skills. In one lesson, the teacher was able to effectively include teaching both literacy and numeracy, with a plan to use word-processing as the lesson developed. Teachers strike a very effective balance between whole-class teaching and individual, or group interventions to maintain the pace of progress. Relationships are very good and a pleasant, productive working environment is built up, in which the pupils make very good progress. The layout of the rooms causes a number of practical problems of setting up and clearing away, but the well-structured lessons and very good teaching methods minimise the difficulties caused by this problem.
133. The recently arrived head of department and his newly qualified second teacher have built a very good working relationship and are clearly very respectful of each other's skills and contributions to the work of the subject. The subject is using National Curriculum Levels to track pupils' specific progress in art, and is able to identify talented students, however, school and subject procedures do not always fit well. The subject benefits from ten hours of valuable technician support. The school's arts bid, although focused on the performing arts, has enabled the subject to set up a sculpture workshop and to exhibit the work of talented artists at a local education authority exhibition. Book resources in the library are good, although some are in need of updating. The

newly qualified teacher is confident in using computers for art; the subject would benefit from extending its meagre resources for ICT to extend the range of pupils' experiences and to enhance their learning through using graphics tablets and digitising equipment, as well as computers and relevant software. The head of subject has had basic skills training on the computer, but does not have the level of knowledge and understanding necessary to manage the digital software. The accommodation for art is spacious, but drab and untidy. There is no control over the very powerful afternoon sunlight that streams in during autumn and winter months, and this hinders the quality of pupils' work. Storage for large scale and three-dimensional work is unsatisfactory. Resources for printmaking are unsatisfactory and those for ceramics remain unused, because both kilns have been condemned, and, overall, resources are unsatisfactory.

134. Whilst the school provides well for the induction of the newly qualified teacher, it does not offer the support that is necessary for the very experienced, but newly arrived head of subject. In spite of the shortcomings referred to above, the subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. With the present very good leadership and management of the new head of subject, the potential for further improvement in the future is very considerable.

CITIZENSHIP

The quality of provision for citizenship is **good**.

Strengths

- The appointment of a co-ordinator to take charge of citizenship has given good direction and leadership.
- A thorough analysis of what provision was needed has enabled a good scheme of work to be developed.
- The enrichment activities and day courses are strengths; they successfully involve pupils in the wider aspects of citizenship.

Areas for improvement

- In order to put many aspects of citizenship into action, pupils need more opportunities to be involved in matters affecting them through; for example, a school council.
- Teaching of some of citizenship in tutorial time is unsuccessful at present because tutors frequently do not have time to do justice to the subject.
- In some lessons, pupils are not involved in sufficiently active and practical ways in their learning.

135. As a formal subject, citizenship has only very recently been introduced, although many aspects of the subject have been part of the curriculum for some time. The standards seen on inspection are average by the end of Years 9 and 11. In the lessons where citizenship was an important element, pupils were acquiring knowledge and understanding of different aspects of society; they were achieving well. A thorough analysis of what had been covered within the curriculum in the past, and of what was needed, has enabled the co-ordinator to devise successfully a scheme of work for the subject. Citizenship is taught in tutorial time, PHSE lessons and a number of specific subjects.

136. English makes a very positive contribution to citizenship. For example, some Year 7 pupils, with special educational needs, successfully word-process letters to the headteacher with their views on wearing school uniform. Similarly, Year 10 pupils write essays showing good empathy that see events through the eyes of a convict in Dickens' novel, 'Great Expectations'. History, geography and the Junior Sports Leaders' Award make strong provision for citizenship. Pupils taking GCSE history show good understanding of the American civil rights movement. Year 8 pupils show a good appreciation of the issues related to slavery. Years 10 and 11 pupils have an awareness of cultural differences in Leicester city, and issues related to conflict over use of resources such as mineral extraction. The skills of debate are being well developed; pupils cogently argue environmental and economic issues. However, some subject areas have yet to contribute to citizenship.

137. Good quality materials and resources are being developed by the co-ordinator; because the course is new, teachers are just beginning to use the resources and adapting the material to the needs of different groups of pupils. A strong thread of citizenship runs through tutorial lessons, but time is often too short for much effective learning to take place. PSHE lessons provide good opportunities for developing aspects of citizenship; for example, pupils successfully debate the morality of meat eating. Aspects of the practical application of citizenship are not yet in place. For example, there is no school council, however, school and year councils are planned for later in the school year in order to provide a forum for debate of issues affecting pupils in the school.
138. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils; they plan lessons with clear aims and objectives that are shared with pupils. As a consequence, pupils broaden their horizons about the role of a citizen. A wider range of teaching methods, especially in Years 7 to 9, would enable pupils to be more actively involved in the application of the concepts of citizenship. However, sometimes, there is insufficient tutorial time to do justice to the topics being studied. Teachers show good classroom management skills, which enable pupils to learn well. Pupils have positive attitudes to citizenship; many, especially in Years 10 and 11, enjoy discussing and debating major issues in society. When varied teaching methods are used to support pupils' learning and, in particular, when pupils are encouraged to work in groups and learn from each other, the pace of learning is good. This was particularly successful in a Year 7 lesson when pupils examined issues of bullying. Teachers show a good understanding of citizenship and this enhances pupils' understanding of major issues. This is clearly shown through the positive responses made by Year 11 after their recent day conference on substance misuse.
139. The citizenship co-ordinator has developed a good range of booklets and resources to support teachers who teach aspects of citizenship; during the inspection, these booklets were used successfully in Years 8, 10 and 11 tutorial time, but more practical teaching methods are required to better involve pupils in their learning. However, opportunities to reflect on issues within society are provided in assemblies and chapel services. ICT and the Internet are used well in many curriculum areas; as these are now important aspects of contemporary society, teaching pupils to use these tools is an important element in the school's provision for citizenship.
140. Citizenship is well led and managed. Some subjects have carried out a thorough analysis of their provision; at present, they are at different stages of implementing citizenship. Methods of monitoring and assessing have been identified and are now a priority in the development of citizenship. Overall, citizenship is beginning to make an important impact on the school's curriculum and there is a commendable emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills through debate and discussion. There is a good commitment to the development of the subject with a good lead being given by the co-ordinator.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in this subject is **satisfactory**; this composite judgement includes the very good provision in food technology.

Strengths

- Standards and the quality of education in food technology are very high, with well above average results at GCSE.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good in most areas of the faculty.
- There is much good teaching and some is excellent.
- Overall standards are above average, although this disguises marked variations within different elements of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The overall achievements of many boys in Years 7 to 11 are unsatisfactory, with unsatisfactory behaviour in some resistant materials lessons.
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of basic skills in resistant materials.
- There is insufficient use of computers as tools for designing and making in all year groups.
- There are health and safety concerns about the fixed equipment in resistant materials.
- In some elements of the subject, there is insufficient matching of tasks with pupils' ability.

141. On entry pupils have average skills in design and technology. Over the past three years pupils' results have fluctuated in the tests at the end of Year 9, with the teacher-assessed grades showing attainment well above the national average in 2002. In recent years, and other than 2002, the girls' results have been better than the boys typically with 15 to 20 per cent more achieving the average level. This appears to represent very good progress and achievement from the start of Year 7, but the inspection evidence does not fully support this; it shows that pupils are achieving lower levels, suggesting an over-generous assessment of attainment in 2002. However, standards are still above the national average overall, with girls out-performing boys; achievement is good.
142. The GCSE examination results for the past three years show an overall increase in the number of pupils achieving grades between A* and C. They were above average in 2002. However, food technology results are very high, textiles above average, but resistant materials below average. This highlights the wide spread of results being achieved in subjects that follow fairly traditional gender-orientated choices at this age range. The very high food technology standards are a great credit to the faculty and the pupils who take the subject. Almost 40 per cent of the pupils achieved grades of A* or A in the 2002 examinations; a very high figure. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good in food technology, satisfactory in textiles and unsatisfactory in resistant materials.
143. Teaching is good overall, but this masks much variation in quality between very good and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and even more variation in Years 10 and 11 from excellent to poor. The teaching is markedly inconsistent in the various materials areas. It is best in food technology and least good in resistant materials. In all food technology lessons, the meticulous planning led to lessons where the pace of learning was very high; the excellent demonstrations enthused the pupils and gave superb tips for securing success; problems were outlined and possibilities explained. As a result, pupils remained fully engaged in their tasks throughout the lesson and rapidly developed their skills as well as their understanding of processes. A skilful blend of whole-class teaching and attention to individual pupils enabled all pupils to be challenged to do their best, think imaginatively and make very good progress. However, the expectations of pupils to complete design work are sometimes too low, partly because there is no 'house style' for each of the material areas. The teaching of some design processes, particularly using design graphics as a medium for clarification of ideas and intentions, is underdeveloped. The use of computers as aids for designing and making is noticeably absent and is affecting the overall quality of the work being produced. In less successful lessons, the tasks set to pupils are frequently common to all and lack recognition of the pupils' different abilities. This adversely affects their progress; only in food technology are pupils challenged at a level that takes their learning rapidly forward. In these lessons, pupils were making independent plans and challenges that motivated them to overcome previous hurdles and opened new horizons in the subject matter. Basic skills in resistant materials are sometimes not being taught and reinforced effectively in Years 10 and 11, and, indeed, some basic skills are not being taught properly. Schemes of work in resistant materials are currently underdeveloped and lack overall coherence. They require further consideration in order to make them useful working tools for teachers, thereby allowing individual challenge for pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory and the teacher assistants are generally effectively used to support those pupils who need extra help.
144. The behaviour of the pupils is widely variable between exemplary and poor. Instances were observed where a teacher was unable to control challenging behaviour and pupils actively undermined the lesson by not allowing the teacher to work effectively. In other instances, pupils showed the greatest respect for the teacher and contributed most positively to what was being undertaken. The methods used for recording pupils' achievement, and the data generated from

results of tests and examinations, are generally understood by pupils in Years 7 to 9, but they have slight knowledge of their achievements in relation to National Curriculum expectations and levels of attainment and, therefore, cannot use these as pointers to their future progress.

145. The rooms that are used for design and technology are of variable quality and suitability for specialist teaching. Room sizes are generally small and group sizes of up to 25 have to be accommodated; this poses problems when pupils from Years 10 and 11 are involved, and limits the range of learning opportunities. Taken overall, accommodation is unsatisfactory. The recent and independent health and safety audit of powered equipment in resistant materials rooms reveals an extensive list of machinery that has been neglected over many years. Many machines are judged unusable by this audit and it brings into question the validity of the faculty's health and safety risk assessments that have been carried out in the past and the usefulness that they bring.
146. The leadership and management of the faculty are now satisfactory overall, although there is much still to do to eliminate variations in standards in the faculty and to bring all aspects of the subject up to that of the best. The recently produced handbook represents clear visions for the future. Good support is given to teachers by the head of the faculty. However, the task of managing the faculty is made more difficult by the head of faculty working at some distance from the other rooms; this means that he is sometimes unable to make significant effect on daily management issues.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and results in pupils achieving well in the subject.
- The very good assessment of progress informs pupils well about their learning and leads to them to extend their learning and achievements further.
- Very good leadership and management are leading to improving standards from a low base a few years ago.

Areas for improvement

- There is still some underachievement by boys at GCSE.
- Fieldwork opportunities in Years 7 and 8 are limited.

147. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were broadly in line with the national average. Girls attained higher standards than boys, who were well below the average for boys. However, the results are a significant improvement on those in 2001, largely because of a much improved staffing situation. There is an improving trend in the results over recent years from previously low standards. In 2002, pupils achieved similar results as they did in the other subjects that they studied.
148. The standards of work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement given pupils' standards in geography when they entered the school. Pupils have a good foundation of map and graphical skills. They are knowledgeable on a broad range of topics such as world population patterns and weather studies in Britain. They know about issues that affect population growth in developing countries compared to more developed countries. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils made very good progress when they discussed and consolidated their understanding of terms such as the characteristics of less or more economically developed countries. They applied their knowledge to compare the differences in size of families in Mali and Britain and wrote simulated letters to explain the differences observed. Pupils achieve very well in project work. Year 9 pupils, for example, recently completed a detailed study of tourism in Mallorca, as an example of the growth of tourism in the region. The standards achieved were high. Girls achieved better than boys because they gave more detail in answers. Most pupils planned and structured the work well, with many higher and average attainers using a wide range of skills, such as maps, photographs and graphs, to support explanations. ICT was

very well used to research information through web sites and to present work. Lower attaining pupils, including pupils with special educational need also achieved well, except for weaknesses in grammar and because some of their work was left incomplete.

149. The standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are now above average. This represents good achievement given their standards of entry to the GCSE course. Students have thorough knowledge and are able to apply knowledge through case studies. In a Year 11 lesson; for example, pupils were able to use their knowledge about river flooding to explain the causes and effect of typhoons in Bangladesh. In some lessons; for example, one on coastal erosion in Britain, they did not link theoretical studies of coastal erosion to real places. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are well supported by the teacher and when available, by teacher assistants. GCSE coursework is of above average standard. ICT is well used to present work. Boys' standards are lower than girls' because they do not write in enough detail or make links between their diagrams and illustrations and their written work.
150. Teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons very well and regularly take the opportunity to reinforce work covered earlier, which enables them to monitor how well pupils have understood the topics. There is a clear marking policy and this is mostly followed so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Teachers place emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills with word banks of key words, and plan opportunities to develop their speaking and writing competence. This is evident in the Year 9 project work and in the group discussion activities in Year 7. Teachers mostly manage pupils very well in lessons and learning is brisk, with pupils making good progress, but, occasionally, learning is unsatisfactory because of poor behaviour of a small minority and this slows learning for the whole class.
151. The good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is now leading to pupils achieving above average standards that are higher than examinations results have been in recent years. The teachers, who are all relatively new to the school, have very good subject knowledge and understand the expectations of the GCSE course very well. This is making a very good contribution to learning because pupils' standards in GCSE coursework are rising and they understand how to answer questions better than before. Lessons are very well planned and teachers explain points clearly. As a result, pupils are better able to understand topics and to write accurate notes or detailed answers in assignments. Teachers support the needs of different groups of pupils very well. In a Year 10 lesson about the growth of urban areas, the teacher met the needs of higher attaining pupils by setting intellectual challenges to promote thinking skills and self-expression. The needs of lower attaining pupils were well addressed by individual support from the teacher and through additional staff support. This led to all pupils in this lesson making very good progress in developing their literacy and geographical skills. The marking of work is mostly informative, but on occasions work is not marked well enough; there is too much 'tick' marking and insufficient attention to the correction of grammatical errors.
152. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. In the two years that the head of subject has been in post, significant strides have been made in raising the profile of the subject among pupils. The schemes of work are currently being revised to make much clearer the links between teaching and learning. The arrangements to assess pupils' progress are very good because teachers identify pupils' geographical attainment on entry and are increasingly using National Curriculum information to monitor progress and attainment. They engage pupils well in setting targets for improvement. There is improving provision for fieldwork, but there are few opportunities to participate in Years 7 and 8.
153. Since the last inspection pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 have risen and the use of ICT has improved. The staffing of the subject has significantly improved and all teachers are now subject specialists. After a drop for some time, GCSE standards are now rising.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good relationships between teachers and pupils create a partnership in learning.
- Through their good knowledge and understanding, teachers delivering the GCSE course are able to encourage their pupils to develop their responses.
- Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to involve pupils actively in their learning.
- Coursework is well supported, enabling pupils to achieve a good standard.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils are not involved in the assessment of their work, so do not understand the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Tasks are not designed to meet the needs of individual pupils; as a result, some higher attaining pupils are not extended while some lower attaining pupils lose motivation.
- Good teaching practice is not shared across the subject so that all pupils can benefit from it.

154. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations in history were just below the national average. Results in 2002 were lower than 2001, however, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades has risen. Girls achieved higher grades than the boys in 2002, although, in 2001, boys achieved much better.
155. In work seen, standards in Year 9 are average; this represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' standards in history on entry. A significant minority of pupils are achieving above average standards. Pupils have a satisfactory overview of the events leading up to the First World War such as the incident at Sarajevo, however, understanding of the reasons for the rise in nationalism and the tensions behind this outbreak is limited. Pupils have a secure grasp of the main features of the First World War and are developing a sound grasp of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Higher attaining pupils recognise its impact on Germany and can understand the reasons for German discontent. Lower attaining pupils identify only one view of the terms unless prompted by their teacher. Pupils use sources to obtain information, and higher attaining pupils are beginning to ask questions about the reliability of the sources used. The use of open-ended questions enables pupils to consider a range of opinions and judgements, and higher attaining pupils are aware of the need to support their judgements with reason and evidence. The judgements of lower attaining pupils are generally unsupported and do not demonstrate reasons based on historical facts. Pupils' oral responses are often more developed, supported by good questioning by teachers who encourage them to analyse further. Written responses tend to be shorter, considering only a single view or factor.
156. The standards reached by pupils following the GCSE course in Year 11 are average overall, although a significant minority is achieving standards that are well above the average when supported by very good teaching. Given their starting points for the course, achievement is good overall. Pupils use sources confidently to gain information about the period studied, and recognise that questions should be asked about the reliability of the source. Higher attaining pupils recognise the problems of bias and are able to make deductions from the inferences in the sources. They identify the value of the source to the historian. Most pupils, however, focus on content rather than reliability, taking sources at their face value unless directed by their teacher. Pupils have a sound grasp of the main features of 20th-century America and reasons for American isolation between the wars. They have a good grasp of the discrimination facing black Americans and the work of the civil rights activists led by Martin Luther King. They have a clear understanding of the differences between them and the Black Power movement. Pupils have an overview of the development of the women's movement, however, understanding of the reasons for this development is unclear. Coursework is well planned and higher attaining pupils achieve a high level of clarity and detail, demonstrating a secure understanding.
157. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, although satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In Years 7 to 9, learning is helped by the prompt start to lessons and the expectation by pupils that they will start to work quickly. In the best lessons, teachers clearly identify the key questions and recap on the work of the previous lesson in order to enable pupils to build on prior knowledge. However, this practice is not consistent across the subject. The pace of lessons is usually brisk,

and teachers use a range of methods to enable pupils to be actively involved in their learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and the positive way in which their responses are received encourages pupils to participate in the oral work of the class. Whole-class tasks are used, and at times this means that both higher and lower attaining pupils are not appropriately challenged. Extension tasks tend to be extra work at the same level rather than be designed to stretch pupils of higher attainment, leading to some underachievement by them. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not familiar with the requirements of the National Curriculum Levels so cannot share responsibility for their progress towards the attainment targets. End of module tasks have been designed to identify progress in history, but they have not yet been used and so there is insufficient data to monitor the progress of the pupils in these targets.

158. Teaching in the GCSE course is good. Teachers have a good grasp of their subject and encourage pupils to develop their oral responses and to think about the information they receive. Good use is made of examination-style questions to support pupils' understanding of the examination requirements, and pupils are well supported in their coursework. Pupils enjoy working in groups and higher attaining pupils are willing to exchange and listen to the ideas of others. Some pupils, however, do not contribute to the work of pairs or groups and teachers do not always identify this and encourage their involvement. Large classes, some over 30, restrict opportunities for the individual attention that could support lower attaining pupils and stretch those of higher attainment.
159. The leadership and management of the subject are broadly satisfactory. Schemes of work are being redesigned to include new developments such as citizenship, and the subject has identified correctly areas for development. Teaching is monitored and there is good support for new teachers. However, the quality of teaching is still inconsistent and there is insufficient sharing of good practice. Monitoring of teaching has not been used to develop the work of the department and there is insufficient use of assessment to identify areas of weakness for development. Since the last inspection ICT has been introduced into schemes of work and a greater variety of teaching and learning methods are used. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils develop good skills in researching information and communicating their understanding across a range of subjects.
- Staffing is generous with teachers having good technical expertise.
- The school gives pupils opportunities to use their ICT skills in a range of subjects.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory; the school does not ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to study the full range of the ICT National Curriculum.
- The pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not always understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve; the formal arrangements for assessment in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory.
- Whilst the school has made good progress in developing ICT since the last inspection, progress is being held back by the arrangements for managing the department.

160. The teachers' assessment of pupils' attainments by the end of Year 9 in 2002 stated that they were well above average, with a very high number reaching the higher levels. Overall, the trend over the last few years has been rising. The school does not enter pupils for an examination at the end of Year 11 and no assessment of attainment is available for pupils at this stage.
161. The inspection finds that teachers over estimate the pupils' attainment. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is average. This represents satisfactory achievement during Years 7 to 9, although progress is good in specific ICT lessons. Pupils can produce word-processed documents and presentations that combine pictures, text and simple animations. Higher attaining pupils can create documents that show pupils' clear sense of audience. Most

pupils are able to log on to the Internet and explore the World Wide Web, and pupils' strategies for searching, selecting and using information are effective. Whilst most pupils can create a simple database to record the results of a survey, only a few higher attaining pupils have an appropriate understanding in the use of computer simulations; for example, in financial forecasting.

162. By the end of Year 11, attainment is below average overall; achievement is unsatisfactory because not all pupils experience the full range of the ICT National Curriculum. Higher attaining pupils are able to extract information from reports on the Internet for their research in history or geography. These pupils can then select and edit the information for their own purposes. Many pupils use a range of software from spreadsheets and database programs, to create multimedia presentations in a range of subjects, but skills do not often extend beyond the level at which they worked in Years 7 to 9. At all levels, there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls or those from different ethnic backgrounds.
163. Teaching for Years 7 to 9 is good overall and is enabling pupils to learn well in ICT lessons. All teachers prepare the lessons well and make good use of the electronic whiteboards to explain and demonstrate the tasks they set. In a good Year 7 lesson, the teacher chose football as an example when demonstrating how to search the Internet. This motivated the pupils who made good progress in developing their search strategies. The progress of the higher attaining pupils is often held back by the lack of work prepared to extend their understanding through more difficult or challenging tasks. The lower attaining pupils are well supported by the teacher with extra help, sometimes from a special educational needs teacher assistant, although rarely with simpler tasks or resources. There was no specific ICT teaching in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection. Three subject-based lessons were seen in Year 11 and in these the teachers made very good use of computer technology to enhance learning.
164. Pupils enjoy ICT lessons and work hard to solve problems or produce a creative response; for example, when designing a Web page. They behave well, listen attentively and follow instructions. This helps lessons to proceed briskly and purposefully. Achievement in the past has been constrained by the fact that some aspects of the National Curriculum have not been covered effectively. The new scheme of work has not been operating long enough to enable pupils to reach higher levels and show good achievement. The pupils' literacy skills are developed well by all teachers. Grammar and spelling are corrected regularly by the teachers. There are fewer opportunities to develop numeracy. The subject does not set homework, which would provide a useful boost to learning and help to raise standards of achievement further.
165. The assessment process is unsatisfactory and is not used effectively to develop teaching and learning. Whilst teachers check and mark work systematically for Years 7 to 9, pupils are not always made aware of the specific features of the ICT National Curriculum Level that they have reached, and what they can do to improve. Teachers have produced inaccurate judgements about attainment and achievement. Their understanding of the National Curriculum Levels has been hindered by the school's own marking and target setting system. In Years 10 and 11 the school has not implemented a satisfactory system for assessing the pupils' work in ICT and so is not meeting the statutory requirements to measure and report on pupils' progress.
166. Although further developments are still needed, the school has made a good improvement in ICT since the last inspection. Achievement and overall attainment have improved for Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The use of ICT in some subjects has increased to the point where it is at least as good as most schools nationally, although there is some way still to go in other subjects. Recent developments in the provision of networked computer rooms have increased opportunities. Teaching is now good in ICT for Years 7 to 9 and there are also examples of good and very good teaching for pupils of all ages using ICT in English, design and technology and history. The provision of training and in-class support for subject teachers in ICT is very good. However, the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because it does not provide equal opportunities to study the full curriculum for all pupils. Pupils do not have an opportunity to study measurement and data logging using ICT. Not all pupils study control, simulation and the use of databases. Opportunities for pupils to gain the higher National Curriculum Levels are limited. The management and leadership of ICT are satisfactory. There are two heads of department who are overseen by a

faculty head, who is in turn responsible to senior managers. This is a cumbersome arrangement that has resulted in a lack of clarity in decisions on the development of ICT, in the near future or longer term. As a consequence, the school has not made as much progress as it could have done in raising attainment to levels found in mathematics and English.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (FRENCH)

Provision for French is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good; it is well prepared and challenges pupils by the sustained use of French.
- The subject has made good progress in initiating schemes for reading and the use of ICT.
- A very good philosophy of inclusion enables almost all pupils to reach examination level.
- Proportionately more pupils take a foreign language at GCSE than is found nationally.

Areas for improvement

- Results at GCSE, although improved from earlier years, were still below average in 2002.
- Forms of assessment need broadening so that they are more specific to the subject.
- A more systematic programming and monitoring of the subject's work will help to raise standards.

167. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades A* - C was below the national average, although the A* and A grades were at national levels. These results are an improvement over the previous year. Pupils' achievements were below expectations from their prior attainments and they did less well in French than in their other subjects. In the last three years the percentage of pupils awarded a grade A* - G has been just below the national average. However, this is good achievement because the school has levels of entry that are higher than the national picture.
168. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen during the inspection are above average with no marked differences between boys and girls. Pupils reach National Curriculum Levels that show good achievement from the time when they enter the school. Average and higher attaining pupils benefit from teachers' high expectations. In several lessons they cover aspects of grammar normally covered much later in the course. The setting arrangements enable teachers to adapt materials to support the learning of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs so that they too show good achievement. The speaking and listening skills of all pupils benefit from the teachers' sustained use of French. As a result, pupils become accustomed to the intonation and pronunciation of French and can listen to French tapes and pick out key information. In speaking they are confident and communicate clearly even where there are small faults of grammar or pronunciation. Pupils have good levels of accuracy in guided written work. There are examples of short passages of self-description and description of home, but few opportunities for more individual work. By the end of Year 11, standards of work seen are average, but this represents good achievement from pupils' previous attainments, which, unlike standards now being reached in Year 9, were below average. Groups of lower attaining pupils respond very well to teaching that is sympathetic, but demanding, and are on target to succeed in the GCSE. The written work of higher attaining pupils contains the grammar features that gain the highest grades, but lengthier writing is restricted to simple topics. A major contribution to pupils' achievements is their good attitudes to learning. Pupils are eager to answer questions and show enjoyment of games and competitive activities. They co-operate well in pair work and sustain their focus on work.
169. Overall, teaching is good at both stages, with some being very good or excellent. A feature of all the teaching is the good planning with a variety of activities to create the maximum involvement of pupils. In addition, teachers challenge the pupils by teaching almost exclusively in French. As a result of whole lessons in a total foreign language environment, pupils gain confidence in using the language. In some lessons computers are used, but this has not yet been developed as a regular feature, losing opportunities for variety and, for some pupils, greater motivation. Lower attaining pupils gain confidence through teachers' praise for effort, summed up in one lesson as 'the only

thing that happens if you get something wrong is that you don't get it right'. Teachers challenge pupils by the pace and the language levels used. Homework is set and marked regularly and pupils' progress is regularly assessed, but opportunities are missed to use National Curriculum Levels to measure attainment or to set language-specific targets for improvement.

170. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory with improvements in the teachers' use of the target language and pupils' speaking skills, but there is potential for further improvement. The leadership and management of the subject are now good, with a strong commitment to further improvement. The head of subject sets a good example and has built a team of teachers who share his commitment. The subject has identified its objectives to raise standards and incorporated some of these into the schemes of work. To improve further, the subject needs to provide a more rigorous programme of ongoing review to ensure consistent delivery of these initiatives. Whilst teaching is formally monitored, teachers would benefit from more frequent evaluation of their work and the opportunity for mutual observation of teaching to identify and share good practice. There is now a team with the capacity to address the issues brought to its attention and raise further the standards and status of the subject.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve better overall at GCSE in music than in other subject that they take.
- Pupils are well motivated and enjoy music, reflected by the large number of pupils who choose to take the subject at GCSE.
- There are good opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning outside classes, including contributing to acts of worship.
- The excellent displays contribute significantly to the positive environment in the music department, mitigating some of the inadequacies of the accommodation.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 does not always meet the needs of different abilities of pupils in the class.
- There is a need to present a more representative range of music to the school and wider community.
- Schemes of work do not yet embrace sufficiently curriculum matters that go across the whole school.

171. The number of pupils attaining A*-C grades in GCSE music in 2002 was broadly in line with the national average. The number obtaining A*-G was below the national average. Over the period 2000 to 2002, giving better statistical reliability; the A*-C grade results are above average and A*-G grades are close to the national average. The number of A* and A grades has increased markedly. About one pupil in five takes music for GCSE; well above the national figure. Overall, pupils perform better in music than in their other subjects. Over the same period, attainment at the end of Year 9, as assessed by teachers, has improved from average to well above average. The 2002 level would appear exaggerated in the light of work seen in the inspection, but improvement in boys' standards, such that they now perform as well as girls, is corroborated.
172. Both in Year 9 and 11, standards in work seen during the inspection are above average. At all levels, pupils achieve well, making good progress in their work. Despite varied provision in feeder primary schools, pupils in Year 7 are soon able to work well with rhythms, giving them confidence from the start. Through exercises involving keeping in time, movement, synchronising their own texts in rap rhythm, dictation using rhythmic notation and shorthand, they have a strong basis for improvement. In Year 9, all pupils, including boys whose voices have already broken, sing confidently in unison, although part-singing is underdeveloped. They enjoy music and have good attitudes to the subject. They perform, mostly on keyboards, relying on their aural memory and alphabetic shorthand. Most are not confident reading the melodic contours of standard or graphic notation. Most can hold an independent part within group work, but progress is held back by many using inappropriate finger technique. They manipulate melodies, so that they are able to create

convincing themes with variations, as in the Year 9 Frères Jacques' project. In Year 11 pupils, who take instrumental or singing lessons progress very well, performing confidently and applying their skills creatively in compositions. They assist one another through good ensemble performance. One talented pupil, for example, had composed a flute piece that used some advanced harmonic techniques in the accompaniment and she was ably supported by a friend who played the piano accompaniment that she had written. Pupils successfully use computer software to help them to layer and structure material when composing, and the Internet for research project work. This is of a high standard with careful attention to using the correct technical vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, often assisted by learning support teachers and students from Years 12 and 13.

173. Teaching is good overall throughout the main school and, as a result, pupils learn well. Teaching sets clear routines and explanation of tasks is unambiguous. Pupils, therefore, work very effectively and, despite frequent changes in activity, no time is lost for musical engagement. Explanations of key concepts are reinforced with simple games, which make learning fun and motivate pupils. Lessons are planned so that maximum use can be made of the practise rooms for developing individual and group skills when two large classes take place at the same time. Most lessons incorporate the key activities of composing, performing, listening and evaluating. While this ensures a good balance of experiences for the pupils, it can sometimes be detrimental. For example, a Year 10 class, having worked on a short composition task, followed this with a scarcely-related performance exercise, instead of evaluating the composition task while it was fresh in pupils' minds. Posters explaining how, in general, work can be improved are displayed in all rooms. This is helpful, especially in groupwork where not everyone has the immediate attention of the teacher. The lack of similar support materials in music in the ICT suite holds some pupils back. Performance materials in Year 8 make too many demands of the pupils too soon, especially for those of lower attainment, and, working in pairs, there is no clear strategy for ensuring that both players aspire to the same standards. Talented pupils are not given enough scope within the lessons in Years 7 to 9 to develop creative freedom.
174. The curriculum is strongly biased towards western musical traditions. Some non-western styles are touched upon, but these only partly reflect the ethnic diversity of the school population and the city. Greater conformity to the principles laid down in the arts faculty handbook would ensure that whole-school curriculum matters, such as those on numeracy and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, would make a greater impact in music. However, aspects of literacy and ICT are well integrated. There are notable strengths to the overall provision of music in the school, which is inclusive and extensive. The curriculum is enhanced with opportunities for all pupils to learn a range of instruments, with 75 pupils taking this opportunity. The subject has no minimum ability level for accepting pupils for GCSE, and, at all levels, pupils can participate in choirs and orchestras, which are divided into junior and senior ensembles to ensure continuity and progression. Formal school concerts are given termly, informal ones more frequently, giving opportunities for young musicians to develop confidence. Each year the school contributes to a concert of the massed choirs of the local Catholic schools. Pupils often perform at assemblies and masses, enhancing the liturgical aspects of the school's life. Regular assessment ensures that pupils' progress is being tracked, and reports give clear and constructive help to pupils and parents alike.
175. Because the subject is well led and managed, it has made good progress since the last inspection in results, quality of teaching and the numbers taking music in Years 10 and 11. Teachers work well collaboratively in the interests of the pupils and have realistic plans for the development of the subject. The class and practise rooms are enhanced with excellent displays, including key words posters, marking criteria, pupils' work and pupils' original artwork on music. These assist and motivate pupils, transforming otherwise drab accommodation. Soundproofing is poor and ambient sound detracts from careful listening. The resources for learning are adequate. To further improve, the subject needs to invest in tuned and untuned percussion instruments, keyboards with recording and overdub facilities, ethnic instruments and department-based computers, to realise its development plans coherently. Pianos also need tuning and maintaining regularly to ensure that work recorded mid-year for GCSE submissions is not of inferior quality.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good; teachers have very good knowledge and high expectations.
- Because of good teaching, pupils achieve well despite the poor accommodation and facilities for the subject.
- Good relationships and pupils' positive attitudes contribute to a purposeful learning atmosphere.
- With good leadership and management, teachers work well as a team, with much enthusiasm.

Areas for improvement

- The poor accommodation and facilities severely restrict the breadth of the curriculum and adversely affect teaching and learning.
- The very cramped room where all examination theory work takes place restricts the range of learning opportunities.
- Teaching methods do not always enable all pupils to take their learning forward sufficiently rapidly.

176. The school's first GCSE group in physical education started in September 2000; their results in 2002 were below the national average. Over 70, Year 10 pupils, each year for the last three years, have taken the Junior Sports Leader Award with at least seven out of ten pupils gaining the award. The standards of pupils' performance in lessons and in extra-curricular sport are average in Years 7 to 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. School teams and individuals are successfully competing at school, district and county levels. No significant differences were observed between the performance of boys and girls.

177. Pupils enter Year 7 with below average physical skills; by the end of Year 9, they reach average standards, which represents good achievement. By the end of Year 9, pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of physical activities. They show basic knowledge of the rules, and they have appropriate skills to enable them to participate successfully; they play fairly within the laws of the game. By the end of Year 9 pupils know the reasons for warming-up the body prior to physical activity; higher attaining pupils successfully take responsibility for leading class warm-up. Most pupils know the importance of good footwork in playing games. For example, in Years 8 and 9 basketball lessons, good footwork is used to outwit opponents and many do this successfully, however, only the higher attaining pupils do this effectively within a game. Year 9 pupils show good basic basketball control skills, however, they are not always sufficiently developed to be effective within a game when under pressure. The good reinforcement of pupils' literacy skills is seen in most lessons through the use of key technical words; for example, 'quadriceps', 'set shot' and 'lay-up'; the use of numeracy skills is more limited, but is used in fitness measurement.

178. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average; all pupils achieve well in relation to their work in Year 9. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards are better than recent examination results. By the end of Year 11, pupils show a better understanding of warm-up and cool-down and the importance prior to and after physical activity. Year 10 pupils following the Junior Sports leaders course lead a warm-up and simple group teaching effectively. In the core programme for all Years 10 and 11 pupils, they show skills in activities like the backhand serve in badminton and dig in volleyball, which are well developed and are successfully transferred into competitive games. Year 11 pupils studying GCSE show good knowledge of sports injuries. Most pupils show that they understand the principles of good early treatment to injuries. Orally, pupils show a good grasp of the anatomical and physiological factors that constrain performance. Appropriate technical words continue to support the subject with some development of new vocabulary like 'aerobic' and 'anaerobic'. Spatial awareness and angles are developed in basketball in both attacking and defensive play. While pupils' practical skills are above average, written work is average, which adversely affects examination results.

179. Overall, teaching and learning are good, although they are better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have a very good knowledge of physical education and apply this knowledge well to promote good learning. For instance, in a Year 11 GCSE lesson, the very extensive knowledge of sports injuries successfully extended pupils' learning. Learning is encouraged by the teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations, demonstrated in teaching volleyball. Probing and challenging questions are a strong feature, as seen when Year 9 pupils effectively evaluate use of space in basketball. However, there are times when teaching methods do not sufficiently involve pupils in their learning; as a result, the pace of learning is reduced. Through individual approaches, teachers successfully help pupils with special educational needs. When learning support assistants are present, pupils with special educational needs have good quality help; their performance is enhanced; for example, in a Year 10 volleyball lesson. However, there are occasions in lessons when gifted and talented pupils could benefit from a more flexible approach so that their learning is taken forward more rapidly. Overall, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships are good because lessons are interesting and demanding and teachers manage their classes well.
180. Physical education is well led and well managed. A strength of the subject is the way staff operate as a team. However, the subject's objectives need to be formulated into a long-term development plan, showing costing of time and finance; success criteria are needed to measure how well pupils achieve. The subject lacks a suitably-sized room for physical education theory lessons; because of this, the range of teaching methods and learning styles is reduced, and this adversely affects the overall pace of learning. The major constraint is the poor facilities and accommodation. The school site is small and outdoor fields are limited for teaching games and athletics. Changing rooms are cramped, dirty and unhygienic; teachers' and pupils' attitudes are good despite the appalling changing facilities. The multipurpose hall has limitations. It is used for daily assembly, examinations in autumn and early summer and school productions; these events severely restrict the range of teaching that is possible in physical education. The gymnasium is barely adequate and is again used for a range of other activities. The poor accommodation severely constrains the curriculum, teaching and learning. The good achievement is a credit to the professionalism and dedication of teachers and the good humour of pupils. Despite the lack of improvement in accommodation, overall improvement since the last inspection has been good, notably in accreditation and assessment procedures, and in the introduction of examination courses. However, physical education needs new facilities if it is to fully provide the quality and range of experiences that would be expected in most secondary schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education was inspected as part of the Canonical and Statutory Inspection and is reported on in the Canonical Inspector's report.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the latest year, at the time of writing, for which national comparisons are available.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	7	100	96	14	46	5.7	6.6
Biology	23	100	88	48	34	6.7	5.3
Chemistry	12	92	90	33	43	5.2	5.9
Economics	18	94	89	28	36	5.7	5.5
English literature	42	100	95	19	37	5.3	5.9
French	4	100	89	25	38	4.0	5.6
General studies	27	100	85	52	30	6.9	4.9
Geography	6	100	92	33	38	6.7	5.7
History	19	100	88	32	35	5.9	5.5
Mathematics	15	93	87	60	43	6.8	5.8
Other social studies	15	87	87	33	34	4.9	5.3
Physics	13	92	88	54	40	6.2	5.7
Religious studies	13	92	92	46	38	6.0	5.8
Sociology	22	86	86	36	35	5.3	5.3

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

181. The focus was on mathematics and chemistry, but biology and physics were sampled. In biology, results in 2001 were well above national averages, following consistently above average results over a number of years. Results in 2002 were less good. One lesson was observed and teaching was very good. A very good blend of explanation with student activity led to very good learning on the difficult topic of factors affecting photosynthesis. In physics, results in 2001 were above national averages and again follows a trend of above average results, which continued in 2002. One lesson was observed and teaching was good. A good use of a practical demonstration was used as the basis for a tutorial, checking and building on the student's understanding of electromagnetism.

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, enabling students to achieve well.
- The course is well organised.

- Students' progress is monitored well.
- Areas for improvement
- Students are not sufficiently encouraged to develop a more enquiring approach.

182. The number of students entered for A-level examinations has fluctuated between five and 15 in recent years. Attainment in the 2001 examinations was well above the national average. Sixty per cent of the students who entered the examinations achieved grades A or B, and only one did not achieve a grade A-E. Results in 2002 were broadly similar. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment, the progress of students and the quality of the teaching have been maintained.

183. Standards of work seen in the AS and A2-level courses are above national expectations. The students follow a modular course. This involves units that include pure mathematics, applied mathematics and statistics. Presentation is good. The students take care with their work, and use precise and appropriate processes as taught to them. Their work is generally accurate and shows good achievement, given the starting points of the students. In pure mathematics in Year 12, students had just completed a practise examination paper ranging across the syllabus, in which most were confident in the integration of polynomials and the use of the trapezium rule, amongst other parts of the syllabus. In Year 13, the students are able to use compound angle formulae to solve trigonometrical equations in pure mathematics, and know when and how to use a Poisson distribution in statistics. The students' progress over the period of the course is good, influenced both by the quality of the teaching, and by their own conscientious attitude. However, they are more comfortable learning standard processes than working out solutions to problems from first principles. Although some are diffident about contributing actively to the lessons, they ensure that they record all necessary information, and satisfy the requirements for additional work outside lessons.

184. The teaching in the AS and A2-level course is good. The teachers have a good understanding of the key requirements of the course and are good mathematicians. They work hard to present the lessons in a way that tries to challenge the students to think through the underlying concepts and achieve a good understanding as well as an ability to master the processes and methods for solutions to problems. Lessons are well organised, but students are not sufficiently encouraged to adopt a more enquiring approach. As a result, their intellectual creativity is not developed as much as it might be. Assessment of students' work is regularly done through marking which, as well as correcting key mistakes, also gives students clear indications about how to improve. Regular testing effectively ensures confirmation of learning and identifies areas for review.

185. The course is well planned and managed. Resources for learning are adequate, although greater use could be made of ICT to encourage independent research. The students are very appreciative of the high quality that is provided for them in the course; they particularly appreciate the continuity of teachers from their GCSE studies, and the personal support they get from the two A-level teachers.

Chemistry

Overall the quality of provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- Individual support and guidance provided to students is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not show sufficient independence in their learning.
- There is a need for more enrichment of the curriculum beyond the timetabled lessons.

186. Results in 2001 were in line with national averages and results have been consistently above or in line with national averages for the last four years. In 2002, results were much better and value

added data provided by the schools shows that results in 2001 and 2002 are in line with those expected from students' prior attainment, representing satisfactory achievement. Males and females achieve equally well. Recruitment to the subject has increased significantly this year and retention rates on courses are typically well over 90 per cent.

187. Standards of work seen during the inspection are very variable, ranging from work at the standard of a bare pass to that expected for the highest grade. They are average overall, representing satisfactory achievement. In a small Year 13 group of female students, the highest attaining students can remember pathways for organic synthesis and describe some simple mechanisms. They can use numerical information in; for example, calculating particular energies in an energy cycle from given data. Lower attaining students find difficulty with mathematical tasks and, while they can remember the structure and function of different organic groups, they cannot apply these in reactions and synthetic routes. In a much larger mixed group in Year 12, more students are working at higher levels and standards are above average for this stage in the course overall. For example, most quickly grasp the basic rules of naming organic compounds and are able to put this into practice.
188. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this well in explanations and responding to students' queries. Teaching of individual lessons is usually good and students learn and understand the particular objectives. For example, in a lesson on synthetic routes, very good explanations and a useful framework sheet enabled students to build a comprehensive map of organic reactions and to use the tips the teacher offered to begin to learn them. However, students' overall achievement is satisfactory rather than good because teaching is not sufficiently planned to develop over time their skills as independent learners. They remain comparatively dependent on their teachers. Students use the Internet for research, but this is always related to a topic set by the teacher. They show little evidence of work beyond the syllabus, partly because there is relatively little enrichment of the curriculum beyond the examination syllabus and its requirements. Students have very good attitudes to the subject because teachers develop very good relationships with students, giving much individual help and support. They provide a lot of individual support. Students have a good understanding of their learning because their written work is assessed and there is a great deal of informal verbal feedback. Written feedback does not include much advice on how to improve.
189. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The work of the two teachers is informally co-ordinated and a clear allocation of responsibilities ensures that the entire syllabus is covered. Results in module tests are analysed against expectations and teaching has been developed in response to evidence of underachievement in previous years. Value added data provided by the school shows an improvement from unsatisfactory achievement two years ago. Sixth form chemistry was hardly mentioned in the previous report. However, the improvement in achievement represents good progress since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Only two courses are currently studied in this curriculum area in the sixth form. In Year 12, students follow an AS design and technology course and in Year 13 students are currently following a specialism in systems and control as part of an A2 course. There is a move, however, to change this focus to a graphical communication course in the near future. Both the courses are reported here under the title of 'design and technology'.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Results in the only examination taken so far (AS level in 2002) have been above average.
- Relationships between students and the teacher are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation and teaching resources of the faculty need significant improvement to allow for further gains in academic standards.
- Teaching in the sixth form does not adequately build progressively on students' prior attainment in Years 10 and 11.

190. The school has only recently introduced courses in the sixth form and no group of students has yet been completely through both years. At the present time, there are eight students following design and technology in Year 12 and three in Year 13. Students generally enter the courses in the sixth form with above average grades in design and technology at GCSE. Most have a good range of basic skills in design methodologies as well as some of the practical ones that relate to their subject specialism.
191. The results shown by the three students in 2002 were above average; they achieved well. The coursework folders produced by the students demonstrate an overall competence in design processes and presentation. The folders are generally improved with the use of ICT to enhance graphical and text work. Further application of the graphical software already purchased by the faculty will help standards to be increased even further.
192. It was not possible to see Year 12 being taught as a group during the week of inspection because of their examination commitments. However, it was possible to interview a few of them to discuss their work. Standards are above average for this stage in both Years 12 and 13, although most achieved above average GCSE results; this represents good achievement in the sixth form. The teaching was good in the two lessons in Year 13 that were observed. It was clear that very good relationships have been established between the students and the teacher, and the lessons moved along at a good pace, enabling good progress to be made. The teacher is confident of his subject matter and has understood the requirements of the courses fully. However, the course does not build sufficiently on work done in Years 10 and 11, although the proposal to change the focus of the course should help this situation. In the current Year 13, the limited dynamics of the group are affecting teaching styles and reducing the learning of students to some extent. The indications are that the course numbers are likely to increase given a development to eight students in Year 12 and considerable interest in the current Year 11. This increase will be helpful to both students and teachers alike. The teacher has good expectations that students will achieve high standards; these expectations are clearly understood by the students.
193. The current accommodation used for teaching the students is a half-converted ex-science laboratory. There are few specialist facilities available here and any ICT work is completed in the school library. These arrangements are unsatisfactory and are having an adverse effect on the quality of work and the standards being achieved by the students. For the sixth form courses to flourish as numbers increase, the room needs to be completed and equipped to the standard required for advanced-level work for the numbers of students taking the course.
194. Overall leadership and management of the courses are good. The teacher is fully informed of the performance of the students and the requirements of the courses. Other staff are drawn in to help where necessary, such as in circumstances where students need to work in workshop areas in order to complete a project. The management system does currently have one weakness in that the course is taught and managed by one person; should he not be available at any time, there could be difficulties.

BUSINESS

In this curriculum area, advanced-level courses in business studies are taught.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Excellent teaching leads to students achieving very well on the AS and A2 courses.
- The assessment arrangements inform students clearly about their strengths and weaknesses and how to improve their standards.
- The leadership of the subject is excellent and leads to high morale and motivation of the students.

Area for improvement

- There are no areas where significant improvement is needed.

195. Results in the 2002, A2 examinations were well above average, with more than one half of the large entry numbers achieving grades A or B. Male students achieved higher than female students, and the school's analysis shows that students, overall, achieved higher results than they did in the other subjects that they studied. The results are the first following the introduction of the A-level courses in Year 2000. Almost all students completed their AS course and proceeded to A2 level.
196. The standards of work of the current Years 12 and 13 are well above average. This represents very good achievement given their standards of entry to the course. Students know a wide range of business terms such as 'interest rates', and use them very well in discussions about business finance. In Year 12, for example, most students were able to explain how the 'cash flow' of a business might be affected by a change of interest rates. Most students are able to relate the theoretical aspects of study to the real business world. In one Year 13 lesson, they showed good understanding of a company's marketing strategy about sales planning in Russia; they knew about the different market sectors and were able to explain how targeting sales to the 'elite' sector was likely to secure high and consistent sales and thereby maximise financial returns. Year 12 students, who are only a few months into the AS course, achieved above average standards in a module test on marketing because they had acquired the knowledge expected for the assignment and had analysed the requirements of the question very well. Whilst students are competent in using number to make calculations about the finance of business, sometimes they do not analyse data enough, such as when studying demand and supply of goods and calculating profit at different scales of production. Although access to computers is good, students do not make enough use of ICT for research and to develop written answers.
197. Teaching is excellent and students learn very well as a result. The teacher has excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject material and of the examination requirements. The morale and motivation of students are very high because they are very confident in the teaching and are eager to learn. They concentrate fully in lessons, engage well in discussion and learning proceeds at a brisk pace. The management of lessons is excellent and rigorous intellectual challenges are made on students. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students showed that they understood about the different asset ratios of a business, such as liquidity or gearing ratios, and individuals confidently demonstrated how they would calculate the ratios to other members of the class. The ongoing assessment of students' attainment and progress is excellent. There are clear procedures established, and marked work is very well used to help students improve standards. A Year 12 lesson, for example, began with the teacher identifying strengths and weaknesses in a marked assignment, and teaching was very effective in helping students to identify 'key' knowledge and where emphasis should be placed in answers. Students improved their understanding of the topic and self-confidence rose as a result.
198. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The schemes of work are up to date with appropriate detail, and are shared with students. Staffing provision is excellent because of the specialist, experienced teaching available that has a significant impact on learning. The curriculum provision is very good overall, although there is scope to make more use of local business to broaden students' experience, and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are not explicit in planning. Resources are good with modern texts well supported by materials produced in school, and these meet student needs well. As this is a new course, there was reference to it in the previous inspection report, but the subject is clearly making excellent progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

199. No examination courses are taught in this curriculum area. A key skills in ICT is taught to students for part of their year in Year 12. Because the teachers were absent on a course on the one occasion when, otherwise, it could have been observed, it is not possible to comment on standards achieved in the course.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

200. An AS course in physical education has started for the first time this term. It is the school's intention that an A2 course will be offered next year. One lesson with Year 12 students was sampled. Teaching and learning were very good because the lesson was very well prepared with very good questioning that challenged the students and probed their understanding. A very good dialogue between the teacher and the students led to very good progress being made.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No courses are taught in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

201. In this curriculum area, the focus was on art and music. The course in drama and theatre studies was sampled, with one Year 12 lesson observed. In this lesson teaching was good, based on the teacher's secure knowledge of the theatrical styles of realism and epic theatre, and supported by well-researched source materials. It provoked good responses on style and interpretation from the students. Video is used as a means for review and evaluation, with, in this lesson, short realisations of a passage from Brecht's 'Mother Courage and her Children' performed by the students. Although only three of the seven students took GCSE in drama, the whole group is highly motivated and making good progress.

Art

The quality of provision for art is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent.
- Students have excellent attitudes, particularly in Year 13.
- The quality of research undertaken and the creative effort that students put into their work is very high.
- Leadership and management are very good, and the teaching team is strong.
- The separate studio accommodation enhances learning opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- The provision and use of computers for digital work need further development.
- Resources for learning, although satisfactory overall, are limited and restrict the scope of work that can be covered.

202. The number of students taking advanced-level courses in 2001 was too small to enable a fair comparison to be made with national figures, although results were disappointingly low. Results in 2002 show that there was no change in the proportion gaining the higher grades of A and B, and results are well below national averages. Results have remained static for the past three years. It is clear from inspection evidence that there has been a very significant turn around in standards and expectations since the arrival of the head of subject and his very strong second teacher at the beginning of this school year. Students are taught very well and learn to sustain their efforts over the well-planned lessons. They are expected to deepen their research into the artists and art movements they study, to annotate their work fully and present it to a high standard of finish. This

evidence gives a clear indication of an improving subject that will yield significantly better results in the years ahead and where standards are already above average.

203. In work seen during the inspection students are achieving very well and making very good progress in lessons. Where the quality of teaching rises to an excellent standard, then progress is accelerated by the teacher's very high expectations in well-planned and fast-paced lessons. Students in Year 13 are knowledgeable about the artists they study, having researched them in depth, through reference books and the Internet, for their personal studies. Their annotation is comprehensive and they develop and present their studies in imaginative ways. They work as independent learners under the guidance of teachers whose skills and knowledge they clearly respect. In an excellent lesson with Year 12, the students built up their expressive skills rapidly through a series of timed exercises in charcoal drawing. Their original pencil self-portraits, whilst technically skilful, were static and lacked expression. Through this lesson they freed up their approach to portraiture, putting movement and expression into their work, producing lively and creative self-portraits that they will build on in future lessons. They gained in confidence as they worked charcoal into the emulsion paint base and paint back into the charcoal, building up the layers of their preparatory work.
204. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject and teach with confidence and enthusiasm. The teamwork between the very experienced head of subject and the newly qualified teacher ensures a well-balanced programme of learning. Both use their own art skills to demonstrate and model technique for the students. Very good class management ensures that students do not fuss over detail, but explore and experiment with different media, building up knowledge and skills as they go. Year 13 students are individually planned for and the small number enables the teacher to give good quality time to them to discuss and develop their work. The very positive attitudes to lessons and commitment to their work is a noticeable strength that ensures a fluent teaching and learning experience.
205. Both the head of subject and the second teacher have recently joined the school and, as a team, they have worked hard to rebuild the foundations of the curriculum. The subject is very effectively led and many good ideas from previous teaching experience are finding their way into the subject's practices in the sixth form. Although much of the accommodation is drab and neglected, students have their own studio, which is spacious and much appreciated by them. Overall resources for the sixth form are satisfactory, but restricted in scope because of the lack of working kilns, limited printmaking facilities and the absence of powerful computers. However, all evidence points to rapidly improving standards in the sixth form and, given the necessary resources, considerable potential for further improvement.

Music

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

Strengths

- Very good relationships between teachers and students create a very positive climate for learning.
- Most students perform particularly well on instruments.
- The style of teaching in Year 12 addresses well the different approach to learning needed after GCSE.

Areas for improvement

- Stylistic trends are not adequately placed into an historical and cultural context.
- Students are not given sufficient creative freedoms in their composition work.
- There is a need to ensure that all teaching and learning are supported by aural experience.

206. It is not possible to comment on examination standards at the end of the sixth form, as the current Year 13 is the first group to take such courses in music. All three students who took AS level last year are pursuing the subject to A2 level, and, in Year 12, there are six students taking the AS-level course; a mixture of girls and boys. No students have withdrawn from the courses and all

current Year 13 students are considering higher education courses in which music plays a significant role.

207. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 13 are average. Students are not achieving as well as would be expected in relation to their GCSE grades, but illness and issues unrelated to school account for this. Only two students attend the whole course. A third, a talented guitarist, has one individual lesson each week and is given further support through school-based distance learning and guided study, in order that he can take four, A2 subjects of his choosing. The students are capable performers and their practical interests are well supported when they study recorded works of music. When writing songs they have difficulties setting the texts to a metrical beat and in following the implications of harmonic progression in accompaniment and melody. They take notes carefully in lessons on historical and stylistic aspects, developing good glossaries. Only more recently have they begun to move from technical description to analyses of how and why musical features are applied in compositions, as in a 'West Side Story' essay where their analysis of the music linked in well with aspects of the drama. They use ICT to research projects, but they do not exploit web sites with audio facilities, which are accessible in the school, their work being synthesised from text-based web pages.
208. In Year 12, standards of work seen in the inspection are above average, showing good achievement even though most students started the course with above average grades at GCSE. With six students, there are better class dynamics and students are able to support each other more effectively with more diversity of opinions in discussion and mutual support in ensemble performance. Several students perform to a high level, others more modestly. Higher attaining students are able to answer questions relating to their performance material well. They keep notes well and have a thorough knowledge of technical vocabulary in historical and stylistic study.
209. Teaching is good and, as a result, learning is good. It is characterised by very good relationships between teachers and students, creating a very positive climate for learning. When students have difficulties in a particular area, such as the songwriting in Year 13, they know that the teacher will attend to this before setting more challenging tasks. Oral feedback is very good, but, in some cases, this leads to superficial written feedback, meaning that students have insufficient points of reference when revising later in the course. Teaching of stylistic trends in Year 12 does much to bridge the GCSE-AS divide with well-prepared material to develop accuracy in reading scores and clarity in understanding formal structures, although students do not have sufficient creative freedom in their composition work. Students' understanding is reinforced through playing and discussion as well as note taking. The application of similar techniques in Year 13; for example, using cards to promote understanding and composition of twelve-tone technique, does not link in with sufficiently sociohistorical and cultural trends to draw out the highest grades from the students, or fully exploit the potential to develop aural perception skills. In each aspect of the courses students are issued with information sheets on how to improve their attainment. This is particularly helpful for guiding students in their homework. Half-termly assessments and reviews help students to know how they are progressing.
210. Students have the opportunity to take instrumental and singing lessons, to contribute to the choirs and orchestras of the school and to lead music in worship. Their social, cultural and spiritual development is very well enhanced by the creative nature of much of their work. Instrumental teachers take an active interest in performance standards and give active support to help students to investigate performances on instruments such as the euphonium or tenor horn, where the solo repertoire is limited. They collaborate well with the A-level teachers. Many students play in good ensembles in the community, including bands and orchestras run by the local education authority. They receive good support and guidance about higher education courses and take initiative by offering learning support assistance in lower classes. There is a very good system of tracking students' progress and the reporting of progress to students, parents and key staff is very effective. The students unanimously feel that music is a good choice.
211. Music in the sixth form is well led and managed. Where some resources are lacking, teachers provide them from home or public libraries. Both teachers have attended courses on the new

course specifications and there is a good strategic planning and a common will for the subject to succeed.

HUMANITIES

212. The focus of this inspection was on history and psychology. Religious education is covered in the separate Diocesan Canonical and Statutory Inspection. Geography and sociology were also sampled. In the geography lesson, teaching and learning were very good with above average standards. The teacher was very skilled at combining giving information and drawing on students' earlier knowledge to take their thinking and understanding forward. The good teaching and learning in a sociology lesson resulted from the use of a teaching pack that contained an excellent range of articles, although, in a feedback session, some of the complexities of the issues were overlooked by the teacher.

History

The quality of provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average, with good achievement.
- Skilful questioning supports high quality responses by students.
- Opportunities for presentations by students enable them to take responsibility for their learning.
- Students are well motivated and have positive attitudes to their studies.

Areas for development

- There is insufficient use of assessment to enable students and teachers to track progress towards students' predicted grades.
- There is little variety in the recording of information in order to reinforce learning.
- Resources are too limited to provide sufficient support for individual research by students.

213. Results in the A-level examinations in 2001 were above average with the proportion of students gaining grades A and B broadly in line with the national average. Results in 2002 were higher. Over the last five years all students have passed the examination. Results in the AS level were above average and most students have chosen to continue their studies to advanced level.

214. Standards in history are above average. Supported by good teaching and high expectations, students are achieving well and have made the transition from GCSE, through AS to A2 level. Students have a clear picture of Tudor England and a good understanding of the development from medieval government to a modern state. Students can paraphrase the Elton theory, recognising that there are different valid theories. Higher attaining students go on to make judgements as to its validity. They compare and contrast the Tudor monarchs and can analyse their strengths and weaknesses, suggesting reasons for them. Students can hypothesise how personal attributes of Tudor kings affected the development of the monarchy and the kingdom. Information is recorded in clear note form, however, there is little evidence of students using other methods to display or categorise information in order to reinforce understanding and support recall. Extended writing is clear and fluent. Most students recognise the key requirements of the titles, and essays are well planned. Lower attaining students include generalisation and are not always selective in the information they include, but the higher attainers' essays demonstrate thorough reasoning and individual judgements. Coursework is completed to a high standard; evidence of the effort of students and support of teachers.

215. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and, as a result, explanations are clear and detailed. Teachers have high expectations of the effort and concentration of the students, who respond well to the mature way they are treated. While challenging students through the level of discussion and enquiry, teachers ensure that they are well supported by clearly structured tasks and opportunities to reflect and review what has been learnt. Teachers ensure that all students participate, and

lessons involve a variety of tasks that enable them to consolidate their learning whilst practising their historical skills. Students' presentations enable them to develop their confidence and learn from each other. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students have confidence that they are working in partnership with their teachers. As a result, students work hard and are making good progress in their studies.

216. The quality of management and leadership is satisfactory. Students feel well supported and have confidence in their teachers. Teachers provide good constructive advice to students about their essays, however, assessment is not used to enable teachers and students to monitor their progress towards their predicted grades. Students would benefit from greater experience in evaluating the quality of responses. Resources that support students' individual projects have not yet been fully replaced since they were destroyed, and the range of library and textbooks is limited. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The number of students choosing to follow the history course is rising and the AS-level course has been successfully introduced.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- A-level results in 2002 were above average.
- The good teaching is based on strong subject expertise.
- Students participate in lively discussions within lessons; this has a very positive impact on the pace of their learning.
- Relationships between the teacher and students are very good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- There are inadequate checks on learning within individual lessons.
- The quality of some students' notes is poor, making consolidation of their work less effective.
- The teachers' feedback on students' work lacks sufficient detail.

217. In 2002, the A2-level pass rate was above the national average, having risen steadily over the past three years. However, the AS pass rate fell in 2002 to below the national average, having been 100 per cent in 2001. However, standards of work seen are above average. The students' coursework shows that they have a very good understanding of how to design experiments, follow the correct procedures and analyse the results. However, they are less effective in discussing the implications of their research findings. Students' essays frequently contain an impressive range of up-to-date research evidence when evaluating different psychological approaches to phenomena such as criminal behaviour.

218. Teaching is good. Much of it stimulates students' interest, and their learning is good. Teaching is based on a strong expertise in social science. Individual psychologist's work is clearly set in context so that the students can see how the subject has evolved over time. Lessons often contain lively discussion in which the students are able to draw upon their own experiences in assessing the merits of different psychological theories. For example, in a lesson on cognitive approaches to education, the class engaged in a lively debate about whether children in nursery schools need to be taught certain skills or whether they instinctively develop them. As a result of their active involvement, the students' pace of learning was rapid as they developed their thinking skills. On some occasions, not enough time is spent on explaining the more complex ideas in class, so that some students struggle to understand fully these ideas. The students are provided with a very good range of supportive handouts, but often these are not annotated by the students and furthermore, the quality of note making by some students is poor. This hinders their learning because they have not analysed sufficiently whether they have understood what they have been reading or writing. When checking what has been understood in class, questions from the teacher tend to be posed to the whole class, resulting in a significant minority of students remaining passive whilst others provide all the answers. Because of this, it is difficult for the teacher to know

how well some students are learning during the lesson. In assessing the students' written work, the feedback is generally encouraging, but it contains too little specific guidance on how students can achieve higher marks.

219. Beyond the classroom, there is a very good range of activities that enriches the students' experience of psychology. An excellent example of this is the psychology society, which invites outside speakers to talk to students about specialist topics. Recent guests have included experts on criminal profiling and forensic psychology and the principal examiner for A-level psychology. The students take a leading role in running the society; their initiative in this helps in the overall broadening of their development in this subject.
220. Psychology is a well-managed subject, with steadily improving resources. The head of subject is very experienced. Resources in the library have significantly improved recently with the addition of a very good collection of original academic papers enabling students to read first-hand psychological research. As yet, no use has been made of the potential of the school Intranet as a learning resource. The main subject room contains a good display of students' work, but, because there are no curtains to block out sunlight on occasions when it is necessary to do so, the range of learning opportunities is reduced.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

221. The focus of the inspection was on English. French is also taught in the sixth form, but only at present in Year 12; the school expects the subject to be taught in Year 13 next year. One French lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. The authentic materials chosen challenged students' comprehension, but some challenge was lost by the unnecessary use of English. Students' confidence in speaking is good and overall standards match expectations at this stage.

English

The quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Students make good progress in their studies and are achieving well.
- Teaching is good; imaginative teaching strategies develop students' responsibility for their own learning.
- Leadership and management are very good, with a strong commitment to further improvement.
- Students have very good attitudes and make a valuable contribution to discussions.

Areas for improvement

- Preparation of study guides, to help students on current courses and to support the introduction of new courses from September 2003, will aid further students' achievements.
- Wider reading by students will raise their standards by extending their horizons.
- There is scope for further development of resources to support students' independent learning skills through new technology and critical works.

222. The subject provides courses for 45 students at present. AS and A2 courses are taught in English literature. These will be replaced by joint language and literature courses from September 2003 onwards.

223. Standards in English on entry to the sixth form are above average, reflecting the pattern of high attainment at GCSE in the subject, but in 2001, overall results at A level in English literature were below the national average. English had the largest number of entries in that year; almost double the next most popular subject. There was a larger range of prior attainment than normal as a consequence. This was clearly a factor in the pattern of overall results. Nevertheless, all candidates were successful in gaining a pass at grades A to E. Over 20 per cent gained the highest A and B grades. In 2002, the 100 per cent success rate at grades A to E was maintained,

with 15 per cent of students gaining A and B grades. Results in 2001 for the new AS-level course in English language and literature were well above average, but lower in 2002. Numbers of students are now significantly lower than in 2001, but are similar to other recent years. Although some students drop out in the early stages of the AS course, retention rates are high from AS to A level.

224. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Reading skills are well developed in the interpretation and evaluation of the literature studied. In a Year 12 class, students contributed perceptively to small group discussions about the chief influences in the life of Blanche Dubois, one of the main characters in Tennessee Williams' play, 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. They showed a good understanding of the central relationships. Ideas were well justified by detailed reference to the text. More generally, there is an increasing emphasis in the course on a broader understanding of literary movements and influences. Students do not always bring such knowledge to their work from their own wider reading. Strategies to develop this aspect more actively need to be considered. Writing is also good. Coursework folders showed that, in the best work, students are able to produce mature and coherent essays, which analyse in some depth character, theme and use of language in literature studied. One essay, comparing 'The Great Gatsby' with Truman Capote's novel, 'In Cold Blood', was particularly impressive in its consideration of symbolism in the novels, to explore the theme of corruption in American society. Written work is presented to a high standard, with students making good use of ICT skills in word-processing.
225. The achievement of individual students is good at both A and AS levels. The majority reach or exceed their target grades in examinations, based on expectations derived from GCSE grades. At A level in 2002, students achieved, on average, one half of a grade higher than expected on this basis.
226. Teaching is good, leading to good learning and achievement by the students. Teachers know their subject well, and are able to communicate their enthusiasm for it. Expectations of students are high, both in their contribution to lessons and in the range and development of written work. In a number of lessons seen, teachers adopted imaginative approaches in order to develop students' thinking and responsibility for their own learning. As a result, the pace of their learning was particularly good. Throughout, there is an emphasis on the students' contribution through small group discussions, giving presentations and even in leading the lesson as a whole, after the necessary research and preparation. Students respond well and with maturity to the challenge that teachers set out. Lessons are characterised by very good, constructive relationships between staff and students.
227. Students work hard throughout their courses and make good progress in increasing their knowledge and understanding. Teachers already do much to encourage all students to develop independent learning skills, through their own reading, note making and research, but resources to support them could be further developed. The school library is well managed and a very good source of help, but its stock of critical literature remains limited. ICT, including CD-ROM resources, could be used more fully. The subject has also recognised the need to prepare study guides for students on current courses and to support the introduction of new courses planned for next year; these will have the potential to raise further students' achievements.
228. Assessment of students' work is very good. Teachers usually give prompt and constructive feedback, making full written comments on essays against the detailed assessment criteria for the subject. They monitor students' work carefully and are prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed. Students feel well supported and value their teachers' work, not least in giving their own time to organise curriculum enrichment activities including theatre trips and study days.
229. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are very good, enabling the well-qualified and experienced teachers to collaborate closely to share good practice and the commitment to continuing improvement. Staff training and development are encouraged and well supported. In particular, importance is attached to keeping up to date with changes in examination and assessment requirements at this level.

