

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. PETER'S SCHOOL

Huntingdon

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110906

Headteacher: Mr D. Furniss

Reporting inspector: John Godwood
18242

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 7th March 2003

Inspection number: 249830

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St. Peter's Road Huntingdon
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr. D. Cracknell
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18242	John Godwood	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards: the school's results and pupils' achievements?</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9391	Norma Ball	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards: pupils' attitudes, values and personal development?</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	<p>Citizenship</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics	
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
13734	Harold Davies	Team inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>Business Education</p>	
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English	
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Science	
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music	
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18638	Chris Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	<p>History</p> <p>Religious education</p>	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design Health and social care Educational inclusion, including race equality	
2079	Trevor Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology	

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REPORT CONTENTS	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	12
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	15
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	19
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	29
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	30
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	36
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT	38
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	39
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	47
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	69

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Peter's School is a foundation comprehensive school of above average size, with 1366 pupils aged 11 to 18. There are more boys than girls in Years 10 and 11. About one in twenty pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, largely Asian, Black Caribbean or Black African. There are a small number of refugees and travellers. There are 31 pupils with English as an additional language, the main home languages being Urdu and Panjabi. One in seven pupils is eligible for free school meals, which is average. One in five pupils has special educational needs, of whom 55 have Statements of Special Educational Needs. This is above average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, though a significant number live in areas of social disadvantage. Some pupils have very significant needs – these are mostly emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning needs, but also include hearing or visual impairment, physical disabilities, autism, dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. The school has had difficulty in recruiting qualified teachers in mathematics and design and technology, though staffing in mathematics is now improved.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Peter's School provides a satisfactory education. Standards are average at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. From their attainment on entry, pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is satisfactory and often good, though learning is slowed by disruption in some lessons. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with thorough systems for planning and monitoring, but not enough emphasis on the school's expectations and its effectiveness. In particular the systems for supporting pupils' behaviour and monitoring their academic progress need to be improved. Sixth form students achieve well because they are well taught and receive good support and guidance. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of good teaching in many subjects.
- Teachers put in a great deal of effort to support individual pupils.
- The curriculum includes a wide range of courses that provide well for pupils of all levels of ability.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sport.

What could be improved

- GCSE standards could be higher.
- A minority of pupils are very challenging and some lessons are disrupted because the procedures for supporting behaviour are not effective enough.
- Assessment procedures do not give pupils enough information on how well they are doing, what to aim for and how to improve their work.
- The arrangements for monitoring school performance are not effective enough in ensuring that policies are implemented consistently.
- Attendance is below average and in many lessons some pupils arrive late.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Since then it has made a satisfactory improvement. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved slightly in relation to the national average, even though pupils' attainment on entry has declined and there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs. GCSE results, however, have declined in line with the entry.

There have been good improvements made to the curriculum in order to meet the needs of all pupils. Provision for spiritual and cultural development has improved and National Curriculum requirements are now met in ICT. There has been some improvement in the quality of teaching. In response to the key issues in the last report, the school has implemented many thorough systems for monitoring and evaluation. However, these have had only a partial impact and there are still inconsistencies in marking, assessment and the management of behaviour. There has not been any improvement in pupils' punctuality.

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	C	C	D	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	E	*	

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

**National comparative data for AS/A-level results in 2002 is not yet available.*

Standards in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002 were average. They were equally good in English, mathematics and science. Results have improved in line with the national trend and in 2002 were the best yet achieved. Pupils made good progress in relation to their attainment on entry. The difference between boys' and girls' performance is less than that found nationally.

GCSE results in 2002 were below average. For the three years before that, the results were average and maintained at a consistent standard. The decline in 2002 was largely due to the fact that 17 of the pupils on roll either completed their education elsewhere or were in a different year group. Pupils made satisfactory progress from Year 9 to GCSE, though lower-attaining pupils made less progress than other pupils. Girls did better than boys, but by a smaller margin than is found nationally. GCSE results in English were average and were significantly better than those in mathematics or science. The best performing subjects were English and French; the weakest results were in physical education, mathematics, history and design and technology. The school failed to meet its very high GCSE target in 2002. The target for 2003 is challenging but the school is on course to meet it. A-level results in 2002 improved significantly from the previous year, though they remained below the 2001 national average. A-level students made satisfactory progress in relation to their GCSE results.

For current pupils, standards are average in most subjects at the end of Year 9. They are below average in design and technology, ICT, geography, music and art. Standards are also average overall at the end of Year 11, though they are below average in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography and art. Pupils' potential GCSE results are significantly enhanced by the vocational courses in ICT and health and social care. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils like school and respond positively when they are well taught. Many are enthusiastic about activities outside lessons.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. Most pupils behave well, but a minority are very challenging and the disruption in some lessons is detrimental to learning.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and with staff are often good. Some pupils make use of the opportunities to take responsibility.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is below average, despite the school's efforts. In addition, too many pupils are late to school and to lessons.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their self-awareness and discuss views and feelings. Behaviour around the school is mostly good natured, but is sometimes boisterous and occasionally unpleasant.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects and is good in English, design and technology, ICT and religious education. In mathematics, science and modern languages it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In music it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In other subjects, teaching is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily, though the approaches taken in different subjects need to be better co-ordinated.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and often use this to plan interesting and challenging lessons. Many teachers go out of their way to give pupils additional help. The management of pupils' behaviour is consistently good in some subjects and as a result they learn well, but in other subjects the school's procedures are not used consistently and some lessons are disrupted. Marking and assessment are a weakness in most subjects and pupils do not know well enough how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

The needs of all pupils are met satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in most lessons and there is additional provision for gifted and talented pupils. However, in several subjects, the teaching does not always meet the needs of the full range of ability in the class.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a broad range of courses to suit pupils with different abilities and interests.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils make good progress because they have good specialist help and are well supported in most lessons. In some subjects work is not always well matched to their needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils receive additional support and most reach standards that are as high as other pupils. However, the very few at the early stages of English need additional specialist language teaching.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Spiritual and cultural development are sound and pupils have good opportunities to support their social development. Provision for moral development is satisfactory overall, but the code of behaviour is not applied consistently enough.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are good arrangements for child protection and the school assigns a high priority to pupils' welfare.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. They receive good information on progress.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils can choose vocational courses in school or at the local college. There is good provision for gifted and talented pupils, including early entry for some GCSE courses. Staffing shortages prevent the school from fulfilling the statutory requirement for all pupils to take design and technology. Links with primary schools are not strong enough to ensure good continuity in learning.

There are good procedures for monitoring attendance, even though attendance is below average. There are some good procedures for supporting the behaviour of individual pupils but overall the procedures for ensuring good behaviour and punctuality to lessons are not effective enough. Assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory because they do not inform pupils how well they are doing in relation to national standards, what their targets are and what to do to reach them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The school has clear aims and staff work hard in the interests of pupils. Policies and plans are well written but the school's expectations are not communicated consistently enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors know the school well, including its strengths and weaknesses, and support many aspects of its work. They are involved in strategic planning but need to challenge management more.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There are thorough systems for evaluation but they do not ensure that all school policies are implemented consistently.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finances are well managed and expenditure is planned to support school priorities.

There is a satisfactory match between teachers' qualifications and the subjects they teach. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most children make good progress. • The school expects children to work hard. • They feel comfortable approaching the school with a concern. • They are kept well informed about progress. • Most children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour is not good enough. • There are not enough activities outside lessons. • Children do not get enough homework. • Some think the school is not well managed. • The school does not work closely with parents.

Inspectors endorse parents' positive views. In investigating parents' concerns, the inspection confirmed that behaviour is not good enough, partly because the school's expectations need to be enforced more consistently. There is a good range of activities outside lessons. Homework is set regularly in most subjects, but the school needs to monitor this more carefully and ensure that pupils' diaries are used effectively. Leadership and management are satisfactory – the school has appropriate aims but these are not always communicated clearly enough. The school's procedures are well planned, but their effectiveness is not checked rigorously enough. The school's work with parents is satisfactory – they receive good quality information and are involved as necessary.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

St. Peter's School has an average-sized sixth form. There are 158 students, with similar numbers of males and females. From 1999 to 2002, it was declining in size, but numbers are now beginning to rise again. In 2002, half of the students in Year 11 continued into the sixth form. There is a wide range of AS and A-level courses, as well as advanced and intermediate vocational courses. There are no entry requirements and all students are admitted who can benefit from the courses offered. Attainment on entry is below average for sixth forms; a small number of students have special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

St. Peter's School has a good sixth form which is cost-effective. Students achieve well from their attainment on entry and reach average standards in most subjects. This is because they are taught well and receive good support and guidance. Standards are rising. Students' good attitudes and very good relationships with teachers contribute to their achievement, though their attendance is below average. There is a good range of courses to suit students' needs and aspirations. The sixth form is well led, with a clear direction for its future and for further improvements.

Strengths

- Students achieve well through good teaching and good support and guidance.
- The curriculum is broad enough to meet most students' needs.
- The sixth form is well led and has a good ethos that contributes to students' personal development.
- Students have good attitudes and are positive about what the sixth form offers them.

What could be improved

- Students' attendance is below average.
- There is not enough careers advice for students who wish to go into employment.
- The statutory requirement for religious education is not met.

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. Recent results are below average, but current work is average and students achieve well because they are well taught, are highly motivated and prepared to think for themselves.
Physics	Satisfactory. Standards are average and students' achievement is satisfactory. Students receive good support from their teachers but have too few opportunities to do their own research.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Design and technology	Very good. Current standards are above average and students achieve well. Teachers' subject knowledge and the quality of teaching are very good. Students respond with very good attitudes to study.
Business	Good. Results have varied but current standards are average and students achieve well. Teaching and assessment are good but students have too few links with the real business world.
Information technology	Good. Standards are average and students achieve well. Teaching is good and the courses cater well for students of all abilities. Students are well motivated and supported well by their teachers.
Physical education	Good. Standards are average and students achieve well. Good teaching enables students to develop a mature approach to independent study. Assessment is particularly effective.
Health and social care	Very good. Students achieve well and reach average standards. Students are highly motivated and, through very good teaching, they learn to link their theoretical studies with practical experience.
Geography	Good. Standards are above average. Students enjoy the subject and achieve well. Teaching is good and students learn to do independent research. Some marking is good, though this is not always the case.
English literature	Good. Results have varied but current standards are average and students achieve well. Teaching is lively and challenging and students have very good attitudes. They receive very good feedback.

In other subjects, work was sampled. All teaching was at least satisfactory and most was at least good. Very good lessons were seen in leisure and tourism, German and chemistry.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Students have good information on courses before they join the sixth form. They feel well supported by their teachers and tutors and have regular individual interviews for advice and to air any concerns. The head of sixth form listens to students' views. There is good advice on higher education but other careers advice is unsatisfactory. The assessment of students' work is good and students know how well they are doing. They have targets for examination performance, which are reviewed in the light of their progress, though some students would like more short-term targets to gain confidence early in their course.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. There is a clear vision for the development of the sixth form and good links between governors, senior management and the head of sixth form. Courses are planned to ensure that all students have equal opportunities. Sixth form performance is analysed and action taken to deal with areas of weakness. Students are consulted through questionnaires and the sixth form council. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach.

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">• There is a good range of vocational and academic courses to choose from.• They receive high quality support and guidance from their teachers and the senior management team.• The sixth-form council is active and there is a good balance between social and academic development.• There are good opportunities to study independently and to use ICT for research.• Their work is assessed well and they have reviews of progress with tutors and teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is too little careers advice and information for students who are not going to university.• They need better induction into the sixth form and advice on choosing appropriate courses.• They are not involved in setting their own target grades.• The quality of teaching and marking is not equally good in all subjects.

Students generally have positive views about the sixth form. The inspection supported their positive views and some of their concerns. The school's system for careers advice does not serve sixth formers well enough. The induction arrangements are being improved since the students have raised this concern with the head of the sixth form. It is true that there is some variation in the quality of teaching and marking, but the inspection found it to be at least satisfactory and mostly good.

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. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. While each year group contains pupils of average and above average attainment, there are fewer above average than in most comprehensive schools. The number of pupils with special educational needs is above average. Most of these have learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties, though smaller numbers have visual or hearing impairment or autism.
2. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' achievement is good overall and they reach average standards by the end of Year 9. Standards in National Curriculum tests have risen each year for the last three years and have improved particularly in English.
3. In work seen at the end of Year 9, in most subjects standards are average and pupils are achieving well. In design and technology and ICT, standards are below average, but pupils also achieve well in these subjects as their attainment on entry is particularly low. Standards are also below average in geography and music; in these subjects, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In art, standards are below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is too narrowly restricted to learning skills in drawing and painting.
4. The good achievement is due mainly to good teaching in many subjects. It is also due to the emphasis the school has given to improving literacy, and to the school's efforts in raising aspirations through monitoring attainment, attitudes and homework and rewarding pupils' achievements in celebration evenings. In those subjects where achievement is less good, it is because the quality of teaching is less consistent and because, in some lessons, progress is disrupted by poor behaviour.
5. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards at the end of Year 11 are broadly average overall. The proportion gaining 5 or more A*-C grades has been below average for several years, but the GCSE average point score was average from 1999 to 2001. It was below average in 2002, largely because 17 pupils included in the figures were educated off site, had left the school or were in a different year group. The current Year 11 pupils are realistically predicted to achieve average results. Their likely performance is enhanced by the inclusion in the curriculum of vocational courses in ICT and health and social care, which are each equivalent to four GCSE passes.
6. In work seen at the end of Year 11, standards are average in most subjects. They are below average in mathematics, design and technology, history, geography and art.
7. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good in English, design and technology, ICT, religious education and music. This is because they are well taught in these subjects. Achievement is unsatisfactory in mathematics. This is due to considerable staffing difficulties and turnover in mathematics in the previous school year. Staffing in mathematics is now more stable, teaching is satisfactory and standards are rising, but this has had little impact on the current Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects.
8. Achievement is not as good in Years 10 and 11 as in Years 7 to 9. One reason for this is that the rate of attendance, which is below average overall, gets worse as pupils get older. Secondly, in some subjects the teaching in Years 10 and 11 does not engage pupils' interest so much or involve them sufficiently in thinking for themselves. Finally, many of the school's initiatives in raising pupils' aspirations have been focused on Years 7 to 9 and the impact has not yet worked through, particularly to Year 11.
9. In all year groups, standards and achievement vary between different subjects. Achievement is better in those subjects which are well managed and where teaching is consistently good.

Throughout the school, pupils' progress is slowed in too many lessons because of disruptive behaviour by a minority of pupils. However, there is little or no poor behaviour in English, modern languages, design and technology, ICT, religious education or history.

10. Pupils' literacy skills on entry to the school are below average and often well below average. They improve to a standard that is average overall, mainly because reading and writing skills are developed effectively in English lessons. Many pupils make good progress in the organisation and structure of their extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs and weaknesses in reading make good progress and improve their reading ages significantly through good support from the reading intervention programme.
11. The standard of pupils' numeracy on entering the school is also below average. They make satisfactory progress because mathematics lessons regularly provide practice in mental arithmetic and the school provides catch-up and booster sessions. Their performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 is steadily improving. Other subjects also support the development of numeracy skills, but there is no whole-school policy to co-ordinate this.
12. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Many achieve well in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests and at GCSE – several achieving up to ten passes. They also make good progress in improving their reading ages, and in achieving targets in their individual education plans. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Their progress is partly due to good specialist teaching in withdrawal sessions and to good support from learning support assistants in lessons. They make good progress in English, design and technology and ICT because the work is well matched to their needs. In some other subjects their progress is less good.
13. Most pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress and reach similar standards to other pupils. There are very few who are at the early stages of learning English. Often these pupils make good progress and gain good GCSE grades, but for some their written work is weaker than their spoken English because they do not have any specialist English language teaching.
14. Gifted and talented pupils make similar progress to other pupils overall. Some have the chance to develop specific abilities through extra courses that are provided. In some cases, pupils take additional GCSEs and a few move on to higher level courses. In sport, music and dance there are good opportunities for pupils to make the most of their talents. There are additional masterclasses in subjects such as English and mathematics to challenge pupils at the highest levels. However, in some lessons, work is pitched too much at the middle of the class and the highest-attaining pupils are not challenged. This occurs sometimes in English, geography, and in science in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

15. The school has an open-access policy for the sixth form, admitting all students for whom there is a suitable course. Students' attainment on entry is below the national average for sixth forms. In 2001, the latest year for which there are national comparisons, A-level results were well below average, though female students did better. Results improved in 2002, though they remained below the average for 2001. An analysis of students' progress shows that in each of the past three years they have made satisfactory progress from GCSE to A-level and AVCE qualifications.
16. The pass rate for Intermediate GNVQ courses in 2001 was well above average and almost all students achieved their qualification. The results in 2002 were equally good. The best results in 2002 were in health and social care, where three-quarters of the students gained merits or distinctions.
17. For current students, standards at the end of Year 13 are average overall. This is better than in recent examination results. The improvement is partly due to new leadership of the sixth form, with higher expectations of students' study habits and improved monitoring of progress. Standards are at least average in all the subjects that were inspected in detail and are above average in design

and technology and geography. The standards seen in the Intermediate GNVQ course in health and social care are above average, though students do less well in examined elements than in coursework assignments.

18. Sixth form students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. This is because teaching is at least good in almost all subjects, students have good attitudes to work and they are well supported and guided. Achievement is good in most subjects, though only satisfactory in mathematics and physics.
19. The number of students who leave without completing their AS, A2 or vocational courses is below the national average. Where students do leave, it is generally because they find that the courses do not suit them. They receive good advice from the sixth form tutors and most take up employment. In some cases they have benefited from extra maturity gained through sixth form study.
20. The school does not provide specific courses in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT. However, these skills are supported through some of the examination courses, strongly so in the vocational courses. Students have good opportunities to use ICT for research, analysis of data and writing coursework. In most cases, students are well supported in their communication and numeracy skills and their progress is not limited by the lack of specific courses. In A-level physics, however, students have too few opportunities for discussion and presentation, and a few are held back by inadequate numeracy skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory. Most are keen to learn and show a good level of interest in their work. In a Year 10 history lesson on the causes of the Korean War, for example, pupils responded well to the teacher's high expectations and discussed their ideas sensibly in a good learning atmosphere. There is a minority of pupils, however, who have poor attitudes, show little interest in school and disrupt some lessons. In some lessons where behaviour management is not strong, this slows the learning of others. The majority of pupils are frustrated by this and continue to apply themselves to their work, though in a few lessons others become distracted and lose their concentration. Pupils express loyalty to the school and most parents believe that their children like school. Almost all respond well to visitors, often going out of their way to show them to their correct destination. Many pupils show a high level of enthusiasm and interest in activities outside lessons. The rehearsals for a dance performance, for example, showed pupils deeply involved in their preparations, enjoying the excitement of the coming performance and working very well together.
22. Behaviour is unsatisfactory overall because too many lessons are disrupted by the behaviour of a minority. During the inspection, attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in five out of every six lessons but the learning of the whole class was slowed by uncooperative or poor behaviour in one lesson in ten. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, for example, a small group of pupils were uncooperative and defiant, interrupted the lesson with trivial questions and made it difficult for others to concentrate. The school has a small but significant number of pupils who have a history of emotional and behavioural difficulties and can be very difficult to manage. In many classes, teachers manage behaviour well and engage pupils in interesting tasks; in these lessons there is no disruption. Disruptive behaviour usually occurs where teachers are less skilled in class management or where a lesson is slow or lacks interest. The school has procedures for supporting teachers with behaviour management, but these are not as effective as they should be. The behaviour code is displayed in each room, but not all staff reinforce it consistently. In addition, some teachers do not call for support from a senior member of staff to withdraw a seriously misbehaving pupil. The result is that at times poor behaviour continues for too long and other pupils are distracted.
23. There is also some unsatisfactory behaviour around the school. Pupils report that bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively if it does occur. While most pupils behave sensibly, there are instances of aggressive behaviour. Staff supervision does not always ensure adequate cover of the

recreation areas around the school and some incidents go undetected. Some parents were concerned about behaviour and the inspection confirmed these concerns. Behaviour has not improved since the last inspection, though the school does now admit many more pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There were no permanent exclusions in the last school year, which is below average, though there were an average number of fixed-term exclusions. Most of the exclusions were for general misbehaviour or verbal abuse to staff.

24. Relationships and pupils' personal development are satisfactory. In many lessons pupils join in discussions well, show respect for the views of others and work co-operatively together. The PSHE programme includes many elements that contribute to pupils' self-awareness and help them to understand the feelings of others. Through the school council, pupils from all year groups are able to contribute their ideas on the running of the school. Older pupils are available to counsel younger pupils in 'time to talk'. Many pupils are appreciative of the support shown to them by teachers – relationships between pupils and with staff are satisfactory and often good. In many classes good relationships make a positive contribution to learning. In a Year 7 English lesson, for example, the pupils and teacher worked together to consider in depth the emotions portrayed in a novel by Ian McEwan, each calling on their own personal experiences in a very sensitive way.
25. Attendance is below the national average and is therefore unsatisfactory. Both authorised and unauthorised absences are slightly above average. The school works very hard to improve attendance but meets with only limited success, partly because, despite its efforts, there is a lack of co-operation from some parents. Attendance is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, where it is consistently below 90 per cent. Attendance has improved slightly since the last inspection. A small number of older pupils are educated off site at a local education authority centre and others follow work experience programmes. These activities are beneficial but have a negative effect on the attendance figures. Punctuality to school and to lessons is unsatisfactory. Some pupils are delayed by home-based responsibilities but a significant number of others show a lack of urgency in reaching school on time. Too much teaching time is also lost from lessons because some pupils are late in arriving.

Sixth form

26. Sixth form students have good attitudes to school and form very good relationships with each other and their teachers. These are significant factors in their good achievement. In lessons they respond well, listen attentively and debate issues keenly. There are good relationships between Year 12 and Year 13 students and between those following different types of course. Students enjoy sixth form life and many get involved in activities. Students elect a head boy and a head girl. There is also a sixth form council which is very active in organising events and is a good vehicle for consultation. The sixth form tutors actively seek students' views and take these seriously. As a result, students' personal development is very good. Students are involved in wider school activities such as sport, music and dance and support younger pupils through paired reading and helping in lessons. They provide good role models, and thus fulfil one of the aims of the sixth form.
27. Attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. The new head of sixth form is working hard to raise expectations of attendance and counsels students whose attendance is low. Attendance is below average partly because in the past students have been given too much freedom in this respect and trusted to make their own decisions over studying at home when they do not have lessons. Sixth form students are now given closer guidance and their attendance is monitored carefully, with both positive and negative feedback given appropriately. There are signs that attendance is beginning to improve.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. Teaching is satisfactory in the main school. During the inspection, more than nine out of every ten lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 were satisfactory or better and half of them were good or better. Three out of every twenty lessons were very good or occasionally excellent.
29. Teaching is satisfactory or good in all subjects. It is good throughout Years 7 to 11 in English, design and technology, ICT and religious education. In mathematics, science and modern languages it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. This is one reason that achievement is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Music teaching is good in Years 10 and 11, but it is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because some lessons are not well enough controlled. In other subjects, teaching is satisfactory.
30. Teachers typically have good subject knowledge and often use this to plan lessons that are interesting and challenge pupils appropriately. In some subjects, such as English and history, teachers' own enthusiasm for their subjects motivates pupils and leads to a positive learning ethos. In modern languages, teachers' own use of the language provides a good model for pupils to follow. Some lessons of ICT and religious education are taught by non-specialist teachers – this does not disadvantage pupils because the teachers are experienced and well supported.
31. In the better lessons, teachers use methods that involve pupils actively. In English, for example, teachers plan a range of interesting tasks for pupils to do in different groupings and are successful in engaging their thinking. Religious education lessons use religious objects, art and poems to involve pupils in feeling and thinking about religions. In some lessons, however, the teaching methods are too limited. Pupils are led to think for themselves in the better science lessons, but where teaching is weaker there is little opportunity for discussion or group work. In mathematics also, some lessons do not encourage open-ended thinking. The better ICT and physical education lessons are interesting and challenging. Pupils have good individual support in art, design and technology and music, but in some art and music lessons, they need more direct instruction and questioning.
32. Some lessons are not sufficiently well planned to challenge pupils of all abilities in the class. Higher-attaining pupils are not extended enough in some English lessons, for example, or in science in Years 10 and 11. Some mixed ability mathematics lessons do not have a wide enough range of activities and some geography lessons don't provide well enough for pupils with special educational needs or the high attainers. Where modern languages are taught in mixed ability groups, all pupils do the same work and little attempt is made to organise tasks according to pupils' prior attainment. In ICT and design and technology, however, the range of work is well matched to pupils of all abilities.
33. Several subjects are beginning to make good use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to improve lesson structure and develop pupils' skills. The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is benefiting from explicit attention in English and mathematics. In science there is some very good practice based on the National Strategy, but it is not used consistently by all teachers. Pupils' thinking skills are being developed through use of the strategy in history, but in geography it is less effective because it is not consistently applied. One particular aspect of the strategy – a session at the end of each lesson for pupils to review what they have learned – is often omitted or rushed in mathematics, geography and design and technology.
34. A minority of the schools' pupils are difficult to manage and, as a result, effective class management is an essential skill in ensuring good learning. Teachers' skills vary in this respect and the standard of behaviour varies between different subjects. In some subjects, generally those which are well managed and have experienced teachers, there is little poor behaviour and a positive learning atmosphere. In other subjects, the management of behaviour is good in some lessons but not strong enough in others and too many lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour or lack of concentration. Where teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory or poor, it was often because the teacher was unable to control the class, though in a few cases it was due to low

expectations or poor planning. A significant number of teachers need more support from the school's behaviour procedures and from senior staff in maintaining discipline.

35. The development of literacy skills within the teaching of subjects is satisfactory but lacks consistency. Significant strengths were observed in English and special educational needs. Literacy is also well supported in the citizenship programme, where there is a good emphasis on developing key vocabulary and on helping pupils develop methods of recording information and ideas. Pupils do silent reading during some tutorial periods and this also promotes the importance of literacy.
36. Numeracy skills are developed through mental work at the start of mathematics lessons in Years 7 to 9, with additional support for the lowest attainers. Some other subjects also make a contribution to numeracy, though this is not co-ordinated by a school policy. In science, for example, pupils produce graphs of load and effort and use scales to relate the sizes of microscope images to the actual objects. Data from questionnaires is analysed in design and technology. In physical education, pupils use graphs to record aspects of performance against fitness and recovery rates.
37. Resources are used well in some lessons to make learning more interesting and effective. Most subjects make satisfactory use of ICT to support learning, though it is rarely used in art, or by younger pupils in music. Some music lessons, however, are recorded on video to provide continuity from one lesson to the next. In religious education, good use is made of artefacts from religious traditions to bring lessons to life but both religious education and history suffer from a shortage of textbooks.
38. The use of marking and assessment to support pupils' learning is a weakness in most subjects. Assessment is used well in the GNVQ ICT course and in the better physical education lessons. Pupils get good feedback on their work in English. However, marking is inconsistent or superficial in science, art, geography, history and religious education. In mathematics, work is marked regularly but does not include enough guidance on how to improve work. In almost all subjects, pupils are not sufficiently aware of how well they are doing in relation to the National Curriculum or GCSE, what their targets are and what they need to do to reach their targets. This is an important area for development in raising pupils' aspirations and achievement.
39. Many parents were concerned that not enough homework is set. The evidence of the inspection, from lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work, is that homework is set regularly in most subjects. Homework is of an appropriate standard and relevant to the lesson content in English, mathematics and science. In modern languages it is set regularly but the quality is limited because pupils do not have textbooks to work from. Homework in history consists of extended tasks which give pupils good opportunities for investigation but are demanding in terms of their personal organisation. There is no homework in art, and this limits pupils' progress. Pupils have attractive homework diaries, but many of these are not regularly completed, which means that parents do not always see when homework has been set. Heads of year monitor homework diaries from time to time, but the school does not monitor the setting of homework or the use of homework diaries actively enough.
40. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. It is particularly strong in the learning support department, English, design and technology, ICT and the Youth Award scheme. In other subjects, while never less than satisfactory, it is more variable. In the best lessons, teaching is supportive and challenging. In a Year 8 design and technology lesson, for example, the teacher built up pupils' understanding of three-angled projection in careful steps, with skilled questioning to check on what they had learned. Where teaching is less strong it is usually because the level of challenge is not well matched to pupils' abilities. In a low ability Year 10 physical education lesson on fitness, for instance, pupils' progress was slowed because the tasks were too difficult. Many subjects, including science, mathematics, art, geography and music, use learning support assistants effectively to help pupils keep up with the rest of the class.

41. Pupils with English as an additional language are known by their teachers, who have all received some training on how to meet their needs. They also receive in-class support from learning support assistants. For most pupils, this support is adequate to enable them to follow the curriculum. However, the learning of a very few who are at the early stages of learning English is held back because the learning support assistants are not trained in English language teaching. This affects pupils of different ages in different ways. Younger pupils sometimes rely too heavily on informal language. Older pupils need help with the academic English used in examinations to enable them to fulfil their potential.

Sixth form

42. Teaching is good in the sixth form. It is good in mathematics, ICT, geography, physical education and business. It is very good in English literature, design and technology, health and social care. Teaching is satisfactory in physics.
43. Sixth form teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and often communicate their enthusiasm, which helps to build students' confidence and motivation. In health and social care, for example, this results in a very positive learning ethos. ICT teachers motivate students through their own commitment and in physical education teachers use their subject knowledge to create stimulating lessons that fire interest.
44. Teachers have high expectations of their students and generally plan lessons that challenge them to think for themselves. Lessons are very well planned in design and technology, for example, giving students suitable challenges and good individual support. Mathematics lessons are intellectually demanding and deepen students' understanding; discussions in English literature are of a high standard. Health and social care lessons make excellent use of the community, such as when students went out into the community in wheelchairs to experience for themselves what it is like to be disabled. In physics, students enjoy practical work but do not get enough opportunities to do their own research.
45. In most subjects, students develop good skills in learning independently. Students of geography and business, for example, are expected to do independent research and relate their studies to current issues, such as population growth or unemployment. Mathematics students are highly motivated and keen to solve problems for themselves. Physical education students develop a mature approach to independent research. In physics, however, students rely too much on the teacher and in business a small number of students are not motivated to work independently outside lessons.
46. Students' own positive attitudes and the very good relationships they have with teachers make an important contribution to their progress. Mutual respect between students and teachers is a feature of many lessons – students value teachers' expertise and commitment and this encourages them to work hard.
47. Assessment is good in the sixth form and provides students with good support. In almost all subjects, work is marked carefully and students are given helpful guidance on how to improve their work. Students have individual targets and their progress is reviewed regularly. Assessment is particularly good in physical education, health and social care and English literature. In physics, however, teachers do not check students' understanding enough and students do not know what to do to reach their targets. In ICT, students have good guidance on how to improve but would benefit from more short-term targets.

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

48. The school's curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. It is flexible enough to provide for a wide range of pupils, including those who require additional courses that are outside the normal school curriculum. It makes a good contribution to the standards achieved and prepares pupils well for further education and adult life.

49. The range of subjects is appropriately broad in Years 7, 8 and 9. Drama is taught in addition to the National Curriculum subjects. The new subject of citizenship is taught within PSHE and, though at an early stage of development, is beginning to have an impact on pupils' understanding. In Year 7, pupils are taught in their mixed ability tutor groups; from Year 8 onwards there is some grouping by ability. English continues to be taught in mixed ability classes throughout the school. In Year 8, mathematics, science and modern languages have two top sets, while the rest of the groups are mixed ability. Mathematics and modern languages further divide pupils by ability from Year 9 onwards. In classes with a wide range of ability, teachers do not always plan sufficient tasks to enable all pupils to achieve their full potential.
50. In Years 7, 8 and 9, all pupils study French and German, providing a sound basis for GCSE choices. Some pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from one language for additional English and literacy. This is beneficial to their progress. The school is following the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, and this is having a positive impact, especially in English where results and teaching are improving. In art, the curriculum is too narrowly focused on painting and drawing, with too few opportunities to experience other media or use ICT. This limits pupils' success and interest and provides a limited foundation for GCSE art.
51. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good. Its breadth enables pupils to follow a course to suit their abilities and aspirations. All pupils take English, mathematics, science, religious education, physical education and PSHE. The school does not fulfil the statutory requirement for all pupils to study design and technology, but instead pupils choose either design and technology or ICT. This is partly in response to many pupils' wish to specialise in ICT and partly due to the school's difficulties in recruiting design and technology teachers. There is a wide range of other GCSE options, including geography, history, physical education, drama, business education and art. Most pupils take one language, but can do both. Some pupils do not study a language but follow the vocational Youth Award scheme. There are GNVQ courses in health and social care, leisure and tourism and ICT.
52. The school has created an alternative curriculum for pupils who require a programme which is more explicitly work-related. Approximately 20 pupils study courses in motor vehicle engineering or hairdressing at the local college. Five pupils are in work placements. These arrangements are popular with parents, pupils and teachers, and have had a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and attendance.
53. There is satisfactory provision for the development of literacy skills. This mainly takes place in English and special educational needs, where well-focused courses result in good progress. The National Literacy Strategy is having a good impact on learning in English. There are summer schools for Year 6 pupils before they join the school. The teaching of literacy in other subjects is the responsibility of a deputy headteacher, who is clear-sighted about the further developments that are needed. Literacy has been a focus for staff training but the effectiveness of this has not been evaluated closely enough. Some but not all subjects have developed a literacy policy and there is no whole-school policy that sets out principles and expectations. The school has prepared literacy 'progress units' for pupils whose skills are below average on entry but these have not yet been implemented.
54. The provision for numeracy is satisfactory. Mathematics lessons promote mental skills through regular practice in Years 7 to 9 and catch-up and booster lessons for pupils with weak skills. There are also summer schools for new pupils. Teachers of all subjects have received training to raise awareness and are supported by the mathematics department. Opportunities for developing numeracy skills are planned in schemes of work in science, design and technology and physical education. However, there has not yet been enough planning to ensure that all subjects play their part and that the approaches are properly co-ordinated. Mathematics challenges, masterclasses, additional statistics lessons and early entry for GCSE examinations provide opportunities for extending mathematically talented pupils.

55. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs, guided by the school's aim of ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities. Pupils have access to the full curriculum and additional opportunities to meet their specific needs. There is a strong focus on reading and literacy through specialist teaching and paired reading with older pupils. There is also good provision for pupils with dyslexia or dyspraxia, supported by helpful guidance for teachers. In Years 10 and 11, pupils with special educational needs benefit from the Youth Award scheme, which develops skills for future studies and employment. Pupils have appropriate support when taking tests and examinations. There is a drop-in lunchtime club which supports pupils' social development. However, the use of ICT to enhance the learning of pupils with special needs is not well developed.
56. Pupils who have specific behaviour difficulties such as attention deficit disorder are well supported. The special educational needs co-ordinator works in close partnership with pastoral staff, including heads of year, to provide individual guidance and support. However, the systems to support the wider group of pupils who need help with social skills and in managing their behaviour are less well developed.
57. Most pupils who are learning English as an additional language cope with the language demands of the subjects that they study. Those who are at the early stages of learning English receive support from learning support assistants but would benefit from specialist English language teaching, particularly in becoming more familiar with the academic language of examinations.
58. The school has identified a small group of gifted and talented pupils and provided them with additional classes and challenges, including a summer school. Some pupils have taken additional GCSEs in Year 9 in archaeology or statistics and others have taken mathematics or music early in order to move on to a higher level. Parents are very pleased with these arrangements. There are good opportunities for talented pupils in music, dance, drama and mathematics. All teachers are informed of which pupils have been identified but in some lessons, in English and science for example, the highest-attaining pupils are not always fully challenged.
59. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. In sport, pupils enjoy individual and team success at local, county and national levels in gymnastics, football, hockey, netball and swimming. All pupils take part in inter-form competitions and there is an excellent response to dance and talent shows. These involve many pupils, including some who are otherwise disengaged from school. International sports festivals contribute to pupils' awareness of other cultures. Other foreign trips include visits to Paris during the activities week, a visit to Ypres as part of the history curriculum and a well-established German exchange.
60. In music there is an extensive programme of activities that are popular and successful. The Swing Band, for example, has only been in existence for a year but already performs at a high standard. Seventy pupils take part in the Junior Choir. Other ensembles, such as the Brass Group, are run by instrumental tutors. Pupils also organise groups for themselves and there are classes to support theoretical aspects of examination work. There is tremendous enthusiasm for all the music activities and good links with dance and drama.
61. Most subjects offer additional lessons to boost pupils' achievement as part of the school's 'Aim High Initiative'. These include masterclasses for pupils who have the potential to gain A* or A grades at GCSE. However, there is a lack of clubs for lower-attaining pupils in mathematics and ICT, and few extra-curricular opportunities in art or religious education. English provision is enriched by trips to the theatre, book week and writing competitions. There are many opportunities to experience life in the community, providing good support to the new citizenship programme. Each tutor group has representatives on the school council and some pupils take part in the local town youth council. Pupils raise funds for charities and participate in the Master Chef competition.
62. The PSHE programme makes a good contribution to pupils' development as individuals within society. The programme is well planned to encompass health education – including drugs education, sex and relationships – environmental issues, careers guidance and citizenship. Sex education and drugs education are taught within a wider context of a healthy lifestyle.

63. Much of the PSHE programme is taught by form tutors. The more sensitive topics such as drugs and sex and relationships are led by a specialist team of teachers and there are also visiting speakers. There are also occasional 'flexible days', in which the normal timetable is suspended and pupils take part in a day's activities on specific personal development themes. Pupils make satisfactory progress in PSHE in response to consistently sound, and at times good teaching. In the best lessons, interesting approaches result in pupils making good progress as in a Year 8 lesson, for example, where pupils deepened their understanding of learning skills through composing raps about them.
64. There is a good programme of careers education. All pupils have an interview to discuss their aspirations. There are good links with the local careers agency, which provides advice and supports the Year 10 work experience programme. Work placements are matched to pupils' requests as far as possible. Work experience has a positive impact, with some pupils continuing a liaison with their place of work. Year 9 pupils are well informed about GCSE choices through an options booklet, guidance in PSHE lessons and a parents' evenings. Pupils do not feel that their choices are so clearly explained in Year 11.
65. Links with the community make a good contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. Use of local sports facilities has helped to increase girls' participation in physical education. Trips to local industry and public institutions add depth to vocational courses and the Youth Award scheme. Local businesses provide speakers at careers evenings and mentors for pupils. The PSHE programme includes visiting speakers from the police and local businesses and pupils take part in mock interviews and mock trials.
66. The school has satisfactory links with its partner schools. There is a well-established consortium of local secondary schools that supports staff training and curricular development. More recently founded is a network of primary and secondary schools, which aims to smooth the transition from primary to secondary school and ensure that pupils' learning is picked up at an appropriate point. Good links have developed at management level but there are not yet effective links in most subjects. Some parents were concerned that children repeated work in Year 7 they had already done in primary school. The links with primary schools and use of assessment data need to be improved to prevent this happening. Links with local colleges provide pupils with good opportunities in vocational and work-related courses.
67. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' spiritual development. The school does not provide a daily act of worship though there are regular assemblies, some of which include spiritual themes. There are also planned moments of quiet reflection in English, PSHE, religious education, geography and history, when pupils are encouraged to think about wider issues such as growing old and bereavement. A moment of elation was experienced when pupils in an ICT class reflected on technological advances and how small vital computer components have become.
68. Provision for moral development is satisfactory overall, though the school's expectations for behaviour are not always reinforced consistently enough. The school has a clear moral code and most teachers are good role models in the way that they treat pupils. Pupils have opportunities to discuss moral issues and develop their views in religious education and PSHE lessons. They are involved in discussing problems facing the school community. The school actively promotes equal opportunities and respect for other cultures through the curriculum and through the citizenship programme. Moral values are reinforced in assemblies and through charity work. The impact of the provision is undermined, however, because the behaviour code is not implemented consistently in practice. As a result, pupils do not receive clear, unambiguous messages. In addition, pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to take care of the environment – a considerable amount of litter is dropped, for example, during break and lunchtime.
69. There is good provision for pupils' social development. A good range of opportunities is provided for pupils to mix and learn to share. Through working for charities, pupils gain a good awareness of helping others. Pupils make a commendable range of practical contributions to the local community. The GNVQ course in health and social care in particular raises the social awareness

of pupils who take it. Within school, pupils undertake responsibilities such as representing the views of others on the school council, paired reading, helping in the library or welcoming visitors. Most pupils undertake responsibilities around the school with efficiency and good humour.

70. Provision for pupils' cultural development is sound. Many opportunities are provided in lessons and visits to explore British and European culture. In history, for example, pupils visit the Imperial War Museum and the Black Country museum. In science, they learn about the contributions made by Fleming and Jenner. Pupils also learn about other ways of life in geography. Pupils' preparation for life in a multi-cultural society is satisfactory, though this aspect of cultural awareness is less well developed. Religious education gives pupils insight into other world faiths and religious festivals from around the world are included in the programme of assemblies. The focus on other cultures has recently been strengthened through a 'flexible day' for the whole school on multicultural themes.

Sixth form

71. The sixth form offers a wide range of AS and A-level courses, as well as vocational courses in business education, health and social care, ICT and leisure and tourism. A particular strength of the sixth form is its inclusive nature, enabling students to mix different types of qualifications. This fosters very positive, harmonious relationships between the students. There are no specific courses in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT. All students follow a programme in PSHE, which includes aspects of religious education. Religious topics are not covered in sufficient depth to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, but there are plans to improve this in the next school year. The sixth form is open to all students who can benefit from the courses, regardless of their qualifications, and also attracts students from other schools.
72. The school responds well to local needs. Students are given impartial advice when their best interests would be met by local college courses and they are also able to combine school and college courses. Students on vocational courses have a good range of work experience placements in local industry which contribute positively to their coursework. An industry day gives them a good insight into the work place. The sixth form community programme enables students to make a positive contribution in local childcare centres and primary schools. Students have representatives on the youth town council and were actively involved in the appointment process for the new head of sixth form. The Rotary Club provides students with practice job interviews.
73. There is a good programme of enrichment activities. Sixth form students make a positive contribution to the main school by helping in lessons. Some students help to choreograph the popular dance shows and the high standards reached are a tribute to their commitment. There is no timetabled sport, but students organise their own fixtures against other schools and maintain their fitness at the local leisure centre. They organise their own social events with adult supervision and raise money for facilities such as new computers or pool tables. There are trips to the theatre and exhibitions and lectures in subjects such as chemistry and sports science. Visiting speakers provide information on university life, gap years and student finance and there are visits to universities. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme has recently been re-established and is gaining in popularity. Tutorials effectively support students in their work and personal development. Life in the sixth form helps students to become confident and mature individuals.
74. The PSHE programme is well planned to extend what has been covered in Years 7 to 11 and prepare students for their next stage. It includes a broad range of topics including health issues and citizenship. A module on study skills supports students' induction into Year 12. Visits to the magistrates' court, school elections and public speaking promote students' confidence and awareness of their responsibilities as citizens. The programme is well taught and students respond well, as was seen in a debate on British support for war in Iraq, where they presented their views clearly from a secure knowledge base.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

75. The school assigns a high priority to pupils' care and welfare. There are good procedures for child protection and the teacher in charge of this is well trained. Pupils who are unwell or require first aid are looked after efficiently and kindly. The good care provided within the school is augmented by strong and supportive links with an extensive range of outside agencies. These positive features of care and welfare were noted in the last inspection and have continued to be good. The school nurse and a student liaison officer are available to give individual advice to pupils regarding health or other personal issues. Each year a number of pupils join the school after the start of the school year. There are supportive arrangements to help them settle quickly, helped by another pupil who acts as a guide and friend. An early report informs both the pupil and their parents of their initial progress.
76. Some parents and pupils expressed concern about the toilets, particularly those of the girls. In response to recent incidents of vandalism and smoking, the toilets are locked during lessons, with a key available from the school office for pupils who need to use them. The toilets are unlocked at break and lunchtimes. The inspection noted that while the toilets were open and available in several buildings at break times, some were not always opened as promptly as they should be and others were located in buildings that remained locked. This was reported to the school as a potential health concern.
77. The procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development are satisfactory. Heads of year move with their year groups from Years 7 to 11 and build up strong relationships with pupils. As a result, tutors and heads of year know their pupils well and record important aspects of their personal development. Parents expressed much appreciation of the concern shown by heads of year and other teachers for individual pupils and for the effective way in which heads of year deal with parents' concerns. When pupils are experiencing problems, there are sound arrangements to monitor and support them. Some pupils have an individual pastoral support plan, for example, which provides them with their own targets and planned support. The PSHE programme makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. In one PSHE lesson, for example, the teacher discussed with pupils the school's seven 'skills for learning', which include guidance on listening, discussing and co-operating. This was very successful in reminding pupils of the rules and gaining their agreement with their purpose. The teacher also provided a very good role model in the way that she treated pupils.
78. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and punctuality. For attendance, the procedures are good, but punctuality to lessons is not dealt with adequately. The school keeps accurate attendance records which are closely monitored. Parents are telephoned on the first day of absence and pupils with attendance problems receive counselling. The school has a very good working relationship with the education welfare officer. Teachers record attendance in every lesson using hand-held computers linked to the school's network. This enables attendance and punctuality to be closely monitored. However, despite the school's determined efforts, it has had only limited success. There are a small number of pupils in all year groups who refuse to attend and some parents are not as supportive as they should be. The procedures for dealing with pupils who arrive late to school are appropriate, but punctuality to lessons is not followed up consistently. In many lessons, a few pupils arrive late and, while concerns are sometimes reported to pastoral staff, too often pupils' lateness is left unchallenged.
79. The school's intake contains a small but significant number of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour. The policy and procedures for promoting good behaviour are clear and well thought out. Much good work is done by heads of year and senior staff with individual pupils. However, the procedures are not as effective as they should be because not all teachers implement them consistently and some teachers need more support in maintaining control.
80. The behaviour policy includes clear guidance for teachers. School rules are displayed in all classrooms and are framed as skills for learning so that pupils can clearly see how they benefit from behaving co-operatively. Rewards and sanctions are clear and praise and credits are awarded for behaviour and other positive contributions. When poor behaviour is reported, it is recorded appropriately and heads of year monitor behaviour carefully within their year groups. Heads of year, together with tutors and senior pastoral staff, work hard to improve the behaviour of individual

pupils. Some pupils have individual targets which are monitored; others receive counselling in anger management. The school works closely with many outside agencies which provide pupils with additional support.

81. However, behaviour is not managed consistently enough in lessons and not all staff make appropriate use of the strategies and sanctions that are available. In some lessons, for example, teachers try to gain control by shouting, which is specifically not advocated in the behaviour policy. There are some departments – mainly those with more experienced teachers – where behaviour is managed well and lessons are rarely disrupted. All teachers have received training in behaviour management but there are some who need more support in maintaining order. There is a call-out system, with two senior members of staff on duty who will remove a pupil who is seriously misbehaving. However, the system relies on teachers coming forward for help, rather than regular monitoring of lessons in order to anticipate problems and ensure consistency in behaviour management.
82. In addition, some staff do not deal with poor behaviour that occurs around the school. This conveys a mixed message to pupils, some of whom show little respect for the school behaviour's code. Despite the good work by heads of year and other staff, behaviour management is not as effective as it should be.
83. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. This is because, although pupils' work is assessed regularly and grades are regularly recorded for attainment, effort, behaviour and homework, the attainment grades do not link consistently with National Curriculum levels and hence do not provide a clear measure of how well pupils are doing. The use of nationally recognised levels and explicit monitoring of progress towards these is satisfactory only in English, music and in some areas where ICT is used. Pupils' potential is assessed satisfactorily when they join the school and this information, together with the results of National Curriculum tests, is used to set targets for the school and for each subject in public examinations.
84. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress do not provide pupils with accurate information on how well they are doing, what their targets are and what they need to do in order to reach them. Only in English in Year 9 is this done effectively. When asked, few pupils knew what level they are working at or what their target was in a particular subject. Neither did they have this information in their work books. Pupils receive monitoring reports each term and a summary report every year. The pupils contribute to their own summary report by analysing the teachers' comments and adding their own. The frequent monitoring reports form part of the school's 'Aim High' initiative and pupils' achievements are rewarded in celebration evenings. Parents are appreciative of these reports because it allows them to monitor their child's effort and progress in a general way. They also appreciate commendation letters that are sent in recognition of good work or effort and many parents attend the celebration evenings. However, the grades that the pupils receive do not give them enough guidance on how to improve their knowledge and understanding in specific areas. Pupils' work using ICT in other subjects is not assessed consistently, though there are plans to correct this.
85. Assessment is better in the examination courses in Years 10 and 11 and particularly in the vocational courses in ICT and health and social care. In these courses, assessment is an integral part of the teaching programme. Pupils understand the criteria by which they will be assessed and teachers can spot instantly when a pupil is under-achieving or is doing well and would benefit from additional challenge.
86. The school analyses how much progress pupils have made, on average, and compares the results with schools locally and nationally. At a whole-school level, this has resulted in some good developments to the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Within subjects, however, assessment information is not used sufficiently in planning future developments. Only in one or two subjects – ICT for example – do teachers use the data to make adjustments to what is taught. In planning lessons, teachers do not take enough account of pupils' prior attainment and understanding, and as a result in some lessons not all pupils are challenged appropriately. The use of assessment to improve teaching and learning is not monitored sufficiently by the senior

management and, as a result, good practice is not shared. For example, national guidelines for linking the work in each lesson to a three-tier assessment process are followed only in science and ICT in Year 7.

87. Pupils with special educational needs have their progress closely monitored through testing and assessment. The targets on their individual education plans are regularly reviewed and provide a secure basis for monitoring progress. The annual reviews of their Statements of Special Educational Needs meet statutory requirements and are attended by pupils, parents and external agencies. The requirements outlined in individual pupils' statements are fully implemented.
88. There are a small number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. There is no specific assessment of their level of English and hence no reliable data on which to plan an appropriate curriculum for them. The school provides support from learning support assistants and where possible places them in classes where the teacher or another pupil speaks their home language. In public examinations they are given assistance with writing and additional time.

Sixth form

Assessment

89. The procedures for assessing attainment and progress in the sixth form are good. In some subjects such as physical education, they are very good. They fit well with the courses that the students take and provide a clear indication of how well individual students are doing. On A-level courses, the marks that students receive relate to the examination criteria and most teachers use these effectively to show students how to improve. For the vocational courses, knowledge of the criteria and providing evidence of meeting them form an integral part of the teaching programme. Teachers use this process effectively.
90. There are good procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress. Teachers have a good knowledge of course requirements and students are made well aware of the criteria and deadlines. Each student is set targets for examination performance based on their GCSE and GNVQ results. The targets are modified as the course proceeds in the light of their performance. In most cases, they are made more challenging. Teachers monitor progress carefully and students know well how they are doing through grading of their work. However, some students in ICT and science would appreciate more short-term targets and feedback, particularly at the beginning of the course. This would give them a boost when they are learning to become more independent.
91. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. It is particularly good in English and ICT, where examination data and students' achievements are examined carefully when planning courses.

Advice, support and guidance

92. Sixth form students are provided with good support and guidance. They are guided in the choice of their courses prior to entering the sixth form and at the beginning of their first year. Each student has a personal interview with their form tutor once every half term. These are informed by comments from subject teachers and help students decide how to make best use of the assessments of their work. The students are also able to air their views and any worries they may have, which are then passed on to the appropriate teacher or the head of the sixth form. This works effectively in most cases, although some history students were disappointed in the response to the anxieties that they expressed about the course. Where students are causing particular concern, either in their work or attitudes, they are interviewed by the head of sixth form. Where appropriate, parents are contacted. Students feel well supported and relate well to their teachers. All said that they could choose a particular teacher, usually the subject teacher, for a confidential discussion.

93. Students are provided with good information and advice. Teachers are able to offer expert advice in their subjects. The new head of sixth form responds well to students' needs and involves them in decision making. For example, a recent questionnaire revealed dissatisfaction with the induction process for entering the sixth form and the students' recommendations for improvement were implemented. The school has a good programme to support students going on to higher education. There are two well-stocked libraries for reference and good access to information via the internet. However, for students who are seeking employment, the provision for careers education is unsatisfactory. These students do not, in general, feel well supported. Careers guidance in Years 8 to 11 is good, but the sixth form programme is not active enough. Students may request an interview with the careers service but these interviews are not formally followed up or supported by the school's careers teacher.
94. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The attendance rate, when measured last autumn, was below average. The head of sixth form has instigated a strict regime of registering and has involved the sixth form council in discussing approaches and expectations. Students who improve are rewarded and this is leading to an improved ethos. Attendance rates are rising and students are proud of their achievements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

95. Parents are broadly satisfied with the school. They are pleased that their children like school, are expected to work hard and achieve their best and make progress. Parents also value the fact that they are kept well informed about the progress their child is making. Their main concerns are about disruption in lessons and the amount of homework. In addition, some parents believe that children are not fully challenged in mixed ability classes and some feel that their concerns are not dealt with effectively.
96. Overall the school has satisfactory links with parents. Pastoral staff work consistently to establish good links with home and work closely with parents if there are problems or concerns. Parents are informed not only of problems as they develop but also of significant achievements. A recent positive innovation has been the celebration evenings for all year groups, in which the successes of pupils are recognised and musical performances and other entertainments are provided by pupils in the year group. Attendance at these events has been good.
97. Parents' involvement has a satisfactory impact on the work of the school. The parent-teacher association supports the school in a number of ways, including helping with refreshments at school events. Parent governors show a high level of commitment to the development of the school and to pupils' welfare. Not all parents make good use of pupils' homework diaries, though these have the potential to provide a good communication link between home and school. Inconsistent use of the homework diary was also noted in the previous inspection.
98. The school provides parents with good information on the curriculum and on their children's progress. The prospectus and the governors' annual report are informative and fulfil statutory requirements. Parents receive four short progress reports each year as well as an annual report. They are very appreciative of the regularity of the reporting and find that the short reports provide helpful and succinct information on progress. However, the comments in the annual report are rather general and do not give enough clear information on the progress pupils have made and what they should do to improve their work. The Year 9 report does not include, as it should, progress in ICT, though there are plans to include this in the next annual report. A newsletter is published each half-term and these provide informal and readable updates on school news and events. There are also helpful documents on the curriculum and information about option choices in Year 10. Such information is valuable to parents and their children in making well-informed decisions about the next stage in their education.
99. There is a good partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and invited to annual reviews. These meetings are carefully prepared and generally well attended. The good liaison between the learning support department and parents contributes to pupils' progress.

100. Sixth form students have positive views about the sixth form. They appreciate the wide range of academic and vocational courses, but are critical of the induction programme and some find that their choices are restricted by the timetable. They are pleased with the quality of teaching. In most cases, they find teachers to be approachable and helpful, though not equally so in all subjects. Students have a good working relationship with their teachers. They find that the quality of resources is variable – some courses lack textbooks or use books that are out of date. They have good access to computers and value the opportunity to use the internet for research. Their work is generally marked up-to-date and students are aware of how well they are doing and what to do to improve. They are not initially involved in setting their own targets, which are based on their GCSE performance, but subsequent review procedures are highly valued. Students are highly critical of the system for obtaining careers advice and the quality of advice received.
101. Students appreciate the enrichment activities. They enjoy taking part in paired reading with younger pupils, support for physical education and fund-raising for charity. The sixth-form committee is very active and promotes activities such as debates, with a good balance between academic and social functions.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

102. The headteacher and key staff provide satisfactory leadership and management. They have a strong commitment to pupils' welfare and achievement. This is expressed in the school's aims, which stress that all pupils should fulfil their potential and develop their personal qualities, within a caring and orderly environment. School policies are well written and there are thorough procedures for planning and for evaluating the quality of provision. There are, however, inconsistencies in the way teachers manage behaviour, and in some other aspects of teaching and departmental management. This is partly because the senior management team does not put enough emphasis on communicating the school's expectations and because the evaluation procedures do not ensure that policies are implemented consistently.
103. There are good arrangements for delegation to staff teams, who are held accountable for their performance. As a result many staff are enthusiastic and committed; they put in a big effort, for example, to support individual pupils. There is a good team spirit among most staff, and this has had a positive impact on the recruitment of new staff.
104. The governing body shows a high degree of support for the school and for the community from which many pupils come. Many governors devote a lot of time to the school. Meetings are regular and well run; there is a set of committees and governors often attend meetings of committees other than the ones on which they sit. Governors are linked individually to different areas of the school's work, including the subject departments, special educational needs, staffing, the premises and the curriculum. Several governors, including the chairman, are often in school, and provide visible support to staff and pupils. Governors on the premises committee regularly inspect the site.
105. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are involved in the process of school planning and are increasingly developing their role of asking critical questions about the school's targets and examination results. They are well informed through the headteacher's reports and have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors do not, however, yet challenge the school management sufficiently over the school's ambitions for its pupils, or over concerns raised by parents, primarily about behaviour. In their monitoring of academic standards, governors would be aided by receiving clearly-presented information about the progress made by pupils from one stage to the next.
106. The school development plan is a comprehensive document, containing the school's aims and strategic priorities, current and future plans. It sensibly includes financial plans and links these to school developments. It also includes outline plans for departments and other school teams. It is supported by a set of detailed action plans, which include target dates and criteria against which to check progress. The priorities identified in the plan are appropriate, though the activities listed

do not always correspond with teachers' stated intentions. There is a thorough planning process, which includes consultation with staff and governors and two evaluation points during the year.

107. There are very thorough and carefully designed systems for monitoring and evaluation. However, these are not sufficiently effective in improving some areas of performance. This is partly because some important aspects of the school's work are not monitored frequently enough and occasionally because appropriate action is not taken even though the areas for improvement have been identified.
108. The senior management team carries out full departmental reviews, usually covering two subjects each year. These are very thorough and include lesson observations, a survey of pupils' views and interviews with staff, resulting in recommendations for future developments. Many of the reviews provide a useful check on departmental progress – they are accurate and identify appropriate improvements. The English review, for example, has led to developments which have in turn raised standards. In one or two cases, the reports are not challenging enough to be helpful, or have not been followed up by action.
109. Each staff team – including subject departments and year teams – completes an annual self-evaluation in the autumn term, which forms the basis of a review meeting with the headteacher. This is a useful practice, though some team leaders need more guidance to ensure that their reports are sufficiently analytical in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and lead to actions to bring about improvement.
110. The headteacher analyses examination and test results and writes a report each year for staff and governors. A thorough analysis of results is used to formulate future targets for each pupil, departments and the whole school. This is done accurately and has resulted in realistic, challenging targets. There is also some analysis done of the progress pupils make. However, staff and governors do not receive reports of the progress made by groups of pupils, which they could use to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. There are plans to improve this, though these have been delayed by staff changes.
111. There are some aspects of the school's work which are not monitored sufficiently in order to ensure consistency of practice. These include pupils' behaviour and teachers' methods of managing behaviour – as a result pupils find different standards in different lessons and behave accordingly. Other aspects which are not monitored sufficiently are the setting of homework, punctuality to lessons, marking and assessment.
112. Each head of department is linked with one member of the senior management team. These links provide good communication between middle management and senior management; most heads of department appreciate the support for their particular issues and developments. However, there are no set requirements for meetings and activities and, as a result, the links are not as effective as they might be in regularly communicating the school's expectations and monitoring the work of the department.
113. The leadership and management of departments are of varying quality. Where departments are well managed and teachers are experienced, teaching is generally good, pupils behave well and achieve well. In the less effective departments, teaching is more inconsistent and pupils' progress is sometimes held back by disruptive behaviour in lessons. Leadership and management are good in English, modern languages, design and technology and music. They are satisfactory in mathematics, science, ICT, history, religious education, physical education and citizenship. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in geography and, because of the long-term absence of the head of department, in art. Several departments, particularly mathematics, science, art, geography, music and physical education, need more rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of classroom work.
114. The heads of year manage their teams of tutors well and provide their pupils with good pastoral support. They are active in monitoring individual pupils' progress, attitudes, completion of homework, behaviour and attendance. Their annual evaluations identify the whole-school issues of

consistency in setting homework and the need for further development of the behaviour procedures. They know their pupils well and, within the limits of the time they have available, follow up any concerns. Parents were pleased with the response they get from heads of year if they have a concern.

115. The school has a strong commitment to equal opportunities. The school population contains pupils with many varying needs and the senior management team and heads of year aim that they should all be included and supported. At the same time some of the systems are not fully effective. There is much good support for individuals, from within the school and through links with outside agencies. Permanent exclusions are minimised through the school's work with outside agencies and a number of pupils with behavioural difficulties transfer to a local education authority centre for more specialist provision. There is satisfactory support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including a homework club and support provided by the local education authority. The race equality policy fulfils requirements and teachers have had training on multi-cultural issues. The evidence of the inspection was that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds progress as well as other pupils. However, while exclusions are monitored according to ethnic group, attendance and academic progress are not. The school curriculum has been extended to provide for a wide range of pupils' needs. Where pupils are in mixed ability classes, however, the teaching is quite often aimed too much at the middle and the highest and lowest attainers are not properly challenged.
116. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well led and managed. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides a clear direction and liaises well with other staff. A good partnership with parents, primary schools and external agencies also supports pupils' progress. Learning support staff are well qualified and experienced. There is a large number of learning support assistants; they are effectively managed and deployed, and make an important contribution to pupils' good progress in lessons. The department's work is evaluated, but the procedures are not analytical enough in identifying areas for improvement. The learning support centre is attractive and provides a welcoming learning environment for pupils, but is too small for the large number of pupils and staff who use it. Resources are carefully planned. The special educational needs co-ordinator does not have enough administrative assistance in assessment, recording, liaison with parents and agencies, and the management of a very large department.
117. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is not at present well managed. It has very recently become the responsibility of an acting assistant headteacher. The school's list of pupils with English as an additional language is out of date and omits several who are at an early stage of learning English. The pupils are given individual support by learning support assistants. The school allocates an adequate budget for the support of these pupils but they are not provided with the specialist language teaching that some of them need.
118. The match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the subjects they teach is satisfactory overall. It is good in many subjects. The school has been unable to recruit sufficient qualified staff in design and technology, and this has had an impact on the curriculum in Year 7 and in Years 10 and 11. Staffing is currently inadequate in art due to a long-term illness. In religious education, staff shortages have led to the use of non-specialist and temporary staff, though these are well managed. Previous staffing difficulties in mathematics have largely been resolved, though the negative impact on some pupils' attitudes is still evident.
119. The school is very active in recruiting staff and has made some successful appointments in a time of significant national staff shortages. It advertises nationally and on the internet, and often makes appointments through a quick response to expressions of interest. The school is part of a consortium of local schools which arranges an annual recruitment fair. Several teachers commented that they were attracted to the school by its atmosphere of enthusiastic and friendly staff.
120. There are good arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers. They are well supported by a mentor within their department and an additional mentor from another area of the school. They have regular meetings and training. Their lessons are observed and they receive helpful

feedback. They have opportunities to visit other lessons and, through the local consortium, to visit another school. The school is also a successful provider of initial teacher training.

121. Performance management is well organised. Each teacher agrees objectives with their manager, is observed teaching and has a meeting to review their progress. Teachers are guided to link their objectives to whole-school priorities and to make them specific and measurable. Teachers' objectives are confidential but the headteacher monitors their quality and reports on this to the governors. Teaching is also monitored as part of the full departmental reviews. These lesson observations provide teachers with useful feedback. However, lesson observations are not done frequently enough, by the senior management team or heads of department, to ensure consistency in teaching quality and behaviour management.
122. Staff development is well managed. Funds are short and training opportunities are mainly linked to school priorities and new curricular developments, though some money is available for personal developments. All training is monitored for its quality. The consortium of local schools provides efficient staff development through sharing good practice across schools and joint sessions on developments such as literacy, numeracy and post-16 courses.
123. Finances are managed well. Financial planning is appropriately linked to the priorities in the school development plan and is overseen by the governors' finance committee. Governors receive helpful reports and monitor expenditure regularly. In addition to maintaining an overview, each month they scrutinise one area of expenditure in more detail. The school compares the proportion it spends under each budget heading with figures from other local schools, but does not regularly make comparisons with national figures.
124. There are good systems for financial control. The most recent auditor's report found no significant aspects in need of improvement. The implications of budget proposals are calculated carefully, and projected up to five years ahead. Departmental budget bids are linked to their planning. Their expenditure is overseen by the bursar, though heads of department are not required to justify their spending in terms of value for money. Specific grants are spent appropriately on the areas for which they are intended, such as special educational needs, disabled access and staff training.
125. At the end of the last financial year, the school had on paper a carry forward of about £180,000 – four per cent of its budget. In practice, most of this was committed, including £60,000 on building improvements and £14,000 on computer training. In the current financial year, the school is expecting the budget to break even. The school's income per pupil is about average and in the light of the standards it achieves it gives satisfactory value for money.
126. The school makes satisfactory use of best value principles. It challenges itself over what services it provides and through seeking competitive tenders aims to get the best value for catering, cleaning and maintenance services. It compares its performance with that of other schools. Staff and pupils are consulted about potential developments, but parents do not have enough opportunities to express their views about the school's standards and provision.
127. Good use is made of new technology. In addition to maintaining pupils' records and financial records on computer, each teacher has a small computer to record attendance and assessments. These communicate with the school's network by radio. This technology means that attendance in lessons can be monitored centrally and enables the regular monitoring of pupils' attainment, attitudes and homework that parents' appreciate. The administrative staff monitor the first aid room by a video link.
128. The accommodation is satisfactory, with some very good areas and some in need of improvement. The governing body regularly inspects the site and is fully involved in determining priorities. There have been recent building programmes for mathematics, music and drama. The new performing arts block is an outstanding facility for music and drama and has had a very positive impact on the standards reached. The new mathematics block is also an excellent learning environment, though there are shortcomings in the layout and design. There is a spacious, pleasant library which encourages many pupils to read and do independent research. Learning in science has benefited

from refurbishment of some facilities. Accommodation for geography, history and art is unsatisfactory because it is poorly maintained and does not provide a welcoming learning environment.

129. There is wheelchair access to all ground floor and many first floor rooms. This permits disabled access to specialist facilities in all subjects except art. The quality of display work on corridors and in classrooms is variable. Displays in English, for example, celebrate pupils' achievements but in the humanities corridors, little has been done to use displays to increase interest in learning. In some parts of the school, the décor is very shabby. Security has been improved through the installation of CCTV cameras. There are some narrow corridors which create bottlenecks between lessons. Some of the toilets are in need of renovation and repair.
130. There are enough learning resources in most subjects. Resources are good in music, physical education, drama and English, which is an improvement since the last report. The new performing arts block is very well equipped for music and drama. There are sufficient computers overall, though some departments – science, design and technology, art and modern foreign languages – do not get enough access to them. ICT is underused by the learning support department though the provision is being improved by sixth form ICT students. In art, while there are sufficient resources, the range is not rich enough to enable students to achieve as much as they might. In humanities there are insufficient textbooks to support independent research and reading. The library contains a satisfactory range of books and other resources that enhance students' learning.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

131. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The head of sixth form has a clear vision that the sixth form should lead the school in terms of attitudes, behaviour and teaching. There are good links with the senior management team, who decide the strategy for sixth form development. There is a link governor, who participates in constructing the sixth form development plan and visits the school to meet students.
132. Sixth form tutors are well managed through team meetings and regular communication. The head of sixth form is newly in post and has begun to raise expectations of students' work habits. One innovation, which is appreciated by students, is a regular individual interview with the tutor to review progress. While many of the innovations are too new to have had a full impact, the ethos of the sixth form is positive and standards seen in the inspection are higher than the recent examination results. Staffing is good in the sixth form. Teachers' qualifications are well matched to the subjects that they teach.
133. Sixth form students are consulted through questionnaires and are regularly involved in the management of the sixth form through the sixth form council. This provides good opportunities for students' personal development. Students' attendance is still unsatisfactory, but it is being monitored more closely and expectations for full attendance are communicated more clearly.

Resources

134. The sixth form is cost effective – the balance between its income and expenditure is appropriate and is monitored by the headteacher each year.
135. Resources in the sixth form are satisfactory. Students have good study facilities in the library, though there are a limited number of books to support their wider reading. They have good access to computers, which supports their skills in learning independently. The health and social care course has a very good range of resources, which are accessible and well used. The department's resources are extended by excellent links with the community, such as old peoples' homes and playgroups. There are also very good resources for A-level physical education, except that they lack ICT facilities for making presentations. There are very good resources for drama in the

performing arts block. History students do not have an individual textbook, which limits their ability to read around the subject and widen their understanding.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

136. In order to raise standards further, the governors and senior management team should:

- (1) Raise standards in GCSE examinations by:
 - improving motivation, behaviour and attendance in Years 10 and 11;
 - ensuring that work is well matched to pupils' abilities;
 - using assessment and target setting to raise pupils' aspirations;
 - making sure that teaching engages pupils' interest and reinforces earlier learning.
(paragraphs 8, 25, 29, 32, 38)

- (2) Ensure that lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour by:
 - making sure that the school's expectations are communicated effectively;
 - implementing the behaviour policy consistently;
 - regularly monitoring behaviour in lessons;
 - ensuring that teachers have adequate support with classroom management.
(paragraphs 22, 23, 34, 79, 80, 81, 82)

- (3) Improve the effectiveness of assessment in supporting learning by:
 - linking the assessment of pupils' work to national levels;
 - ensuring pupils know how well they are doing, what their targets are and how to improve their work;
 - using assessment results to match work to the full ability range in the class;
 - ensuring that work in Year 7 builds on what pupils have achieved in primary schools.
(paragraphs 32, 66, 83, 84, 85, 86)

- (4) Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures by:
 - using the procedures to ensure that school policies are implemented consistently;
 - ensuring that departments monitor teaching, marking, homework and use of assessment;
 - using the departmental links with senior management to monitor the work of departments;
 - ensuring that action is taken when issues are identified.
(paragraphs 39, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112)

- (5) Improve attendance and punctuality by:
 - clearly communicating the school's expectations for attendance and punctuality;
 - continuing the existing good procedures to monitor and promote attendance;*
 - ensuring that lateness to lessons is always challenged and followed up.
(paragraphs 25, 78)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the level of attendance by:
 - ensuring that students' attendance is monitored accurately;*
 - setting clear expectations for regular attendance;
 - providing additional support to students who have attendance problems.
(paragraphs 27, 94)

- (2) Improve careers education by:
 - giving students appropriate advice and information about employment opportunities;
 - supplementing the advice provided by the careers service with guidance within school.
(paragraphs 93, 100)

- (3) Ensure that all students receive their entitlement to religious education.*
(paragraph 71)

In addition to the above issues for action, the school should consider:

- improving subject links with primary schools;
(paragraph 66)
- broadening the art curriculum in Years 7 to 9;
(paragraphs 50, 169, 171)
- improving the management of the provision for pupils who have English as an additional language and providing specialist language support for those at an early stage of English;
(paragraphs 13, 41, 57, 88, 117)
- developing whole-school policies to co-ordinate the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills within all subjects.
(paragraphs 35, 36, 53, 54)

**These issues are already included in the school's planning.*

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

137. The procedures for assessing pupils with special educational needs are good and provide a good basis for monitoring and reviewing their progress. Pupils' attainment on entry and work in subjects are assessed using the whole-school procedures and in addition their specific needs are checked using specialist tests. Progress in the reading intervention programme is measured through mastery tests, for example, and improvement resulting from the paired reading scheme is monitored through regular testing of reading and spelling ages. Pupils are tested to identify specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia, and there is also testing for overlays for pupils who find white paper difficult to work with. Pupils' progress is systematically matched against the initial assessments that were done on entry to the school.
138. Pupils' individual education plans are of good quality. They have recently been re-designed to ensure that targets are specific and measurable, and that the strategies for achieving them are clear and appropriate. They are given to all teachers and support staff to assist lesson planning and checking of progress. They are kept under review and up-dated at least annually. Progress towards short-term targets is reviewed more frequently. While the teaching strategies included in individual education plans provide helpful guidance in helping pupils to improve their learning skills, too few provide support for behaviour management. Learning support assistants play an important part in monitoring pupils' progress informally but there are no arrangements for them to record the progress pupils make towards their targets in lessons.
139. Individual education plans are well matched to the learning requirements identified in pupils' Statements of Special Educational Needs, thus helping to ensure that pupils' needs are met in practice. Pupils' records are well organised and provide an accessible record of their progress. Meticulous preparation for pupils' annual reviews ensures that all parties are well informed, and that the reviews meet statutory requirements. They are attended by pupils, parents and, in most cases, by relevant representatives of external agencies. All, including the pupils themselves, are involved in evaluating progress. Regular liaison is maintained with parents and external agencies, though the amount of support available from some agencies is limited.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	140
	Sixth form	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		81

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	2	19	47	61	9	2	0
Percentage	1	14	34	44	6	1	0

Sixth form

Number	1	14	24	13	0	0	0
Percentage	2	27	46	25	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Years 7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1208	158
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	177	8

Special educational needs

	Years 7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	54	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	291	2

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	89

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3
National comparative data	1.2

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	2002	135	104	239

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	96	98
	Girls	86	78	76
	Total	176	174	174
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (56)	74 (62)	73 (65)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (29)	39 (27)	31 (34)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71	95	92
	Girls	79	79	69
	Total	150	174	161
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	63 (58)	72 (65)	67 (70)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (21)	28 (31)	29 (32)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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
	2002	105	108	213

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	36	86	93
	Girls	41	91	100
	Total	77	177	193
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	36 (36)	83 (90)	91 (96)
	National	50 (48)	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	35.1 (36.8)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14
	National	76

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	21	19	40

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	21	19	40
	Average point score per candidate	9.3 (11.9)	12.9 (16.4)	11.0 (14.3)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	21	16	37	0	3	3
	Average point score per candidate	9.3	12.8	10.8	n/a	14.0	14.0

National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1245	65	
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3		
Mixed – White and Black African	3		
Mixed – White and Asian	7		
Mixed – any other mixed background	13		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	26		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	1	
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4		
Black or Black British – African	8		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	2	
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	4		
No ethnic group recorded	42		

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)	76.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	41
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1045

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26.3
Key Stage 4	23.3

Financial year	2001-2
	£
Total income	4,206,183
Total expenditure	4,223,051
Expenditure per pupil	2980
Balance brought forward from previous year	195,255
Balance carried forward to next year	178,387

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	29.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32.7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1366
Number of questionnaires returned	164

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	22	63	10	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	37	53	8	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	44	26	11	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	52	19	10	4
The teaching is good.	14	65	13	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	52	10	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	48	9	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	37	52	7	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	25	45	18	5	7
The school is well led and managed.	17	49	12	6	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	18	56	16	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	45	21	4	17

Other issues raised by parents

In the parents' meeting, some parents were concerned that pupils were not stretched in mixed ability classes. A few parents felt that in some subjects, too little progress was made in Year 7 because the work repeated what was done in primary school. Several parents were very concerned that the toilets were not accessible – there had been a problem with girls smoking in the toilets and they were now locked. A few parents reported that when they took concerns to the headteacher, they did not feel these were taken seriously.

Parents felt that the heads of year were very supportive and that teachers do a great deal for pupils, especially outside lessons. They were pleased with the provision for gifted and talented pupils and with music and dance activities. They appreciated the regular reports and the celebration evenings.

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

- Standards are improving throughout the school.
- Achievement is good because of teaching methods that help many initially below average pupils reach higher standards.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and have a high level of subject expertise.
- Pupils work well and take a full part in lessons.
- The department is well led and self-evaluative. There is good teamwork.

Areas for improvement

- More pupils are capable of reaching higher levels and grades in national examinations.
- Monitoring is not systematic enough to ensure consistency and consolidation of initiatives and best practice.

140. Pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average, although standards in the most recent intake were below average. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, results were broadly average for all pupils and for pupils from similar backgrounds – an improvement on the below average results of 2001. The proportion at Level 5 or higher was above the national average and well above the average for pupils from a similar background. This suggests that many pupils achieved very well in relation to their end of Year 6 results. However, the proportion at Level 6 or higher was well below the national average, albeit in line with the pupils' previous results. Results have improved by more than one third of a level since 1999. Although girls do better than boys the difference is not significant.

141. In the 2002 GCSE English language examination the proportion gaining grades A*-C was broadly average, above average when compared with pupils from similar backgrounds and much higher than suggested by the pupils' earlier results. Pupils did better in English than in most of their other subjects. The proportion at A*-C increased significantly from the below average results of 2000 and 2001. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' results. In English literature the proportion at A*-C was below average – a little lower than in 2001 but matching the results of 2000. Pupils tended to do better in literature than in most of their other subjects. Although girls tend to do better than boys the difference is not significant.

142. Standards in the current Year 9 are broadly average. Most pupils fulfil the criteria associated with the expected Level 5; about one in five reach higher standards. Many pupils whose standards were initially below average or lower achieve well and some very well. This is reflected in the improvements in the accuracy, structure and organisation of their extended writing. They have an assured knowledge of the main events of 'Macbeth' – one group explained the significant characteristics of Lady Macbeth with confidence. Those with higher standards use engaging vocabulary that is adapted to suit a range of written contexts. They include more details than other pupils when writing about a text. However, very few pupils consistently show the highest standards of technical accuracy, the wide range of syntax and vocabulary, and the perceptive detailed analysis associated with the very highest level. The work of pupils whose standards are below average has too many inaccuracies, but hardly any pupil revealed standards that are well below average. Overall achievement therefore is good, although some pupils with average and above average standards have the potential to do better.

143. Standards in Year 11 are average, with more than half on target to achieve grade C or higher in their GCSE examination. This represents good achievement in relation to these pupils' test results at the end of Year 9. Higher-attaining pupils write with reliable accuracy and effective organisation.

Their choice of vocabulary shows a good awareness of audience but only a few write with the powerful range of vocabulary and expression associated with the highest grades. These pupils do, however, read critically, applying their knowledge effectively when unravelling the dramatic impact of the boxing scene in Miller's 'A View from the Bridge'. Middle attainers, although mainly writing with accuracy, lack the precise vocabulary associated with higher grades and their response to a text tends to be too descriptive or summative. Some middle attainers do not achieve grade C because of inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and expression. Nevertheless enthusiasm and enjoyment emerged in their lengthy assignments on Dahl and Hardy and when writing film deconstructions. Other pupils' standards are below or well below average because of weaknesses in the accuracy of their writing. Speaking standards are average. Pupils speak clearly but only a few give extended, well-reasoned answers. As in Year 9, some pupils at average and above average standards have the potential to do better.

144. Pupils with special educational needs also progress well. The department has raised its expectations of examination success for these pupils with GCSE entry numbers in 2003 higher than in previous years for English and literature. The department has also rightly identified the need to help the smaller number of higher-attaining pupils to achieve their full potential. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because teachers are aware of their needs and give them opportunities to practise language skills. Some who are at an early stage of learning English are more confident in spoken than written English and some have weaknesses in spelling and grammar.
145. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' very good subject expertise helps them effectively develop pupils' skills in reading and writing. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' standards and attitudes and the teachers' evident enthusiasm motivates the pupils. Good curricular and lesson planning keeps the pupils busy. Teachers pitch the activities so they closely match the learning needs of most pupils. In Year 9, good use of small group and whole-class teaching, probing questions and video resources enhanced the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the plot, themes and characters in 'Macbeth' and 'Twelfth Night'. Pupils work hard in most lessons. Year 10 pupils' analysis of Carol Ann Duffy's 'Havisham' was preceded by a fast brainstorm on issues relating to marriage and relationships; there ensued a well-directed analysis in pairs of our first encounter with Miss Havisham in 'Great Expectations', followed by a rigorous whole-class question and answer session. This led to a short written response to the Duffy poem followed by analytical group work on the impact of Duffy's language. The gains in knowledge and understanding were considerable. The range of tasks in this lesson was typical of many and the engagement and thinking achieved explain why so many pupils progress well. Another significant factor is the emerging impact of the National Literacy Strategy, which results in teachers' giving explicit attention to demonstrating and exemplifying skills to guide the pupils' work. However, in some lessons, higher attainers do not have enough opportunity to explore texts and issues with the depth and rigour of which they are capable. Regular homework provides the pupils with opportunities to apply their skills. Day-to-day assessment has many strengths but teachers are not helping pupils in all years to develop a secure enough grasp of what they need to do or learn in order to reach their targets in national examinations.
146. The department is well led and organised. The head of department has initiated improvements. She and her team collaborate well to make new developments and raise standards. The work of the department is evaluated, though monitoring needs to be done more systematically. Some recruitment problems currently undermine the continuity of learning for some pupils. Teachers provide additional support through booster and masterclasses to improve standards in Year 9 and Year 11 national examinations. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. After a dip, standards are improving despite lower standards on entry. The provision for developing pupils' numeracy and ICT skills is satisfactory.
147. The major contribution to pupils' literacy skills comes from English lessons and the learning support department. Many other subjects contribute to literacy, though the approaches lack consistency. Subject vocabulary is emphasised well in citizenship and design and technology, whereas in science teachers do not refer to key words enough during lessons. Silent reading is promoted in tutorial periods, but there are not many opportunities for sustained reading in

geography, history or religious education. In citizenship lessons, pupils learn methods of recording information. The use of 'writing frames' in modern languages, religious education and science helps pupils to structure their writing. In a Year 9 religious education lesson on mixed marriages this resulted in the pupils producing well-balanced written discussions. Modern language lessons in Years 10 and 11 give pupils opportunities to write in a range of styles and their knowledge of parts of speech is consolidated effectively. There are only limited opportunities for extended writing in geography.

Drama

148. GCSE results in 2002 were slightly below average, though pupils did better than in most of their other subjects. Results in 2001 and 2002 represented a significant improvement on the 2000 results. Provision has improved significantly since the arrival of the head of department in 1999. In addition to better results, the numbers taking the course have increased from below average to a level that is now twice the national average.
149. Standards in the Year 11 lesson observed were well above average. Pupils showed high standards of critical and creative thinking in devising pieces on the theme of isolation. A notable strength was their realisation of ideas to enhance the impact on the audience. Teaching was excellent, setting very high expectations but trusting the pupils to apply their skills effectively. The use of the excellent facilities enhanced achievement because the pupils' originality was challenged very effectively by powerful still and moving images. A significant strength is the continuous evaluation of pupils' work, which not only informs pupils of how well they are doing, but develops their skills of self-evaluation. In a Year 8 lesson, the teacher's effective emphasis on controlled physical theatre skills helped the pupils make good progress in developing their freeze frames.
150. The subject is very well led. The teachers in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form are strong specialists with a wide repertoire of teaching skills. Accommodation is excellent in the new performing arts block and good elsewhere. There are good extra-curricular activities including clubs, masterclasses, performances and theatre visits. In Years 7 to 9 the consistency of staffing is less secure and undermines continuity of learning. There is need to ensure that teachers with successful experience of teaching drama remain in these years to ensure continuity and enhance provision.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Lessons are planned well and homework is issued regularly.
- There are good working relationships between teachers and the majority of pupils.
- Higher-attaining pupils make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Marking does not take enough account of attainment as well as effort.
- Pupils are not clear how day-to-day assessment links with their report grades.
- The range of teaching methods needs extending to engage and maintain pupil interest.
- Department policies need additional monitoring to ensure their consistent implementation.

151. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002 were broadly average. The proportion gaining Level 5 or higher was above average but the proportion gaining Level 6 was below average. Standards are similar to English and science. Pupils made good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school and the trend of performance year by year is an improving one.
152. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average and well below the average for similar schools. Pupils did less well than in most of their other subjects, though the results were an improvement

on the previous year. Boys did better than girls. Pupils' progress in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9 was not as good as it should have been. Standards in mathematics were affected by considerable staff turnover and temporary appointments. Staffing is now more stable and standards seen in the inspection are higher than the recent GCSE results, though the progress of Year 11 pupils in particular is still affected by previous difficulties.

153. The standard of work seen in Year 9 is average overall and pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. Higher-attaining pupils have good numerical skills and understand, for example, how to calculate the probability of two events happening simultaneously. Their work is generally well organised and accurate. Average-attaining pupils have a reasonable knowledge of how to change fractions into decimals or percentages, though some lack confidence in their ability and forget the methods. Their estimating skills are not strong and many rely heavily on the use of the calculator. The standard of lower-attaining pupils' numerical skills is weak but is improving through regular practice as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. Some can, for example, calculate a fraction of a whole number. Outside normal lessons, catch-up and booster classes are also available for the weakest pupils. The progress of some lower and average-attaining pupils is undermined by inconsistent presentation and poor quality work going unchallenged. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their learning improves when supported by a learning support assistant, but there are some lessons when support is unavailable.
154. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is better than the 2002 GCSE results but is below average overall. Standards in Year 10, however, are higher and are broadly average. This is because Year 10 pupils have been well prepared in Years 7 to 9 and have been more affected by the improved staffing. The achievement of Year 11 pupils is unsatisfactory overall, but Year 10 pupils are achieving well. Higher-attaining pupils have good computational and estimating skills. In Year 11 they understand the algebraic equations of straight line graphs, and Year 10 pupils make good progress in solving problems with ratio and proportion. Average-attaining pupils make steady progress in number and algebra. They can substitute numerical values into algebraic expressions and multiply decimals, though some remain uncertain about recurring and terminating decimals and more complex algebra. Lower-attaining pupils understand the need for a hypothesis in carrying out an investigation and use scatter diagrams and averages to analyse their data. They get good support with their writing when doing coursework. In their numerical work, however, some poor quality work goes unchecked and they do not complete enough corrections to learn from their errors.
155. Pupils' numeracy skills are developed through mental warm-up sessions at the start of mathematics lessons in Years 7 to 9 as well as the additional support for the lowest-attainers. Many other subjects also make a contribution to numeracy though the whole-school provision needs more co-ordination to ensure consistency of approach. In science, pupils produce accurate graphs of load and effort and use scales to compare microscope images with the actual size of objects. They analyse data from questionnaires in design and technology. In physical education pupils make graphs of their fitness and recovery rates. The use of ICT is planned into mathematics lessons and this enables pupils to learn how to use computers to extend their work with numbers, formulas and graphs.
156. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. It is better in Years 7 to 9 because the methods used more often extend pupils' understanding as well as their skills. In Years 10 and 11, the management of pupils' behaviour and motivation sometimes demands much of the teacher's attention and this narrows the range of methods used. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well, though they should more often outline to pupils at the start of the lesson what they are going to learn. Homework of an appropriate standard is issued regularly. Work is marked regularly but pupils do not get enough comments to help them overcome specific misunderstandings. In some mixed ability lessons not enough work is planned to reflect the full range of ability, including pupils who experience difficulty and those with short concentration spans. However, good use is made of learning support assistants, who address the specific needs of individuals, enabling them to make similar progress to their peers. Not enough lessons include an opportunity at the end for pupils to reflect on what they have learned. A greater variety of teaching strategies needs to be employed to engage and maintain pupils' interest, such

as group work and the use of open questions. Only in the best lessons do pupils have the opportunity to develop their thinking skills. Overall, pupils have limited opportunity for writing or discussing mathematics.

157. Relationships between teachers and pupils are mostly good. Teachers have high expectations and in the better lessons, they establish a brisk pace. In the majority of lessons, pupils have satisfactory or good attitudes and behave well, working for the duration of the lesson. Where teaching is less strong, the management of behaviour is not consistent and pupils lose motivation. There are a significant minority of pupils, mainly in Years 10 and 11, whose poor attitudes and behaviour undermine the learning of others. In a few cases, the teachers require more support in managing these classes.
158. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department is aware of what needs to be done and provides a clear direction for improvement. Departmental planning is thorough and future targets are realistic and achievable. The department works well together and provides much out-of-hours support for gifted and talented pupils, GCSE coursework, catch-up sessions and extra-curricular activities. Procedures for assessment are secure, though links between day-to-day assessment and the grades included in the regular reports are unclear. The policies for marking, assessment and presentation need to be updated, with additional monitoring to ensure that they are implemented consistently. Learning resources, including ICT, are used well, with an appropriate collection of books in the library. The accommodation is excellent, with attractive displays, though the amount of pupils' work on display is limited. The department has been through a period of considerable staffing difficulties, but standards are now beginning to rise. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of good teaching.
- Encouragement for pupils to develop thinking skills has a positive effect on progress.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils in most lessons result in pupils enjoying their work and concentrating well.

Areas for improvement

- Higher-attaining pupils in top and middle sets are not challenged enough in Years 10 and 11.
- Poor behaviour by a minority of pupils disrupts the work of others.
- Assessment is not well enough used to help pupils work towards their target levels and grades.

159. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were average in 2002. Bearing in mind pupils' test results at the end of Year 6, they made better progress than expected. The results have improved in line with those nationally over the last three years. Science results were similar to those in English and mathematics.
160. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were below average for the proportion of pupils gaining higher (A*-C) grades in 2002 and have been similar for the last three years. The proportion gaining A* and A grades was much lower than the national average. Pupils did less well than expected in relation to their National Curriculum test results two years earlier.
161. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 standards are below average. Only about one third can use correct scientific terminology in describing how glass from a broken sugar bowl can be separated from the sugar. However, they progress well through Years 7 to 9 and standards are average by the end of Year 9, matching recent National Curriculum test results. Pupils make good progress in lessons because they are often encouraged to use thinking skills in solving problems for themselves. This was the case in Year 9 when the teacher explained the particle theory of matter and then challenged pupils to predict what would happen when two different gases were introduced

at each end of a glass tube. Most rose well to the challenge and recorded some simple predictions.

162. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11 standards are still average, but higher than those suggested by recent examination results. Standards reached in lessons are higher because pupils can usually explain recent work, although they are unable to recall earlier work. In Year 11, pupils could explain recent work on chemical formulas, but not earlier work about the advantages of parallel wiring in electrical circuits. Overall, pupils' achievement in lessons is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is less good at this stage than in Years 7 to 9 because higher-attaining pupils in top and middle sets have too few opportunities to extend their learning beyond basic lesson content. Inability to recall the meanings of scientific key words hinders the progress of many. In a few lessons, poor behaviour by a minority of pupils disrupts the work of all; progress is then not as good as it should be.
163. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning to speak English make similar progress to other pupils. In Years 7 to 9, learning support assistants are effective in helping pupils with erratic behaviour to concentrate on their work, benefiting all pupils in the group. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the support assistant coaxed a pupil into taking part in the lesson; without this support, his behaviour would have disrupted the work of all pupils.
164. Pupils' skills in using ICT in science are satisfactory and improving. Until recently the department had insufficient up-to-date equipment. This has been partially rectified and some teachers make effective use of PowerPoint or multimedia presentations in lessons, at the same time encouraging pupils to use revision or simulation programs on the school's intranet.
165. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Overall, nearly half the lessons seen were good, and sometimes very good; all the others were satisfactory. Teaching and learning are less good in Years 10 and 11 because work does not engage pupils' interest to the same extent as lower down the school, or is not well enough matched to the wide range of pupils' abilities in middle sets. Key features of teaching in good and very good lessons are teachers' high expectations of good behaviour within a clear and consistent framework, good subject knowledge well used to capture pupils' interest, and encouragement for them to think through problems for themselves. The common feature in all the good and very good lessons was that experienced teachers had established good relationships with pupils over a period of time and dealt quickly and firmly with inattention. Teachers are confident in their delivery of subject material and often employ simple techniques to help pupils' understanding. In one very good lesson, for example, the teacher used an apple to help pupils understand the difference between the amount of energy stored in the fruit and that in a unit of electricity. In another lesson, pupils' learning was very good because the teacher held their concentration with fun activities about the chemical elements. In less good lessons, teachers are too tolerant of unacceptable behaviour or pupils at either end of the ability range do not learn enough. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher allowed unacceptable behaviour by two or three girls to pass unchecked early in the lesson, resulting in further deterioration as the lesson progressed; the work of other pupils was disrupted and their learning about the role of bile in the human digestive system was only just satisfactory. In other lessons, small groups of pupils do not learn enough because they are insufficiently challenged, for example being given the 'prop' of a worksheet when they don't need it, or they are left behind because they need more help than other pupils. The range of learning styles experienced by pupils is too narrow, with little opportunity for discussion or group work. Teachers' marking of pupils' day-to-day work is inconsistent. A small number of teachers make comments in their marking and set targets showing pupils how to improve, but most comments provide encouragement rather than constructive feedback.
166. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Development is hampered because a large proportion of science teachers have other major responsibilities outside the department, but some recent improvements have been made. For example, a new system for assessing pupils' work and tracking their progress has been put in place, though its use in setting targets for improvement is limited to Year 7 at present. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy for science teaching is not used

consistently across the department, and arrangements to disseminate features of very good practice more widely to the whole department are inadequate.

167. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. National Curriculum test results have remained similar in relation to national averages, even though standards on entry have declined. Overall, teaching remains similar, though some of the deficiencies mentioned in the last report, such as ineffective control in some lessons and inconsistent marking, still remain.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory** in Years 10 and 11 and **unsatisfactory** in Years 7 to 9.

Strengths

- Pupils' progress in the technical aspects of painting and drawing in Years 10 and 11 is often good.
- Teachers' one-to-one interactions with pupils in lessons are well focused and helpful.

Areas for improvement

- The range of media in which pupils work is too limited to develop their full potential, and there is no use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.
- The development of pupils' knowledge of the history and meaning of art is unsatisfactory.
- Sketchbooks are not used well enough, particularly for the written aspects of the curriculum.
- Pupils have no homework and marking does not inform them about what to do to improve.

168. GCSE results in 2002 were slightly below average. They were higher than in 2001 and similar to 2000.
169. Pupils enter Year 7 with below average skills and understanding about art. Standards are also below average by the end of Year 9. In Years 7 to 9 pupils make satisfactory progress in painting and drawing. However, their achievement is unsatisfactory overall because they do not have enough experience of other media, such as ceramics and textiles, and standards are well below average in these three-dimensional media. In addition, pupils' knowledge about the historical aspects of art and their understanding of the meaning of works of art are well below average. This is because the curriculum is too narrowly focused on painting and drawing and does not enable pupils to progress as well as they could in other areas of the National Curriculum. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to talk and write about art.
170. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE course that pupils follow is in painting and drawing. Pupils make good progress in these practical skills and reach standards that are broadly average. However, standards overall at the end of Year 11 are below average because pupils' contextual work, including their research, annotation of learning and the experimentation in their sketchbooks is well below average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Year 10 pupils are achieving better than Year 11, but their individuality, personal interpretation and creativity are under-developed. As in Years 7 to 9, this is due to a curriculum which is too narrow and does not develop the wider aspects of art. Lower-attaining pupils are better provided for by this curriculum, where teaching is very directed, enabling them to improve their standards satisfactorily in a limited range of media.
171. The head of department has had a prolonged absence. The teaching is currently undertaken by two teachers who are in their second year of teaching, supported by a supply teacher. Teaching is satisfactory. The teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and in most lessons they manage pupils appropriately. The major strength in teaching lies in the one-to-one interactions with pupils which help them to develop their skills. However, in most lessons, pupils are not given clear learning objectives, so while they know what they have to do, often they do not know what they are to learn. Departmental planning includes links to artists and their work but these are not emphasised enough in lessons. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write about art and their sketchbooks are not well kept. As a result, the subject does not make an adequate contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. This has an adverse impact on GCSE

work, where pupils need to annotate their practical coursework with evaluative, reflective comments. Pupils have no opportunities to use ICT in Years 7 to 9.

172. Many pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9, lack confidence in their ability in art. They feel frustrated because they believe that they can't draw, for example. The narrowness of the curriculum prevents them from working in media in which they could experience success, such as clay or ICT. A minority of pupils display volatile, disruptive behaviour, and while teachers generally manage pupils adequately, this greatly disturbs learning in some lessons. Teachers need more support to manage this difficult behaviour consistently and effectively. When learning support assistants are present, they help pupils well with their learning. Pupils have no homework for art, which is unsatisfactory. They do not experience the rigour of handing in work, having it marked, setting targets and working towards improvement on these. Assessment was identified as an issue at the last inspection and is still weak, particularly in marking. Oral interactions with teachers, while useful, do not leave pupils with a written record of what they need to do to improve.
173. The department has not improved enough since the last report. GCSE results have fallen and most of the areas highlighted for improvement then are still issues now, having been identified in the interim by the school's own monitoring.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The citizenship programme that is taught in PSHE lessons has been well planned.
- Teaching has some strong features and encourages pupils to reflect on issues and their own experience.
- Pupils respond well to the subject and make good progress in lessons.
- The course provides good support for pupils' personal development.
- There is a clear vision for the delivery and development of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Citizenship has not been sufficiently recognised as a full National Curriculum subject.
- The contribution of other subjects to citizenship is not sufficiently well planned or monitored.
- Procedures for marking, assessment and the reporting of progress need to be developed.
- There is not enough clarity about who has overall responsibility for citizenship.
- Monitoring and evaluation are not clearly linked to the objectives in the development plan.

174. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are average, and pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Pupils have sound knowledge of a wide range of topics, and their ideas and opinions, of higher-attaining pupils especially, are often insightful. This was shown by Year 7 pupils in their discussion of prejudice, where they showed a mature understanding of prejudice and its impact, along with issues relating to civil and individual rights. In the same lesson, higher-attaining pupils drew effectively on their background knowledge in readily recognising Martin Luther King, and were familiar with his mission and dream of racial equality. Similarly, another class of Year 7 pupils had a good knowledge of environmental issues, including global warming and its effect. Written work reflects sound, and sometimes good, knowledge and understanding. The work of Year 10 pupils, for instance, reflected a good grasp of the advantages and disadvantages of membership of the European Union, and that of Year 11 pupils well-informed decision making about the appropriateness of sentences given for different crimes. Work is well presented but it is largely confined to lesson notes with little evidence of independent research. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
175. Pupils' responses in lessons and their written work reflect positive attitudes. The great majority, including those with special educational needs, are keen to contribute and express their ideas in lessons. They respond particularly well to a calm, purposeful learning atmosphere and teachers'

high expectations. They are usually attentive, interested and work well together and most pupils are thoroughly engaged throughout lessons.

176. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some strong features. It was good in the three lessons seen, enabling pupils to make good progress. Pupils' written work reflects consistently sound practice. Lesson plans and supporting materials are detailed, with clear objectives, and work is well matched to pupils' learning needs and personal experiences. In the Year 7 lesson on prejudice for instance, pupils' understanding was deepened through being encouraged to reflect on their own experience and reaction to prejudice, and on the impact of treating people differently. In the best lessons, learning benefits from interesting activities and use of questioning to encourage pupils to participate and stimulate discussion. Teaching is usually brisk and purposeful, and learning is well supported by good classroom relationships and behaviour management. The development of literacy skills is well supported by the imaginative use of texts and a strong focus on extending pupils' vocabulary. Weaker aspects of teaching include insufficient explanation of tasks, which makes it difficult for pupils to complete them, a lack of individual research and homework, and work not being marked in sufficient detail to provide an assessment of standards or guidance for improvement.
177. Citizenship is taught partly within the PSHE programme, with contributions from other subjects. The citizenship content within PSHE is well planned and provides good support for pupils' personal development. However, other aspects are at an early stage of development. For example, procedures for assessment and reporting of pupils' achievement have not yet been developed. Monitoring and evaluation processes are not sufficiently focused on standards and the quality of provision, or linked to development planning. The contributions to citizenship made by other subjects are not sufficiently well planned or monitored.
178. The current arrangements for leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject, but this is hindered by the lack of clarity about overall responsibility. The PSHE co-ordinator, working in partnership with one of the deputy heads, provides good practical support and guidance for the subject as an element of the PSHE programme, but though initial planning took account of national guidelines, citizenship is insufficiently recognised as a full National Curriculum subject. This is particularly reflected in the lack of a separate policy statement for citizenship, of specific arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and development planning, and allocation of funding.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- The department is well led and managed.
- The subject has good accommodation and learning resources.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are not as high as they could be, especially those of boys.
- Design and graphical skills are not developed sufficiently systematically in Years 7 to 9.
- There are not enough specialist teachers to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

179. GCSE results in 2002 were below average. Results in food technology were above average; in textiles and graphics below average; in electronics well below average and in engineering very low. Boys did less well than girls. Pupils did less well in design and technology than in most of their other subjects. Over the last academic year the school had some staffing difficulties and this had an adverse impact on the grades attained by the pupils on some courses. Results in 2002 at the higher grades were an improvement on 2000 and 2001, though the number of pupils entered was much lower.

180. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. However, pupils enter the school with standards that are well below average and achieve well. This is because there is an appropriate curriculum and teaching is now good. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have average making skills in a range of materials. Design and graphical skills are not so well developed, especially in the case of middle-attaining boys. Subject knowledge and understanding are developed in all lessons and key technical vocabulary is emphasised. For example, in a Year 9 food technology lesson the pupils researched the function of the ingredients to be used in their 'celebration cakes'. As an extension to this, the teacher also introduced the pupils to additives that are used in commercial products to give flavour, colour and a longer shelf life. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed in designing and making activities. In a Year 9 graphics lesson, for example, the pupils were drawing the floor plan of a bungalow using a scale of 1:100. They were also able to work in other scales. The highest-attaining pupils have a more secure grasp of the subject knowledge and their design skills are more highly developed. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have difficulty with design skills but their making skills are better developed. Girls' standards are higher than those of the boys.
181. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below average. However, the good teaching is beginning to have an impact and standards are beginning to rise. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. The higher-attaining pupils – girls and boys – are working at the higher GCSE grades. Practical making is of good quality, as pupils handle tools and materials with care and increasing precision. This continues to be the strongest area of the subject for all pupils. For example, in a Year 11 textiles lesson, pupils were making soft furnishing and fashion items. They used a variety of techniques and materials and used the machines and tools accurately and safely to produce high quality products. Subject knowledge and understanding are less good than making skills but the highest-attaining pupils reach at least average levels. In a Year 10 systems and control lesson, the pupils were devising questions for a survey on alarms and considering how to present their findings using a spreadsheet, charts and graphs. Graphics pupils have well-developed graphical skills and use a range of techniques with care, accuracy and skill. Design skills are broadly average for the middle and higher-attaining girls and the higher-attaining boys. For lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills continue to be better developed than other aspects of the subject.
182. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons effectively, with an appropriate level of challenge. Teachers use a range of methods and activities appropriate to the pupils' ability. In a Year 10 food technology lesson, for example, pupils were evaluating commercially made soups. They worked in groups to plan what they would evaluate and then shared the making of the soups and the tasting. Their learning was very good because the teacher had high expectations, had planned the lesson very well and constantly monitored and supported the work of the groups. In all lessons, teachers give much individual support and feedback which encourages the majority of pupils to value their efforts. In some lessons, teachers share the aims of the lesson with the pupils so they are aware of what they should achieve, but this is not done consistently. Only rarely do teachers review progress with pupils at the end of the lesson or set time targets for the completion of intermediate tasks; this contributes to a loss of pace in some lessons.
183. Most pupils have positive attitudes to design and technology, with good behaviour and concentration. They show respect for the materials and resources. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good and they co-operate with each other when working in pairs or small groups.
184. Leadership and management are good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, with most of the issues raised having been addressed. Teaching and learning are monitored and the curriculum is reviewed annually. The development plan is well focused on raising attainment. Accommodation and resources are good except that the ICT equipment is dated and in urgent need of replacement. This is affecting the range and depth of work using ICT. The teaching of design and graphical communication skills in Years 7 to 9 needs to be planned more systematically. The school has much difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified teachers. As a

result Year 7 pupils only have one lesson each week, and in Years 10 and 11 a significant number of pupils do not study a design and technology subject.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Many pupils develop skills in enquiry and independent research.
- There is good access to computers, which are used regularly as a tool in teaching and learning the subject.
- Some lessons are well planned and include varied activities that enable all pupils to learn well.
- Most pupils work well in groups.

Areas for improvement

- Not enough attention is given to meeting the needs of the higher attainers and pupils with specific learning difficulties.
- A significant minority of pupils have poor attitudes and behaviour.
- Field study opportunities are limited in Years 7 to 9.
- There are shortcomings in leadership and management – the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9, the implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and the monitoring of teaching and marking.

185. GCSE results in 2002 were significantly below average. This was also the position in 2001. In 2002, boys did better than girls and pupils did less well than in their other subjects. Few pupils gained A* or A grades and a large number achieved D grades or below.

186. By the end of Year 9, attainment overall is below average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Most pupils are developing a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of geographical ideas and processes. In a lesson on national parks, for example, pupils were able to research and discuss differing points of view on planning and development issues. Pupils' mapping skills are weak on entry, but they develop these effectively by the end of Year 9. Many pupils have a satisfactory grasp of geographical vocabulary and they can carry out enquiry work when well taught and managed. A particularly good example was seen in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils used computers and the internet effectively to find information and pictures on tourism issues. Pupils develop an appreciation of the relationships between the physical and human aspects of geography and were able to apply these in their study of Italy and in understanding the links between human settlement and coastal erosion.

187. Standards in the current Year 11 are also below average, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course. Pupils' work and predicted grades are slightly better than last year's GCSE results. Many pupils are becoming more effective independent learners, though a minority are less well-motivated and lethargic. Literacy and listening skills are weak in some cases and a significant number of pupils find retention and recall of information difficult. In a Year 11 revision lesson, for example, many pupils found it difficult to remember previous work. Most pupils work well in groups, such as when Year 11 pupils were working on a geographical simulation, the 'Trading Game'. In this lesson, good gains were made in understanding the concept of fair trade and the difficulties that globalisation brings to less economically developed nations.

188. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with a range from very good to poor. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and while some provide a range of appropriate activities to motivate and challenge pupils, others do not. In one lesson analysing conflicts between different interests in national parks, for example, the teacher provided a very good range of appropriate tasks to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result they were interested and made very good progress. Too often, however, the tasks are aimed at average pupils without challenging the higher attainers or providing appropriate work for pupils with special educational needs. Most lessons have appropriate objectives, which are clearly explained to pupils. In a lesson on the impact of

tourism in the Gambia, for example, the aims were made very clear, pupils then used computers to research the task, and the lesson ended with a check on what had been achieved. In the unsatisfactory and poor lessons, however, objectives are not always made clear to pupils and at the end of the lesson teachers do not check what has been learned or misunderstood. In these weaker lessons, expectations are too low and pupils do not make enough progress. The quality of marking varies. Some teachers mark thoroughly and provide very helpful and informative comments. In many books, however, work is just ticked, with the occasional encouraging comment. A significant minority of pupils behave poorly and display less than satisfactory attitudes to work; this not only affects their own progress but that of the others in the class. Homework is set regularly. Computers are frequently used, but not all these lessons are effective, as sometimes planning is weak and the lesson lacks focus. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. When they are supported by learning support assistants, their progress is good but in some other lessons, because the work is not planned to meet their needs, their progress is less good than that of other pupils.

189. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. There have been some improvements since the last inspection – the use of computers and the quality of worksheets are better, and in some lessons a wider range of teaching methods are used – but overall, too little progress has been made on the many issues raised in the last report. Although the subject is involved in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy, this is not being consistently applied. There is some monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning but it is not rigorous enough to have much impact. Assessment is improving but is still unsatisfactory, as pupils are not given enough information on how well they are doing and data is not used effectively to improve lesson and curricular planning. Greater attention needs to be given to monitoring and mentoring pupils on the GCSE course. Opportunities for practical field study are too limited in Years 7 to 9. Behaviour management lacks consistency. The scheme of work meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, but it lacks appropriate learning objectives and teaching methods. There is a shortage of textbooks. Some classroom display is good but display space outside classrooms is not being used and the accommodation does not welcome pupils or provide a motivating learning environment.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide clear, accurate explanations.
- A good range of teaching methods is used to help pupils to become active learners.
- Extended homework tasks encourage pupils to investigate and organise their findings in a logical way.
- ICT is used well to enable pupils to research and present their work clearly.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment does not provide pupils with information on how to improve, or enable teachers to monitor progress in specific aspects of the subject.
- There are not enough textbooks for GCSE pupils to use at home or for revision.
- The overuse of worksheets means that pupils' work is not well organised.

190. GCSE results in 2002 were significantly below average and lower than the previous year. Pupils did less well than in their other subjects, but their progress was satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. Boys did better than girls.
191. Standards at the end of Year 9 are just below average and pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Pupils know about the changes that have taken place since the 18th century in industry and society. They describe the development of the textile industry and the factors that contributed to its development. Higher-attaining pupils understand that there are differing views about the changes that took place and can offer simple reasons for these views.

Pupils undertake extended projects comparing the lives of rich and poor. These are well planned and presented and make use of ICT for research and presentation. Higher-attaining pupils include much detail, though it is largely descriptive rather than including their own conclusions. Pupils gain information about the past from source materials, but they do little evaluation or analysis of these sources. When they are prompted by teachers, pupils interpret information and consider the effects of change, but few do this without support.

192. In Year 11, standards are below average overall, though a significant minority reach standards that are average or above. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They use historical sources confidently to obtain information, and higher-attaining pupils make sensible judgements about their reliability. Pupils understand how the criminal code has changed over the centuries and most can suggest reasons for the changes. In an extended project on 'Jack the Ripper', they used good research skills and analysed information to identify links between the living conditions in Whitechapel and the failure to apprehend the culprit. Lower-attaining pupils often present information clearly, but it is limited in content and contains little analysis. Pupils have a secure picture of life in Nazi Germany and higher-attaining pupils understand the pressures that led to the downfall of the Weimar government. They understand the use of propaganda and recognise the motive behind its message. However, most pupils find it difficult to make links between the events they study and have limited recall of previous work. Their ability to review previous events or prepare for the next lesson is also limited by a lack of textbooks. Coursework is well presented and of a higher standard than the examinations. In their coursework, higher-attaining pupils show their understanding of the causes and consequences of events.
193. Teaching is satisfactory and often good. In the best lessons teachers begin with a brisk exercise to involve pupils quickly, remind them of previous work and stimulate their thinking. Pupils are actively involved in their learning and their understanding gains depth through good questioning. Teachers are enthusiastic and in most lessons there are good relationships between staff and pupils. As a result the atmosphere in the classroom is positive and lively. Teachers treat the responses of their pupils with respect and encourage them to develop confidence in their abilities. Pupils do not enter classrooms in an orderly manner, but they have confidence in their teachers and respond well to their discipline. As a result, attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory. Teachers encourage pupils to consider the moral issues that arise in their work and to consider the social impact of events they study. In some lessons teachers spend too long leading pupils through information sheets. When this happens they become passive, and concentration and enquiry are reduced.
194. Most lessons are based on worksheets and photocopied source material that does little to interest pupils or promote enquiry. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods but the lack of textbooks limits the opportunities for pupils to follow their own lines of enquiry. The recently introduced extended homework tasks provide good opportunities for investigation, but research is based on information sheets or the internet. Pupils record their work on paper rather than in exercise books, which means that they do not have a logical record of their work. It is also a drain on the department's resources. Marking is superficial and although it is encouraging it does not inform pupils how to improve or communicate high enough expectations of the standard required.
195. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The humanities faculty is leading the school in the introduction of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and work has begun to improve pupils' learning through an increased emphasis on finding and analysing information and on discussing ideas. The department makes a good contribution to citizenship. ICT is used regularly as a teaching tool and is enabling pupils to develop their skills. Teachers are committed to the success of their pupils and are quick to provide additional support when it is needed. Assessment is undeveloped, however, and although teachers assign National Curriculum levels each half term, there is no organised assessment that would enable the monitoring of different groups or to identify weaknesses in aspects of the subject. Pupils are unaware of the requirements of the different levels or what they must do to improve. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress.
- The examination course is well planned and suits pupils' interests and abilities.
- Pupils enjoy ICT and work hard in the specialist lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment and reporting of attainment is not consistent enough to help pupils understand how well they are doing, except in the examination course.
- Not all subject departments make appropriate use of ICT to enhance learning and this affects achievement in Years 8 to 11.

196. Standards in the teacher assessments for the end of Year 9 in 2002 were below average overall. Girls did slightly better than boys. Fewer pupils reached the higher levels than would be expected nationally. Standards have improved steadily over the last few years, in line with the national trend, and are better than at the time of the previous inspection. Standards in the GCSE courses in 2002 were well below average, but this comparison is based on small numbers entered. Results over the last three years have been similar. In the light of this the school is now entering a much higher number of pupils for the GNVQ examination.

197. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Year 9 is slightly below average. Achievement overall is good, as pupils arrive with well below average knowledge and skills. Most of the progress is made in Year 7, where pupils have one specialist ICT lesson each week. These enable pupils to use a variety of data-handling applications so that, for instance, in geography they can simulate weather patterns or temperature data in tables and graphs, or present information in multimedia files. The pupils' ability to vary the rules in a spreadsheet or obtain information from complex searches is more limited. The majority of pupils do not progress beyond the basic tools in word processing. The attainment of boys and girls is similar. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is average overall. On the new GNVQ course, pupils are performing at an above average level, with all pupils aiming at least to pass and with a high percentage on course for merit awards. Achievement in these examination groups is very good as pupils begin the course with below average knowledge and skills. Pupils who are not on the GNVQ course have more limited opportunities to extend their ICT abilities in other areas of the curriculum, resulting in below average standards. On balance, achievement is good at this stage.

198. Teaching is good overall in specialist lessons and often very good. In the GNVQ classes teaching is sometimes excellent. The department makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress. In a Year 10 examination lesson, all pupils made excellent progress. Beginning with quick-fire questions to remind pupils what they knew and needed to do and ending with pupils' demonstration of their own work, the brisk pace and very high expectations inspired the pupils to evaluate and refine their work to a high standard. As a result, their simple spreadsheets conveyed information extremely effectively, with the use of colour and formatting. The teacher made specific provision for pupils with learning difficulties, with two learning support assistants, so that their progress was also excellent. Year 7 lessons are taken by a range of non-specialist, but enthusiastic, teachers. This teaching is also good overall, though there are some weaknesses. For instance, in a Year 7 lesson the teacher's introduction was too drawn out; he did not see that the pupils had grasped the principles of designing a presentation layout and were ready to move on. He then did not provide sufficient guidance on searching and extracting information from the internet, so that lower-attaining pupils wasted time because they did not have a clear method. In most lessons the teachers make the learning interesting and challenging and this motivates pupils, who are keen to learn and consequently well behaved. Teachers have high expectations and allow pupils to exercise independence and choice. This encourages pupils to take charge of their own learning and seek to improve.

199. Overall, the ICT curriculum is satisfactory – an improvement since the last inspection, when it did not meet the statutory requirements. Where possible, subject departments use the school's

networked computers for learning. Some subjects such as mathematics, history and geography book a computer room regularly for classes at all levels. This enables them to employ a wide range of software to enhance teaching and learning. Others have access to computers in the library or in their own department. Music, which has an excellent suite of computers, and art, which also has computers, have yet to use these effectively, except for older or more gifted pupils. All aspects of the ICT National Curriculum are covered, including data-logging in science and control technology in design and technology. However, only in a few subjects is pupils' attainment measured against national standards, so that not enough is being done to enable pupils to reach the higher levels. The co-ordinator for ICT follows the school's guidelines for assessing attainment and progress, but in Years 7 to 9 these do not help pupils understand how well they are doing in relation to the National Curriculum. The reports to parents at the end of Year 9 do not include ICT, though there are plans to introduce this in the current school year. There is no record of ICT progress for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take the GNVQ course.

200. Assessment is used well in the GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11 and is an integral part of the teaching programme. Pupils understand the criteria and teachers can spot instantly when a pupil is underachieving or doing well and needing additional challenge. Assessment information is used effectively to make changes to the curriculum and lesson plans. The new GNVQ course, for instance, is more suited to the pupils' needs than the previous GCSE course.
201. The leadership and management of the department are good – an improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has improved resources and the examination courses and has a good vision for further improvement. This includes specialist ICT lessons in Years 8 and 9 and more computers where there is currently difficulty of access, such as in science. There is a good level of commitment and enthusiasm for ICT from teachers and pupils. Providing that assessment procedures can be strengthened and areas of teaching practice improved, the school has a good capacity to raise attainment further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are rising steadily in French and German.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Good teaching supports learning well, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Committed staff work cohesively and have the capacity to sustain improvement.

Areas for improvement

- GCSE results for girls in German are well below the national average for girls.
- Assessment information and marking are not used well to inform pupils of their progress.
- Low teaching time for individual languages restricts the breadth of learning experiences.
- Poor behaviour affects the progress of a minority of pupils.

202. GCSE results in French at grades A* to C have improved steadily over the last three years, and were average in 2002. Girls did better than boys, by more than the national difference. Pupils did better in French than in their other subjects. Results in German were below average, but improved sharply. This reflects the performance of boys, whose results matched the national average for boys, whereas girls' results remained well below the national average for girls. Girls did less well than boys, contrary to the national picture. In both languages there were very few A* or A grades, but almost all pupils gained a grade, indicating at least satisfactory achievement by pupils with special educational needs.
203. All pupils study French and German in Years 7 to 9. Standards are average by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement for all groups of pupils. The strengths are in comprehension skills. Pupils hear and read enough to consolidate their knowledge of vocabulary, so that they

identify key details in spoken and written language. Lower-attaining pupils often need extra time or repetition. Higher-attaining pupils speak confidently in brief responses and exchange several pieces of information, usually with acceptable pronunciation. Others are less confident, and rely too much on written prompts, so that responses are very brief and pronunciation is often poor. Writing is the weakest skill for all pupils. There is little evidence of systematic development of writing over the three years. Although pupils learn different tenses in Year 9, the most ambitious writing is confined to descriptions, largely in the present tense, for example in giving opinions about school. Pupils with special needs achieve well, especially when they receive individual support. There is no significant difference in standards attained by boys and girls.

204. The standards of work seen by the end of Year 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11. The rate of progress in earlier years is not sustained because too many pupils lack interest in the work, and co-operate poorly in lessons and homework. Standards in writing improve considerably. This reflects the increased concentration on written coursework. Higher-attaining pupils write accurately and produce good content on topics such as past holidays, work experience, healthy lifestyle and letters of complaint. Average and lower-attainers, including those with special needs, adapt models to produce briefer assignments. Though their weaker grammatical knowledge and poor dictionary skills lead to some puzzling language, they convey messages at a basic level. All pupils make satisfactory progress in listening and reading as they cover new topics and extend their vocabulary. Oral work remains weak for most pupils, with little progress towards independent speaking from memory. They rely too much on written preparation, which affects their pronunciation. Boys respond more regularly, though there is often more quality in girls' offerings. The loss of foreign language assistants has had an adverse impact on oral standards.
205. Good teaching supports learning well. The quality is more consistently good, and sometimes very good, in Years 7 to 9. There are more shortcomings in Years 10 and 11. Teachers, including one non-specialist, have good knowledge of the languages they teach. They use French and German effectively in most lessons to provide good models for imitation and to improve standards in listening. A satisfactory contribution is made to pupils' literacy, through the subject's emphasis on the reading, writing, speaking and listening. Not enough use is made of ICT to improve learning. Planning of lesson content to cover skills is good. In the best lessons pupils enjoy a range of activities delivered with pace. In a very good Year 9 German lesson, for example, pupils rehearsed new language about visiting Austria, tested this knowledge through listening to tape recordings, then applied it in role play and writing. They made considerable gains in language and cultural knowledge. Planning is less satisfactory for the many mixed ability groups throughout Years 7 to 11, because all pupils do the same work, and little attempt is made to organise tasks according to pupils' prior attainment. This can affect attitudes and behaviour, as well as learning. Generally, expectations are high, and methods well varied, including the use of rewards. However, not enough time is found for role play and group work to promote independence in speaking. To some extent, this derives from the need to prioritise work most closely related to fulfilling National Curriculum and GCSE requirements, so that desirable activities are squeezed out. For example, too little use is made of video, computers and independent reading to vary pupils' learning experiences.
206. The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning languages and appreciate the opportunity to learn both French and German in Years 7 to 9. This is because classroom management is generally good, and often pupils find the tasks interesting. Teachers use games, mime and humour well to foster strong relationships, which support good learning. They target questions well, so that all pupils feel included, irrespective of gender, race or ability. In the few instances where strategies for managing behaviour are weak, progress is restricted, notably in Year 11. The main weakness in teaching is in the quality of marking. Insufficient provision of comments and explanations means that pupils do not have a clear picture of their progress or of what to do to improve, especially in Years 7 to 9. Homework is set regularly. The range and impact of homework are affected by the fact that textbooks cannot be taken home, so that few tasks extend the learning of the higher attainers within groups.
207. Leadership and management are good, and have a positive impact on learning. Policies are thoughtful. Together with minutes of meetings, they show a strong corporate drive from teachers to

improve standards further. Schemes of work are well adapted to cater for the fact that, over Years 7 to 11, the time allocated for learning each individual language is well below that found nationally. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but data is insufficiently used to inform pupils of their progress or to identify weaknesses, such as girls' performance in German at GCSE. Good staffing and accommodation help to improve standards. Participation in the German exchange and the French residential visit makes a strong contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, and the department is well placed to sustain this.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The accommodation and resources are of a high standard.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Staff are highly committed to developing the department.
- A large number of pupils have instrumental tuition.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular provision are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is sometimes unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.
- The behaviour of a significant number of younger pupils disrupts learning in some lessons.
- Pupils are not given enough understanding of what they are learning or what their targets are.
- The ICT resources are not used enough to support the learning of younger pupils.

208. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. However, standards on arrival in Year 7 are also lower than expected nationally and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. GCSE results in 2002 were average and pupils did better in music than they did in their other subjects. For current pupils, standards are average at the end of Year 11 and pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of the GCSE course.

209. In Year 7, most pupils have difficulty fitting their musical parts with those of others in group performances and some struggle with basic concepts of beat and simple rhythms. Although there was no Year 9 teaching during the period of the inspection, video evidence of current Year 9 pupils at work demonstrates that pupils are able to perform simple parts in time with each other, and know how to create melodies using chord patterns. A few do this with a sense of style. Pupils in Year 11 are able to create effective compositions using computer software. Many of these show both style and individuality, although some of the lower-attaining pupils struggle to get started with composition work. All pupils taking GCSE music are offered tuition on a selected instrument and this supports their progress on the course.

210. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. It is good in Years 10 and 11 but in Years 7 to 9 it is sometimes unsatisfactory. Good progress is made where pupils are motivated and on task as a result of clear instructions and high expectations. On such occasions pupils interact well in groups. In a GCSE class, for example, pupils worked on their own compositions. They were self-motivated and mutually supportive. Their compositions had good shape and structure and some pupils had a good sense of instrumentation. Pupils' good attitudes reflected the enthusiasm and business-like approach of the teacher. Where the teacher does not take full control of the class, however, pupils do not engage in the tasks and some make no progress. In a Year 7 lesson using keyboards and headphones, for example, pupils were only on task when the teacher stood beside them to assist. Because there was no audible sound, the teacher was not aware that most of the pupils were not working, some using the equipment inappropriately.

211. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9, effective classroom management enables pupils to work in groups and use instruments to develop musical patterns. Pupils support each other, though a minority are difficult to manage and sometimes cause disruption. Pupils listen well to each other's

performances and benefit from the teacher's comments and help. Sometimes, however, pupils are given tasks to do without being taught how to achieve success. In a singing session in Year 7, for instance, a song was sung and most pupils joined in, but they were not told how to make it better. Pupils with special educational needs are assisted by learning support assistants and sometimes make more progress than other pupils. The provision for higher-attaining musicians is variable. Sometimes pupils bring instruments to lessons and use them in group activity. During the period of the inspection, however, this happened infrequently. The disruptive behaviour of some pupils in Years 7 and 8 often makes it difficult for others to concentrate.

212. In Years 10 and 11, teachers make good use of their interpersonal skills to provide individual help and support. Pupils' attitudes in these years are generally good, but some of the lower-attaining pupils do not apply themselves wholeheartedly to the tasks in hand. Teachers are very clear about what pupils need to do but do not emphasise enough their individual targets for improvement. Pupils are well supported by the computers, which enable them to compose effectively. This facility is used best by the higher-attaining pupils.
213. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has a clear vision for developing the subject and departmental policies are clearly written. Staff are committed to improvement. However, there are some weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching and, as a result, the policies are not always implemented consistently. The department is developing assessment processes and progress has been made in this area since the last inspection. Pupils' work is assessed against the National Curriculum, though the levels that are assigned are too high. Pupils also assess their own work, though often they write about what they have done rather than setting targets for improvement.
214. A building programme has taken place since the last inspection. The department is now housed in excellent accommodation and is very well resourced. Continuity from lesson to lesson is supported by recordings made using a video camera. This enables the teacher to remind pupils of what they did in the previous session and provides a starting point for moving on. An intercom system helps the teacher to monitor groups working in practice rooms. These strategies have a positive impact on achievement. There is excellent provision of computers to support composition, but their use is not yet being maximised. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 only have the opportunity to use computers in the summer term, and the software is not being utilised by lower-attaining pupils.
215. The take-up of instrumental tuition has increased significantly over the past year. Good use is made of the instrumental teachers in providing ensemble experience for their pupils alongside the lessons. Instrumental teachers are very well supported by departmental staff. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and these are directed well. Some pupils run their own ensembles, taking responsibility for their management.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is starting to improve participation rates, especially of girls.
- The extra-curricular programme gives pupils many opportunities in sport, dance and trips abroad.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- A minority of pupils have poor attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils' evaluative skills and confidence in using technical vocabulary are under-developed.
- Monitoring of teaching does not identify inconsistencies between teachers.
- Assessment procedures do not accurately track pupils' progress and National Curriculum levels are not used in reports to parents.

216. Results in GCSE physical education 2002 were below average. Girls' results were average but many boys gained lower grades than in their other subjects. Results improved from the previous year when they were well below average.

217. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This is good achievement because attainment on entry is below average. A minority of pupils have good ball skills. They are confident in their control of the ball in games such as netball, basketball and football. They understand the principles of attack and defence and have good spatial awareness. A minority have games skills that are below average. They are slow to anticipate the flight of a ball and poor spatial awareness leads to crowding of the ball. Girls' badminton and trampolining skills are below average, but their achievement is satisfactory for the amount of time they have been studying the activity. Pupils' ability to evaluate their own work and confidence in using technical vocabulary is generally not well developed. In some lessons, unchallenging tasks and poor attitudes result in girls' underachieving. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils from ethnic minorities also achieve well in games such as badminton and netball.

218. Standards reached by pupils in Year 11 are average and they achieve satisfactorily. Their performance becomes more skilful and they are more consistent in their use of tactics and strategies. A minority of boys have above average skills in football, basketball and hockey. They are quick to anticipate the ball and move with agility and speed. Girls have below average badminton skills. They are able to maintain a rally and use recognised shots, but they are slow to anticipate the flight of the shuttle and hit with a square stance. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily overall. Though participation rates have improved there are still too many pupils choosing not to take part in lessons and this slows progress.

219. Pupils currently studying GCSE reach average standards. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. The boys have good football skills and are increasingly accurate with their passing and use of tactics. The girls' netball skills are above average. They use attacking tactics effectively and are able to plan their own tactics. A few girls have poor attitudes and are reluctant to take part in practical work. This leads to below average standards. A minority of pupils reach above average standards in theoretical work. They have a good depth of knowledge and are able to link theoretical aspects to practical work. These pupils achieve well. A minority of boys, some with special educational needs, have below average standards. They have insufficient depth of knowledge and are not confident in the use of technical language. They are poorly motivated and are not given a range of tasks that are specifically designed to meet their needs and stimulate their interest. As a result, these pupils are underachieving. Their notes are often incomplete and are not a good basis for revision.

220. Many pupils enjoy individual and team success at school, county, regional and national levels in sports such as netball, gymnastics, football, athletics and swimming. They all take part in inter-

form competitions. There is great enthusiasm for the dance presentation evenings, when large numbers of girls and a few boys rehearse in their free time to perfect their performances. Sixth form girls choreograph dances for younger pupils and help in rehearsals. The dances are complex and exciting to watch. As well as the physical education teachers, some other teachers and one parent help to run school teams. Links with local clubs add to the pupils' experiences.

221. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is some good and very good teaching but there are too many inconsistencies between teachers and the best practice is not effectively shared. In the most effective lessons pupils are challenged physically and intellectually. Even when their performance is below average they understand how the skill is developed. Question and answer sessions effectively draw out information and generate thought. Lesson objectives are explained and pupils make their own evaluations of their performance at the end of the lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are given tasks to meet their needs and their contributions are valued and applauded by others. In most lessons, ongoing assessment is accurate and constructive criticism leads to improved performance. Tasks progress logically, building to the final activity with sufficient time to consolidate skills. In a boys' basketball lesson, for example, the introduction of zonal defence enabled the boys to have more time on the ball and become more accurate with their passing. In the better lessons, pupils' attitudes are positive and they behave well.
222. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to evaluate their own performance or to answer questions. Pupils rely too heavily on the teachers to do the thinking. Those who are unable to take part in physical activity are not always involved in the lesson and opportunities are lost to develop their coaching skills. In a minority of lessons, some girls have poor attitudes and little inclination to learn. Management of these situations is not always effective, with the girls sometimes becoming alienated further. Teachers are not always aware of individual pupils' specific learning difficulties and how best to devise tasks for them. Lessons are sometimes late to finish and pupils delayed for their next lesson.
223. The quality of teaching at GCSE again varies and the best practices are not shared sufficiently. Homework is set regularly and most marking is constructive, with helpful targets. However, some pupils' work and notes are not checked for accuracy or completeness and they are given little help on how to improve. Higher-attaining pupils are not always given tasks to extend their knowledge. There are too few opportunities to learn using ICT.
224. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The curriculum has been improved to match pupils' interests, especially for girls in Years 10 and 11. There is good use of the local leisure centre. Girls' football has been introduced and is popular. Girls study dance and gymnastics, but boys only study gymnastics. New assessment systems have been introduced but they do not yet accurately track progress from the beginning of Year 7. Reports to parents do not record National Curriculum levels. Assessment of GCSE practical work is accurate and teachers know the requirements well. Monitoring of teaching is not focused sharply enough on ensuring consistency between teachers. Accommodation is good overall, though staff would benefit from a joint office where resources are central and day-to-day discussion more easily managed. Some changing rooms are in a poor state of decoration and the lower tennis courts are not an effective teaching area because they are not fenced. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils promote a secure learning environment.
- Teachers treat pupils' views with respect and as a result pupils respond readily.
- The use of art and poetry encourages pupils to reflect on the concepts studied.
- Attractive subject rooms provide stimulating areas for work, and there is an excellent collection of religious artefacts.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and in GCSE courses.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient opportunities for the department to meet and plan its further development.
- There is inconsistency in the experiences and opportunities presented to pupils.
- Assessment does not inform pupils about their progress over time, or enable teachers to identify individual needs.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to have first-hand experience of people and places of faith to enable them to identify and appreciate faith in our community.

225. Results in the GCSE full course in 2002 were below average, though all pupils gained a pass grade. The GCSE short course results were also below average. Results have risen steadily over the last three years for both courses, and represent good achievement given pupils' prior attainment. Girls achieve a higher proportion of higher grades than do boys.
226. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average, which is good achievement in relation to pupils' attainment on entry. Pupils know the key features of Islam and reflect on different approaches to marriage. With the support of writing frames, they present clear comparisons of the arguments for and against arranged marriage. Their oral responses are generally clear and thoughtful, demonstrating interest in the topics studied. Written responses tend to be brief and do not show as much consideration. Pupils consider moral issues and reflect on the possible consequences of alternative responses to a situation. In answering their teacher's questions, they understand the purpose of ritual and festivals, though their recall is weak and they do not readily make links with earlier work. The progress of a significant number of pupils is reduced by missing or unfinished work. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress when they have additional support. There is not much extended written work, which limits the opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to develop their ideas in more depth.
227. Standards in Year 11 are just below average. Pupils achieve well overall, particularly in their preparation for GCSE examinations. They are motivated by the examinations and well prepared for them. In lessons earlier on in the course, however, some pupils are reluctant to develop their written answers, and very few make reference to religious authority to support their responses. Pupils investigate moral issues such as euthanasia and abortion, and higher-attaining pupils understand that the sanctity of life is a religious principle. Responses are generally clear, but lack depth and analysis. Boys are quick to respond in oral work and their responses are usually relevant and thoughtful. They are reluctant to write, however, and so do not organise their ideas or develop their understanding. Most pupils work steadily and complete their tasks. A minority of pupils in Year 11, however, display poor self-discipline and teachers have to work hard to motivate them. Progress in these groups is affected by the behaviour of a minority, who demand more than their share of their teacher's attention. Other pupils become passive and reluctant to respond to questions. Behaviour is well managed, however, and lessons are rarely disrupted.
228. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the ideas they study and to develop their own views and values. Relationships are very good and provide a supportive environment. The topics are relevant to pupils and good use is made of artefacts, art and poetry to inspire and strengthen understanding. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils were clearly affected by a reconstruction of a Buddhist shrine and developed a clear sense of the atmosphere of respect found there. Teachers encourage pupils to empathise with the situations of others in order to understand them better. An exercise in which Year 10 pupils found themselves on the receiving end of discrimination provided an excellent stimulus for understanding prejudice. Teachers show respect for pupils' opinions and, as a result, pupils are encouraged to respond, develop their ideas and listen to each other. However, the lack of extended reflective writing and homework reduces the opportunities for pupils to organise their thoughts and develop their ideas. Short written responses lack depth and are not true reflections of pupils' understanding. As a result assessment is superficial and there are few opportunities until the Year 11 revision time for pupils and teachers to diagnose weaker areas or to assess attainment and progress. Marking is generally superficial and though encouraging, does not challenge pupils to improve or provide advice on how to do so. The standard of written work accepted by teachers is sometimes too low.

229. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Staffing shortages have led to the involvement of non-specialist teachers, though these are well managed. A lack of departmental meetings reduces the opportunities to develop the subject. The co-ordinator has identified appropriate areas for development, though progress is slow. There are no class sets of textbooks, which limits opportunities for pupils to do research or additional reading. There have been no visits to places of worship recently, or visitors to lessons, other than for the Youth Award groups. A recent visit by the Archbishop of Rwanda enabled pupils following the Youth Award scheme to gain an insight into the plight of the people of that country. ICT is used well to do research and present work. The department has a very good base, where the excellent range of artefacts is displayed and this enhances pupils' learning. Since the last inspection, the short and full GCSE courses have been introduced. The Youth Award course enables lower-attaining pupils to receive their entitlement to religious education. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	1	100	83	0	23	2.0	2.3

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	3	0	87	0	43	0	5.8
Chemistry	1	100	90	0	43	2.0	5.9
Biology	12	100	88	25	34	4.7	5.3
Physics	2	100	88	0	40	3.0	5.7
Business Studies	4	100	92	25	32	6.0	5.5
Business AVCE	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.0	10.5
Sports/PE Studies	8	88	92	0	25	3.75	5.09
Health and Social Care AVCE	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15.0	10.8
Art and Design	7	100	96	29	46	6.0	6.6
Geography	13	85	92	0	38	3.7	5.7
History	5	100	88	0	35	4.4	5.5
Religious Studies	12	100	92	0	38	3.2	5.8
Other Social Studies	3	67	87	33	34	4.0	5.3
English Language	12	100	91	8	30	5.0	5.3
English Literature	8	100	95	13	37	5.0	5.9

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	4	100	76	75	n/a		
Information Technology	8	100	76	38	n/a		
Leisure and Tourism	5	100	76	40	n/a		

Health and Social Care	3	100	76	0	n/a		
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

230. The focus was on mathematics and physics, but biology, chemistry and human biology were also sampled.
231. Examination results in biology were above average in 2002 and students did better than expected in relation to their GCSE results. At A2 level, only two candidates were entered, but both did very well and gained A grades. Standards in the sampled Year 13 lesson were above average. The lesson was good because students demonstrated good learning in their researched presentations about ethical issues in biology. Timely interventions from the teacher ensured that students gained a good understanding of each other's work.
232. In chemistry, examination results in 2002 were above average at AS level and about average at A2 level. Students did about as well as expected in relation to their GCSE grades. Standards in the sampled Year 13 lesson were above average. The lesson was very good because the teacher used subject knowledge very effectively to guide students in working out for themselves the reactants and conditions needed to carry out syntheses starting from benzene. Relationships were very good and students were keen to do their best for their teacher.
233. Examination results in human biology were average at AS level in 2002 and students did about as well as expected. However, the only candidate entered at A2 level failed to gain a grade. Standards in the sampled lesson were average. The lesson was good because the teacher used very good subject knowledge to provide background information about inherited diseases before helping students understand how genetic engineering can be used positively, for example in the manufacture of insulin.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and consequently students are highly motivated and work hard.
- Good co-operative learning takes place between the students themselves and with the teachers.
- Good assessment and monitoring of students' progress means that students are aware of their targets and what to do to achieve them.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, the teaching methods do not involve students enough in explaining their own understanding.
- Provision for GCSE mathematics is not organised effectively.
- ICT is not used enough to support teaching and learning.

234. A-level results in 2002 were below average and students did less well than in their other subjects. Current standards, however, are average. They are better than the examination results because of recent improvements to staffing and teaching. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE results. Students' files are very well organised and provide a good record for revision. Year 12 students make good use of past GCSE work to move into new areas and are well into the course. For example, when solving complex equations using logarithms, students confidently applied their knowledge of algebra and the rules of indices to this new area of study. In Year 13, students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in class and in their written work. In one lesson, for example, students were familiar with Cartesian and parametric equations of graphs and were able to apply these in identifying and sketching curves correctly.
235. Students learn well on the AS-level, A-level and further mathematics courses because the teaching is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They plan their lessons well

and make sure that students are clear about what they are going to learn. Teachers maintain a brisk pace and set students challenges that are intellectually demanding and deepen their understanding. As a result students are highly motivated, work hard and are prepared to think for themselves. In some instances students contribute as much to lessons as the teacher and make a considerable collective effort to understand the work they are doing. In other lessons, however, students are not given enough opportunities to explain their own understanding, listen to other students and build a written record of what they have learned. Little use is made of ICT for demonstration purposes. Work is regularly marked in relation to examination requirements, with good annotations on how to improve. Students are aware of their targets and what they need to do to achieve them.

236. Leadership and management are good. Effective action has been taken to improve standards. Accurate and critical analysis of the department's examination performance has resulted in realistic and achievable targets for improvement. Assessment procedures are well established and results are used for monitoring students' progress. There is a shared commitment between students and teachers, in and out of lessons, to build on what has already been achieved. Teachers give up much of their non-contact time to support students, and this has increased the number of students who have succeeded on the course. As a result of timetabling difficulties the key skills course on application of number has been discontinued. There are also timetable difficulties around the GCSE re-sit course and not all students who need the course are able to attend lessons.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Well-planned lessons help students to progress.
- Students appreciate their teachers' willingness to give up time in helping them overcome difficulties.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment is not used well enough to monitor students' progress and help them work towards target grades.
- Students have too few opportunities to research aspects of physics for themselves and appreciate the wider importance of the subject.

237. Examination results at A2 level were above average in 2002 and students did about as well as expected in relation to their GCSE results two years earlier. The results were better than those in the previous two years, although only three candidates were entered. At AS level, results dipped in 2002 and were below average, but students did about as well as expected bearing in mind their GCSE results.
238. Students enter the sixth form physics course with GCSE results that are about average for starting on AS-level courses. Standards reached by those currently in Year 12 are in line with the average nationally for students taking similar courses. All should gain a pass grade at AS level, with about a quarter gaining higher (A and B) grades. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory. Several students find some aspects of the work difficult, while absence hinders the progress of a small number. In the lesson seen, students carried out a straightforward practical activity using thermocouples to measure variation in temperature in different parts of a Bunsen burner flame. All worked carefully and accurately, and about a third applied their learning well in speculating how thermocouples could be used to produce a high enough current to run a television set.
239. Standards in Year 13 are average, representing good progress for these students from their AS-level performance in the previous year. All should pass the A2-level examination, with grades across the full range. Students' practical skills are average. In one of the lessons seen, most measured and recorded their results accurately, but one or two made errors in their use of measuring equipment. A minority of students are held back by inadequate numerical skills.

240. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge, for example in constructing helpful worksheets that lead students through the work or ask them challenging questions about a practical activity. This was the case in the lesson about thermocouples – after students carried out the practical activity, they began to speculate about other possible uses of thermocouples. As a result, they worked at a good pace in the early part of the lesson. However, their learning was only satisfactory overall because the pace slowed as they later relied on the teacher's help rather than using appropriate reference material to research answers for themselves.
241. Students are pleased with their choice of physics in the sixth form. They like the high proportion of practical work, feel confident in their understanding of most aspects of the work, and appreciate teachers' willingness to give up their time to help them overcome difficulties. However, they feel less secure about some of the more difficult parts of the course, such as thermodynamics, because teachers do not check their understanding frequently enough.
242. Leadership and management in physics are satisfactory. The department runs smoothly and students have a clear view of their AS and A2-level target grades. However, most are unclear about what they need to do to reach or exceed their targets. Assessment is not used effectively enough to monitor progress and set short-term learning targets. Students have too few opportunities to research for themselves or gain wider perspectives on the importance of physics.
243. The previous report made no specific reference to physics, but A-level results in science were above average overall. Recent A2-level results have been average or above, but numbers of students entered have been small. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

244. The school offers an A-level course in product design. This course was inspected.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and results in very good learning.
- Very good use is made of the expertise of different teachers.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- There are not enough links with industry to broaden the students' experience.

245. In 2002, one student was entered for A level and achieved grade B. Of the seven students who studied the AS-level course, six achieved pass grades, with three gaining A or B grades.
246. The standards reached by current students in Year 13 are above average. Students achieve well in relation to their earlier results. They develop a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. In one lesson, for example, students deepened their knowledge of the properties of metals by performing a range of machining operations. They have good skills in designing, making and graphical communication. In preparing their final projects – a display unit to hold items of their choice – their design folders and practical making are of high quality. Good use is made of ICT for internet research, word processing and graphics.
247. Year 12 students are achieving well on the AS-level course. They develop their design and practical making skills and broaden their knowledge and understanding of the subject. In one lesson, the students developed their understanding of design and aesthetics through practical

activity using coloured card which they cut and arranged to explore shape, form, pattern and texture. In another lesson the students worked in pairs, researching information on materials using reference books and the internet. Each pair had been assigned specific groups of materials and the information gained was shared with the other students, so contributing to the learning of all.

248. Students' very good attitudes contribute to their learning. They are very attentive and work very productively. Relationships between students and with staff are very good. Students support each other and co-operate well. Teachers give very good support and guidance, including advice on future career opportunities in the subject.
249. Teaching is very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and skills are the most important contributors to the quality of learning. Lessons are very well planned to ensure that the work is of a suitable difficulty and offers every student an appropriate level of challenge. Some lessons are given added pace by the use of deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks. Resources are of good quality and well used to support the learning. Very effective support is given to individual students which often includes constructive advice on how to improve their work.
250. Leadership and management are good. Four teachers are deployed well to make the most effective use of their specialist skills and expertise, and teamwork is very good. Accommodation is good, as sixth form students have a small room where they can work during private study periods. The product design syllabus follows on well from the GCSE courses in resistant materials, graphics and textiles, but less so from GCSE food technology. There are no opportunities for the students to visit local companies and experience commercial and industrial practices. Such activities would enrich the curriculum and broaden the students' experiences. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

BUSINESS

251. The school currently offers A-level and AVCE courses in business, though the A-level course is being phased out. Both courses were inspected.

Business

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

Strengths

- The department is well led and managed.
- There are good resources, particularly the access to computers.
- The assessment procedures and use of data are good.
- Lessons and assignments are well planned.

Areas for improvement

- Links with the real business world are underdeveloped.
- There are too few opportunities for teachers' professional development.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is in place but would benefit from being developed even further.

252. In Year 13, there are five students following an A-level course in business. Thirteen students from Years 12 and 13 are engaged on AVCE courses, five taking the single award and eight the double award.
253. In 2001, A-level results were above average although numbers were low. Results were much lower in 2002. Results at A level have varied considerably over recent years, depending to a large extent on the ability levels of students opting for the subject. Only a very small number have taken the AVCE in recent years and results have been around average.
254. Standards in the current A-level and AVCE groups are average. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE performance. In the A-level group students are able to think about business concepts

and work independently. They have satisfactory knowledge of business terminology and a satisfactory understanding of concepts such as inflation, marketing functions and unemployment. In a lesson on business strategies, A-level students understood investment appraisal and the pay-back model. The main weakness for many students is that in their essays they do not provide sufficient detail or draw conclusions from facts. This restricts the level they reach. AVCE students possess satisfactory skills in independent research and enquiry. They use computers well to research and present their assignments. There is a wide range of ability in the AVCE groups; the weaker students tend to be descriptive in their assignment reports and fail to analyse the data they have researched.

255. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and teachers' secure subject knowledge means that their explanations of business theory are clear and students' discussions are well informed. In a lesson on economic growth, for example, a clear explanation led students to understand how inflation has to be taken into account when assessing growth. Marking is thorough and helpful and enables students to be aware of the standards they are achieving and how they can improve their work. Assignments are also well planned. Teachers have appropriate expectations and challenge students to work independently. In the AVCE course, students do their own research, relating business theory to the real world of business. In units on marketing, business organisation and human resources, a wide range of businesses are studied, both directly and using the internet. Students are positive about their work, though in the AVCE course a small number are not so well motivated outside the classroom and will need to become more independent if they are to obtain their target grades. In both courses there are some weaknesses in students' ability to analyse data and draw conclusions; some students tend to be too descriptive in their essays and notes.

256. Leadership and management are good. Examination results are carefully analysed and development planning is thorough. Students' progress is assessed well and data is used to evaluate teaching, learning and the curriculum. Subject documentation is good. The subject contributes implicitly to students' personal development, but this needs to be planned in a more explicit way. The department accepts that there are too few opportunities for teachers' professional development, especially in advanced vocational courses. Further monitoring of teaching and learning would be beneficial. Although students make individual business contacts in AVCE courses, there is little contact with the real world of business elsewhere in the curriculum. Resources are good and accommodation is adequate. The subject was not reported on in full at the last inspection and no key issues were raised.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

257. The focus was on the AVCE course in information technology, but the GNVQ Intermediate course in ICT was also sampled. In 2002, twelve out of thirteen students gained the qualification, including two merits. This is above the national pass rate. One lesson was observed, which was well taught. Students learned to make good use of ICT in a variety of applications, such as a web-site design, and were making good progress. Achievement by students re-taking this course or taking it for the first time is good.

AVCE Information Technology

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

Strengths

- The examination courses are well planned and cater for students of all levels of ability.
- Teaching is good and often very good.
- Students are well motivated and make good progress.
- Students are well supported by the teachers and enjoy the course, which they feel is relevant to their needs.

Areas for improvement

- Students would benefit from more regular feedback on standards and short-term targets, particularly early on in the course.

258. This is a new course and students will gain grades for the first time this year. Standards are average overall. This represents good achievement since students enter the course with a range of qualifications and ability, but overall with below average knowledge and understanding. For some, this is the first examination in information technology they will have taken. Others are in their third year of sixth form and spent their first year taking a foundation vocational qualification; these students are also achieving well. Most students have a very good understanding of computer systems and are able to make informed recommendations on improving the power of a computer or upgrading a computer network. Higher-attaining students have built their own computer network from spare parts. Students also develop good communication skills and business knowledge.

259. Teaching is good and often very good. There is a high degree of commitment and co-operation between the teachers. The modular nature of the course enables them to teach classes with Year 12 and Year 13 students at the same time. Teachers explain the requirements of the course and the assessment scheme very clearly and this sets students a continual challenge to improve their work and to meet deadlines. During the inspection, the students had been set the task of improving the computer resources in the special needs department. In a very good lesson towards the end of the week, the teacher led a lively and at times entertaining brainstorming session that showed very clearly how students could reduce costs while at the same time improving their designs. The large number of students in this class were completely gripped and made very good progress.

260. Leadership and management are good. The course has been developed by a team of expert teachers and meets the needs of the students well. It is a very popular course and students feel well supported. They have a good understanding of how well they are doing through regular grading of their work. However, some would appreciate more short-term individual targets and feedback, particularly at the beginning of the course. This would build their confidence at a time when they are learning to become more independent and self-reliant.

261. The range of resources is good, including a sophisticated web-site design program, industry-standard office applications and multimedia programs, and good access to computers for all sixth form students. Students take advantage of these and are prepared to put in extra hours in completing their assignments and following their own interests.

262. Standards in the previous A-level computing course fell after the last inspection, when they were average. Numbers taking the course were small. The move to the vocational course is proving to be a successful decision as numbers and standards are now rising.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

263. The focus was on physical education but the AVCE in travel and tourism and the GNVQ Intermediate course in leisure and tourism were also sampled.

264. Results in travel and tourism were average in 2001, and similar in 2002. Students did better than expected from their GCSE results. There are currently two students in Year 13. During the inspection they were working independently under their teacher's guidance. In an assignment on

worldwide tourist destinations, they did independent research into the popularity of destinations, taking account of factors such as topography and climate, transport and accommodation. They interpreted data and explained trends and used ICT to present their work in a logical and structured way. They have more difficulty with drawing conclusions from sustained research and are on course for average results.

265. In leisure and tourism in 2002, all students passed and half gained merits. This is above average and similar to the results in 2001. One lesson was observed, which was very good. The students were working on plans to take a group of younger students to a leisure centre. They worked independently of the teacher and ran an efficient meeting, using normal protocols. Students showed a good understanding of health and safety and of customer care issues. The teacher had planned the lesson carefully and facilitated unobtrusively where necessary.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Good planning and teaching result in good achievement for most students.
- Students are able to learn independently.
- Students have good attitudes towards the subject.
- Good assessment procedures have a positive impact on students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students have too few opportunities to give presentations using ICT.
- There are no opportunities for students to study vocational or recreational courses.

266. A-level results in 2001 were below average. They improved in 2002 and most students attained higher grades than in their other subjects. Girls performed better than boys.

267. For current students, standards in Year 13 are average and students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on joining the course. Their mature approach to independent learning adds to their achievement. A particular strength is their ability to link their personal performance with theoretical aspects. Students use technical vocabulary accurately and have a good grasp of principles, which they interpret intelligently in relation to their chosen activities. They have a good understanding of how skills are acquired and apply physiological formulae in relation to bio-mechanics. Students are confident when talking about their chosen activities and their aspirations for their future careers. They use ICT effectively for performance analysis and do research using the internet and other sources.

268. Standards in Year 12 are also average. Students' written work is good but lacks added depth from independent research. They are not as confident orally as Year 13 students but are clear about how their studies will help them with their future careers. Students in both years are actively involved in sport and reach high standards in netball, football, athletics, swimming and hockey. Their practical performance in lessons is above average and they practise with a high work rate to improve their performance. Netball skills in particular are above average for both boys and girls.

269. Teaching is good with some excellent features. The most effective teaching involves very high expectations and a good range of tasks that stimulate a good response and independent research from students. Students gain a greater understanding of the big picture because teachers make links between different parts of the course. All teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, resulting in stimulating lessons that fire students' interest. In a practical lesson on assessing netball skills, for example, students used a video to record their performance and prepared to carry out an analysis of skills at a later date. The key skills of communication and the application of number are effectively taught. However, students do not have enough opportunities to give PowerPoint presentations because of a lack of ICT equipment. Assessment of students' work is

particularly effective. Students have targets, which are reviewed regularly, and are very clear about the level of work that is expected relative to their ability.

270. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum is growing in popularity in this school and with students from other schools. Students respond well. Many use the adjacent leisure centre in their own time, showing a good approach to exercise for a healthy lifestyle. Teachers and students have a mutual respect that creates a supportive learning environment. Teachers extend a high level of independence to the students, which results in a mature and diligent approach to their work. They are appreciative of the support given to them by the teachers and feel that their work improves through constructive criticism. They value the courses they attend away from school. The sixth form classroom has a positive impact on the students' morale and quality of work. They are able to display their work and refer to it during lessons; it is also useful for storing resources. The community programme followed by all sixth form students encourages them to help in younger pupils' lessons and to organise sporting fixtures and dance clubs. There are, however, no opportunities to gain a vocational qualification or to attend recreational classes in physical education. Leadership and management are good, with very good organisation and planning of the examination courses.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

271. The school offers AVCE and GNVQ Intermediate courses in health and social care. Both courses were inspected.

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is very good and students have very good relationships with the teacher.
- Students' attitudes are highly positive and their personal development is very good.
- Students' work in the community is very well integrated into their coursework.
- There is a very good range of speakers, visitors and other external sources of information.

Areas for improvement

- The management arrangements create difficulties in managing standards and quality in the subject across the school.

272. Numbers in recent years have been small, but results above average. Most students achieved grades above those predicted. Current provision includes a GNVQ Intermediate course and an AVCE course, which can be taken as a single or double award. The retention rate has been good, with those who leave moving on into good jobs, one of the prime objectives of vocational provision.
273. Attainment on the GNVQ Intermediate course is above average. Students' assignments show good understanding of the theory and well-argued presentation of the course content. Attainment in the externally-examined elements of the course frequently bring these standards down and are likely to do so again, despite good preparation for the examination.
274. Standards in both AVCE groups are average. All students are achieving well. The great strength of students' achievements lies in their ability to link their real experiences, for example of working in health or care organisations, with their theoretical studies. Students' coursework shows a very good understanding of these real contexts. Some students, for example, did work experience in a primary school. They worked with small children and have woven this experience into a project about child development. Other students went into town in wheelchairs, or pushing wheelchairs, and were able to link this experience to the theories about barriers to access for disabled people. They also made good use of a talk they had had from a wheelchair user, recognising the psychological as well as physical barriers. Students make good use of ICT to present their

findings and work is always neat and well ordered. Their contributions to oral discussions are above average, showing very good understanding and consistently linking theory and practice. For these students also, their weaker area is the externally-tested units, as is common on vocational courses.

275. Students have a mature and enthusiastic attitude. Their personal development is very good. They talk eloquently about their experiences, in class and individually. They value the excellent relationships they share with their teacher and have a sense of fun and enjoyment in learning. Students are very proud of their involvement in the community, speaking articulately about their trepidation before interacting with elderly or disabled people, and of how much they have learned from these experiences. Students are very good ambassadors for the school.
276. Teaching is very good. The provision of opportunities for real experiences is excellent. Learning is not restricted to lesson times. Planning and teaching methods are very good, and there is also an ethos of very good learning which adds significantly to the success of the courses. Very effective assessment through written comments and oral feedback means that students understand exactly what they have to do to improve their work. Students work together very effectively, and often learn from each other. Students become very aware of others' needs, such as the dietary requirements of other cultures and religions, or the needs of students who have English as an additional language. Students learn how to express strong emotions without reluctance. The course adds significantly to their social, emotional and moral development and fulfils the key requirement of producing rounded individuals, ready for employment in these areas.
277. Management of the sixth form courses is very good. The co-ordinator does not, however, have responsibility for the subject across the school, which leads to difficulties in monitoring standards and quality across the full range of health and social care courses. Health and social care had no specific report in the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

278. The school offers courses in art, music technology and drama. These courses were sampled.
279. A-level results in art were average in 2001 and similar in 2002. Students did about as well as expected. One lesson was observed, which was satisfactory. Students were working individually with sound help from the teacher. The standard of their practical work and their personal studies that support this was average.
280. Music technology is a new AS-level course, which is appropriate to the needs and interests of a small number of boys taking music in the sixth form. One lesson was observed, which was satisfactory. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and the students show a high level of motivation and engagement. Sixth form students make a good contribution to music in the school.
281. In drama, A-level results were above average in 2002, though numbers were very small. One lesson was observed, which was good. The students worked with enthusiasm in devising the staging for their assessed performance of Strindberg's 'Miss Julie'.

HUMANITIES

282. The focus was on geography but politics and government, history and religious studies were also sampled.
283. A-level results in politics and government in 2002 were about average, though numbers were small. One lesson was observed, which was satisfactory. Students were discussing the factors that lead to the decline of political parties and the role of pressure groups. They were keen to share ideas and showed a sound understanding. The teacher gave good advice on where students needed to develop their knowledge in more detail.

284. In history, A-level results were below average in 2001 but improved in 2002. One lesson was observed, which was good. Students had a good understanding of the German economy in the period leading up to the Second World War and of how Hitler gained and kept power. The teacher skilfully asked questions that led students to think and deepen their understanding. Students were interested and confident.
285. A-level results in religious education were well below average in 2001 but improved significantly to an average standard in 2002. One lesson was observed, which was satisfactory. Students were revising their knowledge of ethics, including absolute and relative moral principles and the concept of duty. They were confident and able to give an account of different views and their proponents. The teacher gave good support and built students' confidence and understanding through good use of questions.

Geography

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

Strengths

- A-level results in 2002 were above the 2001 national average.
- Students are well motivated.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge – they prepare lessons well and challenge students to think for themselves.
- Students develop independent learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students are less good at analysing data and drawing conclusions.
- The quality of assessment and marking is not consistently good.

286. A-level results in 2001 were well below average. Students did a little less well than in their other subjects. However, most students achieved their target grades based upon AS and GCSE performance. Results in 2002 were much improved and were above the national average for 2001.
287. Current standards in Year 13 are above average, with students achieving well in relation to their prior attainment at the start of the course. Standards are slightly higher than at the time of the last inspection. The better results in 2002 and those seen currently are partly due to the higher ability of students opting to take the subject.
288. Students show good knowledge and understanding of topics in physical and human geography. They are able to work independently, collect information from a variety of sources and form sound conclusions based on the data. In a lesson on different approaches to urban regeneration they used web sites very effectively to research developments in Manchester. They are able to discuss issues and geographical ideas. In work on Cambridgeshire, they used local settlements to explore and discuss patterns of housing development, relating it to government policy and local authority strategic planning. One weakness in lessons and in some essays is a lack of detail in answers and in the case of some students, a tendency to be descriptive rather than analytical and evaluative in their conclusions.
289. Teaching is good. Lessons have a clear structure and are well planned to challenge students to think and develop independent learning skills. This is achieved by encouraging them to carry out independent research from a variety of sources including the internet. In a lesson on housing developments, for example, students gained valuable information about developments in the local area to inform their decisions. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. They make the subject interesting and they engage students in seeing the relevance of geography to current issues such as population growth, development of rural and urban areas and management of the environment. Students enjoy the subject and are mainly keen to learn – their positive attitudes, combined with the good teaching, contribute to their good progress.

290. The scheme of work meets examination requirements. The management of teaching and learning between the four teachers is satisfactory. Assessment of work is mainly good and some very helpful guidance is provided to make students aware of the standards they are achieving and how they can improve. This is not, however, of a consistently high standard. Field study opportunities are good. Resources are used effectively, particularly computers. Up-to-date case studies are used well and contribute considerably to teaching and learning.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

291. The focus subject was English literature, but English language, French and German were also sampled.

292. A-level results in English language were average in 2001 and similar in 2002. One lesson was sampled, in which the teaching and learning were good, as were the students' attitudes. They made good progress in analysing key features of linguistic development as evidenced in the writing of infants. However, their overall standards were below average because of insecure use of the appropriate specialist vocabulary.

293. There have been few entries for A-level French recently. Three students took AS level in 2002 and did less well than expected from their GCSE results. Two lessons were observed, in which teaching was satisfactory. In Year 12, two female students were making satisfactory progress listening and speaking. In the Year 13 lesson, the two female students were finding difficulty in understanding a letter written in French. They lacked confidence in reading and speaking in French, because they had gaps in their basic knowledge.

294. There were no entries for A-level German in 2001. Four students took AS level in 2002 and did as well as expected. A Year 13 German lesson was observed, in which a single male student made very good progress in response to very good teaching. His very good oral skills and cultural knowledge have been boosted by participation on several occasions in the school's German exchange.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results.
- Very good teaching with lively, challenging methods results in very good learning in lessons.
- The students have very good, hard working attitudes.
- The quality of feedback to students is very good.
- The course is well organised.

Areas for improvement

- The standard of students' written work is not as consistently good as that shown in discussion.

295. A-level results in 2001 were below average but better than the students' previous attainment would suggest. Students did better in English literature than in most of their other subjects. Results fell in 2002. In the AS level, results in 2001 were below average with nearly one in four not achieving a pass grade. Some of these students had GCSE results that were lower than usual for a post-16 English course. In 2002, results improved.

296. Standards in the small group in Year 13 are average, which represents good achievement in relation to the students' GCSE results. When discussing 'Dr Faustus' they analysed effectively the looming clash between damnation and salvation at the close of the play, although tended to rely on the teacher's probing questioning rather than initiating ideas of their own. Their written work shows very good progress in coursework modules. On these assignments the opportunities for individual support from the teacher and for redrafting result in above average standards. The best

assignments on Doyle's 'The Woman who Walked into Doors' were typified by a good analysis of the impact of Doyle's language on meaning. Students are less assured in writing for examinations. The highest attainers retain an analytical, persuasive approach but lower attainers lose the focus on the title, do not sustain the required formality of expression and make too many technical errors.

297. Year 12 students have adapted very well to the demands of the course in terms of class discussion and participation. All students make significant contributions. When discussing the closet scene in 'Hamlet', for example, they initiated their own lines of enquiry, making apposite comments on the brutality of Hamlet's language and drawing links with other events in the play. So strong was their response that the teacher was able to act as a catalyst, skilfully drawing out the students' ideas. In another lesson, the students presented their research on the historical context of Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' with a confidence that confirmed good independent research skills. In discussions, therefore, overall standards are above average. However, these standards are not yet consistently evident in written work. Overall, the students are not secure in writing with the required formality of tone, vocabulary and syntax; the consistent clarity of precise expression; and the consistent focus on evaluating the impact of language on meaning that are associated with above average grades.
298. Students' attitudes are very good. They work hard in lessons. They also organise their materials well. Their views of the course are positive. They value their teachers' subject knowledge and professional commitment, particularly when teachers give of their own time to provide additional support.
299. Teaching is very good and helps students to achieve well in relation to their below-average starting point. The teachers' subject expertise is very good. Their informed knowledge of texts, literary techniques and examination requirements ensures that the students' knowledge of the texts is very assured. High expectations mean there is no compromise regarding the depth and analysis expected in lessons. This expectation extended to the most challenging concepts when Year 13 students explored and contrasted the links between language and power as represented in 'The Tempest' and Friel's 'Translations'. As a result, students achieve very well in discussing and understanding difficult ideas in complex texts. Other important factors are the very good, mutually respectful relationships which motivate the students, the informative marking and the good range of learning activities that sustain interest and engagement. Despite the very good teaching, overall achievement is no better than good because the progress in the quality of written work does not match the very good progress in understanding shown in lesson discussion.
300. The three teachers on the course are experienced specialists who collaborate well. They constantly evaluate the provision and have recently improved the monitoring of students' organisational skills and progress towards targets. Assessment is a strength, with a sound emphasis emerging on the use of assessment to help students learn. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, the teacher ensured that students knew exactly what they needed to do to reach their targets on a timed essay. Consolidation of this explicit approach to outlining the standards and skills required will help to improve the standard of students' writing.