

INSPECTION REPORT

BOURNEMOUTH SCHOOL

Bournemouth

LEA area: Bournemouth

Unique reference number: 113900

Headteacher: Mr John Granger

Reporting inspector: Mr Brian Rowe
1695

Dates of inspection: 10th - 13th February 2003

Inspection number: 249849

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Male

School address: East Way
Bournemouth
Dorset

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr David Oaten

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1695	Brian Rowe	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30046	Ross Parker	Team inspector	English	
31441	Maggie King	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Physics	
20124	Jo Peach	Team inspector	French German	
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Business studies Design and technology	
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography History	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bournemouth School has designated Language College status and is a boys' grammar for pupils aged 11 - 18 years. It is situated in Bournemouth, Dorset. The pupils and sixth form students come from a wide catchment area including the town of Bournemouth. The school is at full capacity and is always over-subscribed. Most of the children live in an area that is economically and socially advantaged, but pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. There are currently 1,027 pupils on roll, of which 274 attend the sixth form. The school has similar numbers on roll compared to an average sized secondary school, but the sixth form is larger than average. There are two girls on roll in Year 12. Fifty pupils are from minority ethnic groups, including one refugee from Russia, a similar proportion to most other schools. Virtually all pupils are fluent in the English language. About 2 per cent of pupils receive free school meals and this proportion is close to the average for grammar schools. Pupils' attainment on entry is very high when compared to the national average. About 3 per cent of the pupils have been placed on the special educational needs register, of whom 13 have been assessed to have a high level of learning difficulty. These proportions are very low when compared to other secondary schools. One pupil has a Statement for Special Educational Needs; this proportion is also very low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bournemouth School is a good school that provides its pupils and sixth form students with a good quality of education. It has considerable strengths, but also areas where improvement is needed. Pupils start with very high levels of attainment and the school does well for them so that by the end of Year 11 they achieve standards that are in line with other grammar schools. The sixth form is cost effective and students achieve standards that are well above the national average. Effective teaching and positive relationships ensure pupils make good progress. The school is led effectively by the governors and headteacher and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Effective and well-organised teaching ensures that pupils and sixth form students achieve very good results in their tests and examinations.
- Determined leadership by the headteacher and governors has ensured good improvement since the last inspection and that standards of work remain high.
- It has created a climate where pupils and sixth form students develop very positive attitudes, a pride in their school, learn to take initiative and mature into confident young adults.

What could be improved

- The proportion of highest grades achieved by pupils in GCSE examinations.
- The systems to maintain a regular check on all aspects of school life and then taking appropriate action to ensure improvements.
- Greater consistency in the use of performance data, to set pupils challenging targets and provide them with support to succeed in their study.

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 May 1997 and has accomplished good improvement since that time. It has maintained the very high standards reported at the previous inspection. It has successfully addressed many of the recommendations identified in the last inspection, with the exception of providing daily worship. The school has also made improvements in many other important areas. These include gaining specialist Language College and Investors in People status. Improvements have been made to the accommodation and the number of computers for pupils' use. There have been changes in aspects of the management which have been successful, but some changes have been made to circumvent identified weaknesses and improvements in these areas have so far been limited. Arrangements for performance management have been put in place. While this programme meets basic requirements, performance management is not yet sufficiently well integrated into the school's strategy for further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds and sixth form students at the end of Year 13, based on average point scores in national tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
Key Stage 3 tests	A*	A*	A*	A	very high A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	C	
	1999	2000	2001		
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	A*	*		

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 have been improving at a faster rate than results nationally in recent years. In 2002, as in the previous year, results in English, mathematics and science were very high¹ compared to the national average. GCSE results are also very high. However, the 2002 GCSE 5+ A*-C grades gained in relation to the results achieved by the same boys in their end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests were well below average. When the total 2002 points score for GCSE is analysed the attainment achieved by pupils is average when compared to other grammar schools. For the last few years the number of A* grades has been well below the grammar average in many subjects, including English and mathematics. An analysis of the cumulative A*/A/B grades reveals that many of the foundation² subjects are well below grammar school average, though this is not the case for English, mathematics and science where the boys achieve a high proportion of A grades. In the last few years the GCSE results have improved at a slower rate than nationally. The very high results achieved are the outcome of good teaching, which holds the interest of most pupils and encourages them to adopt positive attitudes to study. Although the school did not meet its targets in 2002 it had done so in the past two years and has set itself challenging but achievable targets for the next year. The work of pupils currently in Years 9 to 11 is well above average and students are achieving well, indicating that the good pattern of results will be maintained in the coming year. Pupils' numeracy and literacy standards are very high, with pupils applying these skills well in other subjects. Results in the sixth form were very high in 2001 and slightly better in 2002. This represents good overall progress by sixth form students. Students currently in the sixth form are achieving well as a consequence of good teaching and the very positive attitudes of students. The relatively few pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the effective support they receive. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language similarly make good progress. The school is likely to maintain the examination performance of recent years in the coming year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and work hard. They are highly motivated and this has a positive impact upon their progress. They are proud of their school and enjoy taking part in the wide range of opportunities available.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good during lessons and at other times. Pupils are courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. The number of exclusions is low compared to other schools.
Personal development and relationships	This school has established a purposeful working environment within which pupils mature into confident and articulate young people. They relish responsibility and are keen to engage in discussion and share their ideas. Relationships are very good. Pupils and most of their teachers address each other with the respect and consideration they deserve.
Attendance	Attendance is excellent. While it is similar to other grammar schools, it is very high compared to the national average. Unauthorised absences are exceptionally rare.

¹ In the top 5 per cent of all state maintained schools.

² Art and design, design and technology, history, geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education.

Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, working successfully both independently and in groups. This prepares them well for their sixth form study, where they display mature attitudes to their work. In a small number of lessons some pupils lose concentration because teachers are not providing work that meets their needs, with the result that they do not behave well. This occasionally distracts other pupils from their work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good throughout the school, with a considerable amount of teaching that is very good, and has improved since the last inspection. There is, however, still a significant amount of teaching that has unsatisfactory aspects. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good, as it is in most other subjects, and is the main reason why pupils are making good progress and achieving well. Only in modern foreign languages is there a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Generally, teaching is effective because teachers have a high level of subject expertise and are enthusiastic about their subject. In many subjects, teachers' expectations are high and this ensures most pupils are challenged to achieve well. Teachers know their pupils well and most prepare stimulating and challenging lessons. Pupils and sixth form students are consequently enthusiastic and work hard. In those lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers do not pay sufficient attention to meeting the needs of all their pupils and the content is mismatched to the ability of the group. As a result, less learning takes place in these lessons, with pupils becoming bored and, occasionally, misbehaving. Despite recent training on assertive discipline techniques, some teachers do not manage well those pupils who find the work more difficult and lose motivation. Teaching in the sixth form is also good. As a result, students develop very good study habits, which stand them in good stead for moving on to higher education. Teachers provide pupils and sixth form students with individual support when necessary, but all do not make sufficient use of assessment information to set targets and ensure that all of the pupils and students maintain a good rate of progress. Currently, the arrangements for evaluating the quality of teachers' work are inadequate to ensure consistency within and between departments. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to effective support. The very few pupils for whom English is an additional language make similarly good progress. The promotion of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects is developing well. Virtually all pupils and sixth form students use computers confidently. Homework is used well to consolidate and develop learning, but practice is inconsistent between teachers and departments.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, well matched to the needs of the pupils and sixth form. The school has a very good range of modern foreign languages and extra-curricular activities but vocational options are limited. All statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There are effective systems to monitor students' needs and progress. They are well managed by a small team of staff who are committed to continued improvement.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has very few of these students. When pupils for whom English is not their first language do attend the school their specific needs are carefully noted and teachers successfully integrate them, enabling them to achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	This is very good overall. The social and moral development of students is very good and has a positive effect in their learning successfully together. Students have many opportunities to show initiative and undertake a high level of responsibility. Students are very involved with the whole school community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for and child protection procedures are good. Assessment procedures are insufficiently developed. Significant changes over the last 18 months have not yet had a significant impact across the school.

Most parents have positive views about the school, but a significant number have concerns about the provision in modern foreign languages, music and physical education. The inspectors endorse their views about modern foreign languages and music. They receive good information about school life and how their children are doing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher provides determined leadership, which is focused on helping the school achieve its aims. Most aspects of the school are managed well, but levels of accountability are not adequate to ensure that all aspects are as good as they should be.
How well the governors fulfill their responsibilities	The governors are well informed about school issues. They understand their responsibility and contribute well to the school's development. They do not fully meet statutory requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship or teaching religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring by the headteacher and some senior staff has improved since the last inspection. However, the steps to evaluate the impact of teaching on standards are not adequate to ensure consistently good quality throughout the school.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its resources. It correctly applies the principles of achieving best value to all major purchases.

The school has sufficient appropriately qualified staff to teach the curriculum effectively and to meet the needs of pupils and sixth form students. Overall, learning resources are good and there is very good provision of computers to enhance learning. The accommodation is good for the numbers on roll and the curriculum that the school offers, but much further improvement is needed for the mathematics department.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school sent out 1,027 questionnaires of which 545 (53 per cent) were returned and additional comments were appended to 70 of these. About 70 parents attended a meeting prior to the inspection to express their views about the school.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Children make good progress. • Children's behaviour. • The teaching is good. • The school has high expectations of the pupils. • Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Providing more information about their children's progress. • The school working more closely with parents. • The range of activities outside of lessons.

The inspection team fully endorses the positive views expressed by parents. They do not fully agree with the views concerning homework and the information provided about children's progress. In both these aspects they found the provision to be good, although homework was inconsistent between teachers. The range of activities organised for pupils outside of lessons is very good.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this average sized grammar school has 274 students. The size of the sixth form is consistently much larger than average when compared to other secondary schools. Numbers have fluctuated each year and decreased since the last inspection. The sixth form offers a very wide range of AS and A2 courses and provision has been enhanced since the previous inspection by the introduction of additional courses. It does not offer any vocational courses. Around 95 per cent of pupils from the main school continue their education in the sixth form and a number enter it from other schools. Entry to the sixth form is open to students who gain six or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, for whom there are appropriate courses, and who are committed to further study. Over 90 per cent of students usually enter higher education on completion of their sixth form studies.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a good sixth form that is cost effective. The overall standards achieved are very high compared to national figures. This is because teaching is good and students have excellent attitudes to their work. The range of courses offered is appropriate to meet the differing interests and aptitudes of students. The school makes very good provision for students' personal development, especially their moral and social development. Teachers are committed to their students and care for them well. However, a few teachers do not provide sufficient support for those students who find some aspects of their study difficult.

Strengths

- Standards are very high when compared to the national average.
- Students' ability to learn independently, their self-reliance and self-motivation.
- Supportive teachers who foster positive relationships with students. This is reflected in students' excellent attitudes and contributes towards their very high attainment.
- Rich opportunities are provided for students' personal development in their daily life and work in the sixth form and through their involvement with the main school.

What could be improved

- The provision for modern foreign languages, especially German.
- The overall co-ordination of the sixth form.
- Making better use of the assessment information available to measure individual students' progress to ensure they attain their full potential in examinations.

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
English	Very good. Examination results are well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching is good overall, with a mixture of some excellent subject knowledge and some innovative approaches.
Mathematics	Good. Results at AS and A level have been consistently well above national averages. Teaching is good so the very high standards students have at the start of the course are maintained. They have excellent attitudes to their learning and are very good independent learners.
Physics	Very good. Standards obtained in the AS and A2 courses are consistently very high and well above the national average. The experience and very good subject knowledge of the staff are a particular strength. The department sets high standards and the students achieve well.

Biology	Good. The department has a team of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers who share a very good relationship with their students. The teaching is good and leads to above average attainment at A level.
French	Satisfactory. Standards are above the national average, although numbers are low. The few students taking the subject are achieving well, given their GCSE results. They have particular strengths in speaking French, which they do confidently. However, the standard of writing in Year 12 is not as high as it should be.
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY	Satisfactory. The subject has just been introduced at AS level and a new A2 course is planned for 2003/4. Teaching is good and students' progress meets expectations. Few have a GCSE qualification in the subject.
Design and technology	Very good. Standards are high with students producing imaginative and creative products of very high quality. Excellent attitudes and very good teaching ensure high expectations and achievement. Leadership and management are very good.
Business studies	Good. Standards improved in 2002 and were above average due to effective leadership and management. Teaching is good and the students' very good attitudes towards the subject promote good achievement in Years 12 and 13.
History	Very good. Because of very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes to their work, results at A level were above average in 2001. In 2002 they were above expectations for that group of students based on their earlier attainment. AS results were in line with expectations.
German	Unsatisfactory. Students are not well enough prepared for the demands of the AS examination and do not achieve good standards in Year 12, although preparation for the A2 is better in Year 13. The number of students taking A2 courses and the unsatisfactory teaching are a result of inadequate leadership and management.
Economics	Satisfactory. Results are close to the national average. Teaching at AS and A2 level is good and students develop very positive attitudes to the subject. Although students have under-achieved in the past, current students are making better progress. An improving, well managed subject.
Geography	Very good. Results at A level were below average in 2001 but, as a result of very good teaching and management and the excellent attitudes of students, they improved in 2002 and were above expectations at both AS and A2 levels.
Physical education	Good. Standards are good and students learn well. Students have very positive attitudes and respond well to good teaching. Leadership and management are good, particularly in providing a very good range of activities, including extra curricular sport and timetabled opportunities for all students in both Years 12 and 13, not just examination groups.

Work was sampled in many other subjects during the inspection week. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good. The provision in **chemistry** is good. In A level, the department's 2001 results were the best since 1998 and were above the national average. The 2002 results produced by a larger number of students show an improved pass rate at 100 per cent, although the average points score and percentage of A/B passes showed a decrease. These results were broadly in line with expectations based on previous GCSE results. The provision in **electronics** is outstanding. The teacher's expertise helped students gain top grades of A and B in the recent trial AS examination, well above school and national averages, continuing the very high trend from previous years. The quality of provision in **religious education** is very good. The high quality teaching results in very high standards, with a 100 per cent pass rate in 2001 at A2 level. In 2002, students at A2 level achieved very well, given their standards when they started the course. At AS level achievement was in line with expectations. The provision in **art** is good. After a decline in numbers over several years, a small entry achieved good results last year. Numbers have picked up this year and standards remain high. Teaching is very good and students have very positive attitudes to the subject. The provision in **Spanish** is satisfactory. In Year 12 students are not achieving as well as they should, given their GCSE results. Students achieve good examination results in Year 13 because they are well taught and are made to work hard. They have a particular strength in speaking fluently and confidently by the end of Year 13. The provision in **Latin** is satisfactory. The few students who are entered for this

examination achieve satisfactory standards because they are adequately prepared for the demands of the examination. Students make better progress in Year 13.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good educational and personal support and guidance. The school recognises students' increasing maturity and the house system helps to ensure that students are known individually to members of staff. Students are positive about the sixth form and the way in which the courses available suit their talents and aspirations. Information about the various sixth form courses is good, although students say that they would like more guidance about higher education and their eventual career choices. The facilities for independent study are inadequate for a sixth form of this size.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Overall, leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall. There has been a strong focus on maintaining the high standards, but equal emphasis has been placed on students' personal development. Currently, the review and monitoring have not ensured a consistently high level in the quality of provision by all subjects. The overview of the work of the sixth form is not sufficiently well co-ordinated despite the extensive and diplomatic efforts of the head of upper school.

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"> The range of courses suits their career aspirations and talents well. Students benefit from good teaching and teachers challenge them to do their best. Most of the teachers offer individual help and support when it is requested. Students are enjoying the sixth form and would recommend it to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is insufficient advice and guidance on the various career options available. Some teachers do not keep students well informed about the progress they are making. There is insufficient constructive advice on which courses to study in the sixth form. The school does not respond to the views of students. The facilities for personal study during the school day are inadequate.

As part of the inspection process, students were asked to complete a questionnaire. In addition, several groups met inspectors to discuss their views on the subjects they are studying and on the sixth form in general. Although a number of concerns were expressed on the questionnaire, students spoken to did not recognise these views as being widespread. Students' overall views of the sixth form are positive. They are enjoying this phase of their education and almost everyone would recommend this sixth form to others. Almost everyone is pleased with the readiness of teachers to give advice when it is needed; views towards history, geography and mathematics are especially positive. Inspectors agree with these areas of strength. Students who completed the questionnaire expressed misgivings about the advice provided about which courses to take in the sixth form, along with guidance on possible careers after school or after university. While students admit that help and advice are available if they specifically ask for it, inspectors agree that students would benefit from more structured advice on careers lower down the school. Study facilities are limited and students would like to have somewhere quiet where they can go to work during the school day. Inspectors agree with these concerns.

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

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Effective and well-organised teaching has ensured that pupils and sixth form students achieve very good results in their tests and examinations.

1. Pupils enter school at the age of 11 with levels of attainment that are very high for their age. They make good progress and their attainment is extended during Years 7 to 9, so that by the age of 14 a very high proportion of pupils achieve the highest Levels 7–8³ in the national tests. During the last three years, pupils' attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has been very high⁴ compared with the national average by the end of Year 9. Results when compared to similar schools⁵ are well above average. Also during this period the school improved its performance at a better rate than national trends of improvement. Over the last three years, standards in mathematics have been higher than English and science.
2. Pupils' overall attainment by the age of 16 is very high compared to the national average. The most recent 2002 results were a slight decline on the previous two years. Over the last four years the GCSE results have been below the national trend⁶ of improvement. However, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and many pupils achieve outstanding examination results. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the additional support they are given, especially from the support staff. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similarly good progress. Many subjects gained credible examination success, but results have been especially noteworthy in English, mathematics, science and physical education. Nearly all pupils stay on at school and join the sixth form. They achieve results that are very high compared to the national average.⁷
3. By the time students leave school most have made good progress and achieved examination success that allows them gain entry to university. In addition, the school promotes their personal development and ensures they have the relevant study skills to succeed in their higher education courses. There are many reasons why the school is successful in raising standards and much is centred on the effective and well-organised teaching and the high level of commitment shown to pupils and sixth form students. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and has improved since the previous inspection. There was some evidence of unsatisfactory teaching found during the inspection, but very good teaching was evident in most departments. Teachers have a high level of subject expertise and commitment to their subject. They present challenging and frequently stimulating work for the pupils and sixth form students.
4. Within this context of good teaching there are still aspects that can be improved. The inspectors feel that a more systematic review of teaching, learning and curriculum developments by senior staff and heads of department would improve teaching and learning even further. In a small minority of lessons, planning was not sufficiently detailed and teachers did not involve all students to take the initiative and develop a deeper understanding of the topic. In these lessons work was not well matched to the individual needs of the pupils, especially those who struggled with a new concept and those who found the work too easy. Consequently, the interest of all pupils was not

³ Level 7 is two National Curriculum levels above the average for students at this age.

⁴ Very high indicates attainment within the top 5 per cent of all state maintained schools.

⁵ Schools with a selective intake of pupils.

⁶ For a more detailed account of GCSE results please refer to paragraph 20.

⁷ A summary of A level results can be found in paragraphs 33 – 36.

capitalised upon for them to take initiative and develop their own ideas. Not all teachers provide pupils with individual support when necessary or make good use of systematic assessment to ensure a good rate of progress is maintained, both in lessons and throughout the units of work. Despite recent training on assertive discipline techniques, some teachers do not manage well those pupils who find the work more difficult and lose motivation. Many teachers do not make good use of assessment information to set targets for individual pupils, nor make sufficient effort to involve all pupils fully in the lessons. The small number of pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the additional support they receive from effective teaching assistants. This true also of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

5. The planned promotion of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects was not always evident in lessons, although students used these skills confidently in their work. Teachers help them develop study skills and prepare them well to gain success in public tests and examinations. They effectively build on the pupils' positive attitudes to the school to develop an enjoyment of learning. Consequently, there is a culture in which most students embrace learning positively. They have a desire to improve and gain academic success, although there are a few in Year 11 who become disaffected and reject learning when the teaching is less stimulating. Pupils' learning and achievement are very strongly promoted through the teachers' high level of subject expertise and enthusiasm for the subject. Most teachers have high expectations and set the pupils suitable challenges. Very good relationships between the pupils and teachers in the classroom create a positive learning environment where pupils learn effectively and with enjoyment.
6. Teachers assess students' progress through regular testing and the marking of class- and homework. However, the marking of work is too variable. Some of it is not sufficiently diagnostic and does not always inform students about how to improve their understanding of the topic. In some modern foreign language books substantial amounts of work had not been marked and students were left not knowing how well they had done.

Determined leadership by the headteacher and governors has ensured good improvement since the last inspection and that standards of work remain high.

7. Determined leadership by the headteacher and governors has ensured good improvements and maintained the very high standards reported at the last inspection. They have successfully addressed many of the recommendations identified in the last inspection, with the exception of providing daily worship. The school has also made improvements in many other important areas. These include gaining specialist Language College and Investors in People status. Improvements have also been made to the accommodation and the number of computers for pupils to use. As a mark of the school's success over 95 per cent of the pupils continue into the sixth form, of whom regularly 90 per cent follow a higher education course at university. The school continues to provide an extensive range of activities outside the curriculum and this promotes the pupils' personal development so they become mature and confident young adults.
8. The school's vision and its mission statement are supported by a clearly stated set of aims, which stress 'each pupil is challenged and stimulated in a broad range of contexts'. The mission is 'to enable all members of the school to achieve their full potential by the provision of appropriate high quality teaching, resources and training' and the school is moving toward achieving this as it progressively meets its aims. The headteacher, senior colleagues and governors have had much success in encouraging

the contribution of members of the school community towards ensuring that every boy is supported well. However, there are still a number of staff who do not fully adhere to this principle and process.

9. The headteacher and governors ensure that the aims form the basis for planning for further improvement. The strategic development plan is a comprehensive and useful document which sets out a programme of action over a three-year period to move more closely to meeting the school's aims. Staff and governors are involved in drawing up this plan and governors' financial planning is guided by the priorities within the school's annual improvement plan. All departments are also required to draw up their own plans, linked to the overall plan, and this coherence is a strong factor in helping the school move forward. The senior staff are clear about what they want to achieve for the pupils and sixth form students.
10. Many of the school's aims are already being achieved. Particularly well developed are the aims that inspire and challenge each student to become responsible for his own learning, think and work independently and develop the confidence to accept responsibility. There are many opportunities created in school to bring these aims to fruition. Equally well developed is the aim 'to ensure that pupils maintain high moral standards and develop the social skills necessary to work successfully with other people'. As a result, relationships and pupils' attitudes are extremely positive.
11. There have been successful changes in many aspects of management, but some of the changes have been made to circumvent identified weaknesses. Consequently, improvement in these areas has so far been limited. In part, the management structure has been developed to compensate for staff in key posts who have not adapted well to the changes in education and new requirements for their role. This has resulted in a lack of clarity and focus for some aspects of the work of pastoral and academic managers. There has been a concern in school for a number of years with the modern foreign language department, but, despite additional support and monitoring, the under-achievement of this department remains a serious issue for the senior managers to resolve.
12. The school aim 'to provide stimulating and challenging teaching materials in an environment conducive to learning' is not met in a small, but significant, number of classrooms. Although the quality of teaching remains good throughout the school, it is still too variable within and between departments. For some subjects, it is possible within the same department to find both very good and barely satisfactory practice. This is because the departments have not yet developed adequate self-evaluating strategies to share the good practice and identify and improve any weaknesses.
13. The headteacher is highlighting the need to ensure that there is equality of access and opportunity for every pupil to succeed, whatever their academic ability and social need. However, the school aim 'to provide extension and support material for different ability levels' is a weak feature for some teachers. As a result the school is still not a fully inclusive community where the contribution of all is valued and where the needs of each individual are recognised and attended to. Too many teachers do not ensure that the very highest level of performance is achieved in examinations or that the pupils with more complex learning and social needs are given adequate support. Indeed, some do not self-critically review their own teaching strategies and materials. They prefer to blame the pupils for any under-achievement and resort to giving detentions as a first option to motivate pupils and enhance their learning. The attention given to those pupils who have special educational needs and to those with English as an additional language has greatly improved and is now good. The success in educating these particular groups of students is based on their individual needs being well known and

successfully communicated to staff. These students are fully included in all aspects of the life and work of the school.

It has created a climate where pupils develop very positive attitudes, a pride in their school, learn to take initiative and mature into confident young adults.

14. A striking aspect of the school is the positive, mature and confident attitudes that pupils and sixth form students adopt to their work and other aspects of school life. This attitude manifests itself in very good overall behaviour, in hard work in almost all lessons and in a strong commitment to the wide range of extra-curricular activities in the school. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and, as a result, pupils are fully involved in their house and school life and develop well as mature, confident and responsible young people.
15. Most teachers and support staff are very positive in their dealings with pupils. This means that relationships between staff and pupils are very good and are focused on helping pupils develop both personally and educationally. The vast majority of pupils respond very well, showing respect for staff and recognising that their best interests are foremost in the school. Teachers are willing to provide good levels of individual support to pupils, giving freely of their time when pupils experience problems, either with their work or in their personal development. Pupils appreciate this very much and recognise that they can ask for help and be confident about receiving it. Most parents are similarly appreciative of the commitment of staff to their children's development.
16. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop good learning habits. They are frequently encouraged to develop their interests through research and investigative work. Very good use is made of new technology to support enquiry, including constructive use of the Internet. As a result, pupils learn to take responsibility for their work. The benefits of this approach by staff are best illustrated in the sixth form, where many students adopt standards of independent study that are similar to those expected of undergraduates at university. The teaching in Years 10 and 11 has long-term benefits for all students who aspire to higher education. This aspiration is nurtured by teachers, as a result of which pupils clearly see their work at the school as preparation for the next stages of their education.
17. Pupils are helped to show initiative and take responsibility in lessons and the school provides a very good range of activities for students to participate in outside lessons. Many teachers give generously of their time to provide a large number of clubs and societies. These activities are appreciated by pupils and the take-up of these opportunities is good. Additionally, the school regularly stages concerts and dramatic productions, again with high involvement by the students, either on stage or behind the scenes. Each of these activities helps enhance students' personal development.
18. Within the curriculum, the school offers a very successful course in personal, social and health education. This now encompasses many of the requirements for the course in citizenship. Although time for this course is limited, it nevertheless provides a very good framework for pupils to learn about many aspects of personal development and helps them to a greater understanding of their place in society. Pupils are encouraged to be mindful of the needs of others. The success of this is illustrated by the way in which students care for the needs of others in the school. Outside lessons, students are very committed to helping raise money for charity. This also helps to raise their awareness of the needs of others.
19. Whether in lessons or in more general aspects of school life, members of staff have high expectations of pupils' personal development. They encourage pupils to take

initiative, to develop independence and to show responsibility. Pupils recognise that the school provides an environment where they are valued and where they can grow and develop in safety and with confidence. As a result, pupils develop as mature, confident, responsible young people who are well prepared for the next stages of their education and for life in society.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The proportion of highest grades achieved by pupils in GCSE examinations.

20. Pupils perform very well in their GCSE examinations and the overall results are very high⁸ compared to national averages. Compared to other grammar schools the GCSE results are average, but there is little valid data to make a direct comparison to similar, single gender grammar schools for boys. In 2002, the GCSE 5+ A*-C grades gained in relation to the results achieved by the same boys in their end of their Year 9 National Curriculum tests was well below average. When the total points score for GCSE examinations is analysed, the attainment achieved by pupils is average when compared to other grammar schools. Information from a national database (Yellis), used by the school to measure the amount of progress made by pupils from Year 9 to Year 11, reveals that progress is just satisfactory, but in the lowest 30 per cent of the national profile of results. In 2002 there were a few boys who for a variety of reasons failed to achieve their predicted number of A*-C grade passes. This proportion of boys was greater than in previous years, but the school could readily explain the results through pupil absences, illness and a significant number of boys with specific learning needs. Of more significance is the proportion of pupils who do not achieve the highest grades of A* and A at GCSE. For the last few years the number of A* grades has been well below the grammar school average in many subjects, including English and mathematics. An analysis of the cumulative A*/A/B grades reveals that many of the foundation⁹ subjects are well below the grammar school average, though this is not the case for English, mathematics and science where the boys achieve a high proportion of A grades. However, the general trend is that the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve the very highest standards.
21. While teaching is good throughout the school, the range of teaching quality is too varied. For instance, teaching observed during the inspection ranged from excellent to poor. Not all the unsatisfactory aspects of teaching are confined to one department, although teaching in German was judged to be unsatisfactory. In many instances of the unsatisfactory aspects of teaching, the problem was that the teachers had not sufficiently taken into account the individual needs of the pupils in the class, with the result that often the most and least able made too little progress.
22. Considerable steps have been taken to help teachers improve their teaching. Recent attention to some aspects of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has begun to raise the awareness of teachers to the need to focus in their planning on exactly what it is intended pupils should learn from lesson to lesson. Arrangements for appraisal were put in place and these have now been subsumed into the performance management programme. While the programme meets basic requirements, performance management is not yet sufficiently well integrated into the school's strategy for further improvement to teaching and learning. There has been in operation for some time, teachers being observed by both heads of department and by members of the senior management team. When teachers are observed they are provided with feedback.

⁸ In the top 5 per cent of all state maintained schools.

⁹ Art and design, design and technology, history, geography, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education.

23. This classroom observation is not rigorous enough to help the small number of teachers who are not performing as well as others. While much of the teaching in the school is good or very good, the review of classrooms and departments is not yet sufficiently robust to ensure that there is a good analysis of why these lessons are as good as they are or ensuring that weaker teachers and departments make improvements. There are several options available to the school to ensure that all pupils achieve their highest possible standards. They are:
- using a greater variety of teaching and learning strategies to support the learning of the most able boys;
 - making better use of the assessment information available to motivate pupils and help them understand how to improve their own performance;
 - ensuring that the good practices in the use of assessment and independent learning that exist in some departments are shared and adopted in all subjects;
 - developing pupils' self-assessment skills and awareness of target setting arrangements;
 - involving all pastoral staff in the monitoring of pupils' performance;
 - making better use of marking and homework;
 - insisting that all staff fully follow all agreed school and department strategies.

The systems to maintain a regular check on all aspects of school life and then taking appropriate action to ensure improvements.

24. The systems for monitoring the quality of education are satisfactory overall and have improved since the last inspection. Senior staff have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be improved. The school follows the requirements to appraise staff and identify their training needs through the performance management initiative. The school's management structure has been in a state of transition during the last few years as a large senior management team has been gradually reduced in size. The roles and deployment of some senior staff have been changed to compensate for apparent weaknesses in the way other key staff undertook their responsibilities. This does not provide a robust structure in which to support the work of departments and monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the success of curriculum implementation. The current structure does not rigorously review all aspects of the work in departments or develop the role of the heads of department and heads of house to conduct their own self-evaluations.
25. Because the classroom review process is relatively new and not tightly focused in aspects of pupils' learning, teachers are not yet able to focus sufficiently on details of their practice that would bring about further improvement. As a result, performance management has not yet become fully integrated into the school's improvement strategies. Currently, teachers' targets for improvement in teaching are too broad and not sufficiently specific. This is slowing the overall process of ensuring that teaching in all lessons is at least satisfactory and is very good or better in a higher proportion than is currently the case.
26. The subject co-ordinators and heads of house are effective and lead their departments well. However, there is no scheduled programme in place for senior staff and subject and pastoral leaders to conduct regular and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the departments in order to share any effective classroom practice. As there is no systematic programme for review and monitoring in place, it is not clear when the various aspects of the school's provision will be reviewed. Consequently, the role of the heads of department is not fully developed and senior managers do not always ensure that decisions made for future action are followed

through to their completion across all subjects. There is little systematic monitoring of subjects on an on-going basis with heads of department being required to report formally on the progress made. Consequently, practice and effectiveness vary widely both between and within subject departments. The governors, headteacher and senior managers have not delegated sufficient responsibility to heads of department to monitor the work in their areas and accept accountability for the standards achieved, and, as a result, there is room to develop the school further as a self-evaluating institution.

27. The role of the senior staff responsible for review and monitoring of departments does not include a regular audit of issues such as the effectiveness of lesson planning, implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, assessment procedures, the use of information and communication technology across subjects, teaching of citizenship and the students' personal development in all areas of the curriculum. The role of the heads of department is not sufficiently developed to ensure that they have the skills and time to complete regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning within their departments. Consequently, there is insufficient monitoring of the use made of learning objectives and plenary sessions, the effectiveness of marking, use made of homework, the quality of presentation of pupils' work and strategies for teaching and learning. The heads of department are not formally required to review and account for the progress made towards implementing the targets identified in their development plans on a termly or annual basis. Consequently, not enough work has been undertaken to make heads of subject sufficiently accountable to senior managers, and hence to governors, for the quality of work in their areas of responsibility.

Greater consistency in the use of performance data, to set pupils challenging targets and provide them with support to succeed in their study.

28. Assessment procedures are insufficiently and inconsistently developed across the school, including the sixth form. The assessment co-ordinator has introduced significant initiatives over the past 18 months. The school has subscribed to a series of national data analysis systems. These enable comparisons to be made between the performances of pupils and sixth form students at Bournemouth School to those at other schools. They enable likely progress to be predicted and, therefore, some analysis of performance in national tests and examinations. The data from these systems is now available to heads of house and form tutors and training has begun so that teachers appreciate the use and potential of the data. Several staff lack confidence and an awareness of the value of using this assessment information to set individual students challenging and realistic targets to achieve.
29. Consequently, these developments have not yet had sufficient impact on the practice of all teachers. Subject teachers have been accustomed to evaluating examination results, but have not yet made the best use of this data. Nor have they made consistent use of other available data that includes all the pupils and sixth form students in the school. Day-to-day marking by most teachers is thorough and students are usually given clear feedback on how well they have done in specific tasks. This information is provided to form tutors for the regular half term assessments. These make good use of what information is available to monitor and guide students' progress. Some parents were critical of the accuracy of the half-termly assessments in some subjects. As there is little monitoring or moderation of the assessments between departments, there is inconsistency of practice across the school.
30. Some subject areas such as design and technology have made a very good start in the use of assessment information. The teachers make good use of the available data to set individual targets and use these both to motivate students and to evaluate the

effectiveness of their own work. In business studies, teachers have made a start on using data, but in other subjects such as English, modern foreign languages, physical education and history this is not sufficiently developed. Sixth form geography students do have individual targets, but these are not based on all of the available information. In mathematics, students sometimes mark their own work as they work together. Consequently, teachers are not always able to monitor individual progress effectively. It is not standard practice for teachers to have up-to-date information about students' current and prior attainment in their own and other subjects. However, some departments are beginning to set up systems, or have included this as a priority within their development plans.

31. One specific and important weakness within the assessment system is the lack of procedures to identify individual pupils' learning needs. This is not the case for pupils with special educational needs, who are quickly identified and their needs are provided for effectively. Pupils who use English as an additional language receive similar support. However, those pupils and sixth form students who find it hard to succeed in a subject are less well served. Some teachers intuitively adapt their methods and approach so that every pupil is effectively included in the lesson and succeeds in the course. This is not the universal practice across the school and some teachers fail to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of every pupil in school and accepted on to the examination course.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In order to improve further the standards of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

Main school

1 increase the proportion of higher grades achieved by pupils in GCSE examinations** by:

- using a greater variety of strategies to support the learning of the most able boys;
- making better use of the assessment information available to motivate pupils and help them understand how to improve their own performance;
- ensuring that the good practices in the use of assessment and independent learning that exist in some departments are shared and adopted in all subjects;
- developing pupils' self-assessment skills and awareness of target setting arrangements;
- involving all pastoral staff in the monitoring of pupils' performance;
- making better use of marking and homework;
- insisting that all staff fully follow all agreed school and departmental strategies;

(paragraphs 20 – 23)

2 develop systems to maintain a regular check on all aspects of school life and then taking decisive action to ensure improvements by**:

- devising a planned annual programme to review and monitor all aspects of school life systematically and regularly, to ensure consistency between departments, house and year groups, sharing the existing good practice and celebrating success;
- ensuring that the above programme for review and monitoring clearly identifies when the aspects of the school's provision will be reviewed;
- ensuring that this programme for review and monitoring includes a regular audit of issues such as lesson planning, literacy, numeracy, the use of information and communication technology, citizenship and students' personal development in all areas of the curriculum;
- strengthening the role of the heads of department so that they have the skills and time to complete regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning, including the use made of learning objectives, quality of the marking, use made of homework, presentation of students' work, assessment arrangements and strategies for teaching and learning;
- asking heads of department and house to review and account for the progress made towards implementing the targets identified in their development plans, on a termly basis;
- revising the management structure to develop future review and monitoring arrangements;

(paragraphs 24 – 27)

3 ensure greater consistency in the use of performance data**, to set all pupils challenging targets and provide them with the support to succeed in their examination by:

- providing further training and support for staff;
- monitoring the effective use of assessment made by teachers and setting targets for departmental development and implementation;
- improving the diagnosis of learning needs of those who fail to match the intensive pace of learning achieved by the most competent students;

(paragraphs 28 – 31)

Sixth form

- 4 improve the provision for modern foreign languages, especially German** by:
- developing the quality of teaching and learning through sharing the examples of good practice that exist in the school;
 - providing training to improve strategies for teaching and learning so all students make adequate progress;
 - providing training to improve the management of students' learning;
 - improving the quality of leadership and management by regularly and rigorously monitoring the quality of work in the department;
 - setting targets to measure improvement and then taking further action if the targets are not met;

(paragraphs 134 - 152)

- 5 improve the overall co-ordination of the sixth form** by:
- revising the management structure so one person has a closer daily overview of the overall provision;
 - clarifying and simplifying the communication between all involved with the students' education;
 - strengthening the systems to review and monitor the quality of all aspects of the sixth form provision and take decisive action to ensure development;

(paragraphs 60 – 62)

- 6 making better use of the assessment information available to measure individual students' progress to ensure they attain their full potential in examinations** by:
- providing further training and support for staff;
 - monitoring the effective use of assessment made by teachers and setting targets for departmental development and implementation;
 - Improving the diagnosis of learning needs of those who fail to match the intensive pace of learning achieved by the most competent students.

(paragraphs 28 – 31)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Governors may consider including the following less important issues in their action plan:

- complying with the statutory requirements outlined within the report;
- improving the quality of accommodation for mathematics**;
- ensuring greater consistency of practice in marking pupils' work and setting homework**;
- providing the sixth form students with dedicated space for study.

(paragraphs 51, 68 – 69)

** These issues have already been identified as part of the school's development planning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	27
	Sixth form	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	2	11	9	3	1	1	0
Percentage	7	41	33	11	4	4	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	18	22	6	3	0	0
Percentage	8	34	42	11	5	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 Years 7 – 11 and the sixth form as each lesson represents more than three percentage points in Years 7 – 11 and more than one percentage point in the sixth form.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	753	274
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	19	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	26	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	37

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	147	0	147

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	141	139	139
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	141	139	139
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	96 (99)	95 (100)	95 (100)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	96 (89)	95 (99)	90 (97)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	144	146	144
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	144	146	144
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	92 (89)	99 (99)	99 (99)
	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	145	0	145

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	139	144	146
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	139	144	145
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	96 (100)	99 (100)	100 (100)
	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	62.4 (66.4)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	113	0	113

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All
School	24.1	0	24.1
National	18.9 (16.9)	17.6 (17.7)	18.3 (17.4)

* National comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
978	17	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
3	0	0
9	2	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
7	0	0
21	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	392

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.8
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Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	22.4
Sixth form	16.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
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	£
Total income	3,206,080
Total expenditure	3,111,946
Expenditure per pupil	3,036
Balance brought forward from previous year	183,283
Balance carried forward to next year	277,417

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	22.0
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.25
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

53%

Number of questionnaires sent out

1027

Number of questionnaires returned

545

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	56	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	59	8	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	56	19	4	1
The teaching is good.	34	57	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	51	16	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	44	9	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	34	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	19	48	24	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	36	43	8	3	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	50	6	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	46	12	3	8

Other issues raised by parents

A number of parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the organisation of extra-curricular sport. A few parents expressed their disappointment that home economics is not part of the curriculum. Some parents felt that too much pressure was exerted on teachers.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

33. Study in the sixth form is open to all students who achieve six or more GCSE A*-C grades or who are considered to be able to complete the courses successfully. As a result, the overall ability of students on entry to the sixth form is well above average. Results in 2001 GCE A and AS level examinations were well above average. Overall results in 2002¹⁰ were slightly higher and continue the upward trend of success in post-16 examinations. A very high proportion (95 per cent) of students who attended the main school stay on to undertake post-16 courses. Nearly 90 per cent of students enter higher education at the completion of the sixth form. There is some variation in results from subject to subject and from year to year¹¹. In 2002, results were well above average in many subjects.
34. The school seeks to ensure that students of all abilities do well in the examinations and courses they study. There is very little drop-out from courses during either Year 12, when students are following courses to AS level, or in Year 13 when following A2 level courses. The notable exception is in modern foreign languages. The most able students are helped to achieve the highest grades, but the overall proportion of students gaining the A or B grades has been below that predicted from previous test and GCSE examinations. In most subjects, all students completing courses are successful in gaining at least an E grade, confirming the successful completion of the course by the vast majority of students. The school has only very few students for whom English is an additional language. The needs of these students are well known to staff, who modify tasks to ensure that these students achieve well in examinations. Similarly, the very small numbers of students with special educational needs are also helped to successful completion of their sixth form studies.
35. The inspection focused on work in 13 subjects. The overall standard of work being produced by students currently in the sixth form is well above average. Students are achieving well and making good progress in most subjects because sixth form teaching is good. In most subjects, teachers encourage students to develop skills of independent study and this is helping them to achieve well. Only in German were students not found to get sufficient encouragement to develop these independent study skills. This led to slower progress than in most other subjects.
36. All sixth form students have good language skills, which they demonstrate both orally and in their written work. Similarly, their mathematical skills are sufficiently well developed to support their work in other subjects. Many students have very good computer skills and use information and communication technology (ICT) well, both in lessons and in private study.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

37. Students' attitudes to school and to their work are excellent. They respond very positively to the school's provision for their personal development and they are highly motivated. Members of staff recognise this and fully acknowledge their considerable maturity and sense of purpose. The school's assumption is simple: that sixth formers

¹⁰ At the time of preparing this report national comparison data for AS/A level results in 2002 are not available.

¹¹ Care needs to be exercised when comparing results of individual subjects with national data because, in many subjects, the numbers taking the subject are too small to make comparisons reliable.

are still at school because they want to be. On this basis, students assume much of the responsibility for their learning and, during discussions, they say that they thoroughly appreciate being treated as responsible young adults. Almost everyone in Year 11 stays on for sixth form and this reflects their very high level of commitment. Students behave very well during lessons and at other times of the day. Their attendance is well above average and good time-keeping during the day helps students to make the most of their time at school.

38. As part of the inspection process, students were asked to complete a questionnaire. Although they expressed concerns in a number of areas, nine out of ten say they are enjoying this part of their education and would recommend this sixth form to others. Many students also spoke to inspectors during lessons and at other times. Although they are pleased with many aspects of school life, one area of common concern is the modern foreign languages department. Students feel that they are not being well taught; the work set tends to be either too easy or too difficult and they find this demotivating.
39. Students behave very well during lessons and at other times of the school day. There have been no permanent exclusions for many years. Students are clearly committed to learning and can be relied upon to get on with their work both at home and at school. A small number, however, find it difficult to cope with the transition to sixth form. Teachers grant students considerable autonomy with regard to their learning but, despite their best efforts to meet these expectations, some students would like to receive more reassurance and support. This particularly applies to students in Year 12 who are studying English and modern foreign languages. Relationships between students and with most of the members of staff are excellent and students work very productively, both on their own or in groups. Students are proud of their school and they are helpful and very polite towards visitors. New entrants to the sixth form say they received a warm welcome and that they quickly made new friends.
40. Students' personal development is excellent. The school has high expectations and, working within a very purposeful atmosphere, students mature into confident and very articulate young people. Students willingly take on responsibilities around the school and help others. For example, prefects in Year 12 and 13 help younger pupils during registration by checking their homework planners and advising on homework. Students also undertake the sports youth leadership award. A most significant contribution to students' personal development is gained through the contribution of the Combined Cadet Force where boys have a considerable amount of responsibility and undertake much of the organisation.
41. Overall, attendance is very good. While teachers take the register during every lesson, students who come in to use the library or to see their friends are not registered. There is no system for recording their arrival or departure and this could cause uncertainty should the school need to be evacuated. However, there is a system where every room in school is checked during an evacuation.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

42. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout both years of the sixth form. During the inspection 53 lessons were observed and the quality of teaching was good in 42 per cent of lessons, very good in 34 per cent, excellent in 8 per cent and satisfactory in 11 per cent. However, there was evidence of unsatisfactory teaching in modern foreign languages, especially German. The quality of teaching is a strength in the sixth form and has contributed to the success in examination courses at a higher level than the national average. In addition, the good teaching has a positive impact on

the support and guidance given to students, encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, but some of the same concerns, raised then, still remain. For example, there were concerns with a number of lessons where the tasks were too ambitious, objectives not clear and the students were expected to find out too much for themselves without adequate guidance. Concerns were expressly raised about the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages and these issues have not been resolved.

43. Teaching in the sixth form is very good in physics, design and technology, geography and history. It is in these subjects that students are making very good progress. Teaching is just satisfactory in French and unsatisfactory in German. In all the other subjects that were the focus of this inspection, teaching and learning were good.
44. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach, enabling them to present work that is stimulating and challenging for their students. In turn, students work hard and show considerable enthusiasm in lessons. In many subjects, students take considerable responsibility for their studies, undertaking research, investigations and experiments with maturity and confidence. Many teachers support these activities skillfully, providing guidance when needed and carefully monitoring progress. This approach to learning is successful, both in helping students gain a good understanding of the topics being studied and in developing study habits which will serve them well when they enter higher education. However, there are a number of teachers who do not give adequate guidance to support students' learning and are not sufficiently flexible to present the subject in alternative ways if the students do not readily grasp new concepts and knowledge.
45. Students are encouraged to make significant contributions to discussion and debate and this helps refine and develop both their thinking and language skills. Teachers encourage students to make good use of a wide range of resources, including the Internet, for research. Students are also encouraged to use the power of computer software to analyse and present information in sophisticated ways.
46. A feature of the work of sixth form teachers that needs further development is their use of assessment of students' work. Assessment is not always used to set students targets so they are more likely to achieve the highest grades possible in their examination courses. Although assessments are often detailed, the teachers do not always use this information to provide students with clear indications of what they need to do to improve their work even further. Because students are not always aware of how well they are doing, they lack confidence to follow up their lessons with work that they undertake in their own time. There are notable exceptions and in design and technology assessment is used exceptionally well to refine the curriculum planning and set students precise targets to achieve. Teachers know the students well and make good use of assessments to benefit those students with special educational needs or those with English as an additional language and ensure they are fully included in lessons and make good progress.
47. Teachers of sixth form students are aware of the need to support them in the development and application of their language and mathematical skills. In the absence of separate courses to ensure that these skills are developed, teachers of other subjects take this responsibility seriously. This enables all students to develop good levels of confidence in using language and applying their numerical, graphical and data handling skills in a wide range of contexts. Similarly, although there is no specific basic skills course in information and communication technology (ICT) for all students, teachers of many subjects make sure that these skills are developed successfully. The

school has a successful strategy to teach students the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT in the sixth form using a high level of autonomy, even though in most subjects these are planned informally.

48. Although teaching in the sixth form is good overall, there is still too great a variation in quality in and between subjects. This variation arises because the school does not yet have sufficiently effective arrangements for evaluating teachers' work in classrooms. This means that the best practice is not adequately shared. Managers are not sufficiently aware of what and where additional guidance, help and support are necessary to help all teachers to improve their effectiveness. Due to the increased number of AS courses studied in Year 12, teachers now have to teach to groups with a much wider range of ability than was previously the case. This, linked to the more complex range of learning and social needs prevalent amongst students, has resulted in several teachers lacking the skills to positively manage students' motivation and learning. Instead of looking to review and improve their own skills a minority of teachers would resort to punishing students.

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

49. Curriculum provision in the sixth form is good. The school has embraced recent recommendations for the post-16 curriculum and, as a result, students have a wider range of subjects from which to choose than previously. For example, the curriculum now allows students to undertake up to five AS level subjects in Year 12. Students then study at least three of these subjects at A level in Year 13. Only a few students make changes to their chosen options early in Year 12, although a significant number drop out of modern foreign languages as they are disappointed with the course. The school concentrates on the provision of academic studies in the sixth form and offers no vocational courses. There is some liaison with the local girls' grammar school and this helps to widen the choice, for instance to include theatre studies. The school's successful bid for Language College status has enhanced the learning opportunities for both students and the community. A few students from other schools, including some girls, are attracted by the opportunities to study a variety of languages.
50. About 95 per cent of Year 11 students choose to remain at the school in Year 12 and student numbers are steady. Virtually all students continue into Year 13 and around 90 per cent progress to higher education. Students in Year 12 are able to choose from 23 AS level courses, rising to 29 next year in collaboration with the local girls' school. Almost all of these are offered at A level. The school recommends that students should have a minimum of six C grades at GCSE to embark upon an A level course, although almost all students have much higher grades. A very small number of students re-take GCSE examinations in English and mathematics and successfully improve on their grades.
51. The school also offers an afternoon of recreational sport and a very successful course in personal, social and health education to complement their academic studies. Additionally, students take either general studies or a languages course. This ensures that all students have a broad curriculum and develop as well rounded young adults. The provision of a religious education course is a statutory requirement, which is not met.
52. Although key skills are not offered as a taught course, standards of communication and the application of number are good and students apply these skills to help meet the challenges of their chosen subjects. The provision is not co-ordinated and information

and communication technology skills are not consistently developed and used across all subjects.

53. Many students in the sixth form benefit from a programme of extra-curricular activities, which complements that provided in the main school. These include activities in sport, music and languages, Combined Cadet Force and catch-up programmes. Through these and the house system, there are many opportunities to take an active part in the wider life of the school, to raise money for charity and to compete in, for example, debates. Many students take responsibility and help others such as acting as mentors in other local schools, through the senior sports leadership award and by advising younger pupils. Gifted students are stretched through enrichment in some subjects, such as the mathematics Olympiads and debates with national figures in history. This provision is not universal across all subjects.
54. The provision of careers education and guidance for sixth form students is satisfactory. All students are able to have a careers interview. Advice on further education opportunities and on application to university for Year 13 students is very good. Students in technology develop knowledge of industrial processes through a link with a local firm and there is liaison with local commerce for business studies students. However, work experience or sampling is not a provision for all sixth form students.
55. Overall, provision for students' personal development is very good and this has a positive impact on students' learning. Students have many opportunities to show initiative and undertake a high level of responsibility. Students are very involved with the whole school community through the house system. Three assemblies each week provide students with the opportunity to consider and reflect on a range of moral and social issues. Although the school does not comply fully with the statutory requirement to enable all students to take part in a daily act of collective worship, the quality of assemblies is good and an improvement since the time of the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Advice, support and guidance

56. Sixth form students receive good academic and personal support and guidance. Continuation of the 'house' system into sixth form ensures good continuity and the five heads of house and individual tutors get to know their students well. In addition to their annual report, students receive half-termly assessment sheets and students say that they find these to be most helpful. Although most of the students spoken to during the inspection feel that their work is thoroughly assessed, others feel that some of their teachers incorrectly assume that they already possess all the study skills they need to complete their various assignments. These students feel that they receive insufficient academic support and this makes it more difficult for them to complete their course and homework on time and to the best of their ability. This is particularly the case for some modern foreign languages and English. The majority of students, however, indicate that most of their teachers provide good support and that they clearly identify what students have to do in order to improve the standard of their work.
57. Students are granted considerable autonomy from the time of their arrival in Year 12. Students appreciate this and, during discussions, say that they enjoy being treated as responsible young adults. One third of the students who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire, however, would have liked more information about the various courses that are available in the sixth form. When asked about this during the inspection, students contradicted this view and said that plenty of information and advice is indeed available; they have only to ask. Students, however, would like more guidance on

future careers and how these affect their choice of options in the sixth form; inspectors agree with these concerns. Students feel that although members of staff are willing to help them with personal problems, many would prefer to discuss such matters with their friends or parents.

58. Routine health and safety procedures are in place, although a number of specific concerns were brought to the attention of senior staff during the inspection. Although students are expected to formally register with their tutor several times a week and attend specific assemblies, students' attendance is also registered during each and every lesson. There is no system, however, for registering students who come into school to use the library or study facilities. The school therefore has no quick way of knowing exactly who is present at any given time and this could pose a problem should the school need to be evacuated at short notice.

Assessment

59. Please refer to paragraphs 28 - 31 for a detailed account of the quality of assessment procedures across the school, including the sixth form.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

60. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The leadership stems mainly from the headteacher and the head of upper school, who provide a clear educational vision of what it means to be in the sixth form. This vision reflects the school's overall aims and values. The vision is for a wide variety of courses to be offered at advanced level and for high standards to be achieved. Students are also encouraged to become mature adults who take their responsibility to the local and wider community seriously. The head of upper school has a clearly articulated philosophy and direction emerging for the post-16 provision. This has been developed in conjunction with the findings from a major survey to obtain the views of parents, teachers and students. The development of the sixth form is highlighted in the school's 2002-03 improvement plan. The priorities are identified from the results of the recent sixth form survey, commissioned by the governors, and include the planned co-operation with the local girls' grammar school to enhance and support the academic, personal and social development of students. Review and monitoring procedures are in place, but they are not sufficiently co-ordinated to ensure effective actions to improve the quality of education provided for sixth form students. A strength of the sixth form provision is the involvement of the students in the whole school community through the house system, prefect responsibilities and the Combined Cadet Force. The school is keen on this involvement and not to reduce the influence of the sixth formers on school life. The house structure, whilst providing students with a close identity with the school, also makes managing the overall sixth form provision more complex. The head of upper school has greatly improved the management of the sixth form provision and ensured greater consistency between the work of the houses and subject departments. However, some more development is still needed to ensure all students receive the same high level of support given by the most effective form tutors and subject teachers. Subsequently, the overview of the progress made by all students is not sufficiently co-ordinated despite the extensive and diplomatic efforts of the head of upper school.
61. Overall, leadership and management of sixth form study within the subject departments are satisfactory. However, there are inconsistencies within this, ranging from very good leadership and management in design and technology and geography to unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. The monitoring of the work of the departments is

variable. A common area for development in management is in evaluating the work of the departments. Much of the evaluation is done informally and without sufficient rigour. Thus, the system does not ensure consistency in teaching or identify and share strengths and areas of excellence. This results in inconsistencies within and across departments in learning and the effective use of assessment and target setting to help students improve their work. The academic and personal development of students is monitored by the heads of house providing information for students and parents about academic progress and achievement, but again there is some inconsistency of practice between houses.

62. The governors are aware of the strengths of the sixth form and are keen to support its development. The governors and the senior management team ensure that there is good financial management, with financial decision-making being closely linked to school improvement planning. The sixth form is cost-effective and the governors ensure that the principles of good value for money are applied. While governors are actively involved in helping develop and promote the sixth form, they have failed to deal with two issues raised in the report of the previous inspection. They have not addressed the need for all students to be able to take part in a daily act of worship and they do not provide a course in religious education for all sixth form students. In addition, they have been aware of under-achievement in modern foreign languages and have not ensured sufficient improvement.

Staffing

63. There is a good match of suitably qualified teachers to the sixth form curriculum and this situation has improved since the last inspection. In some subjects there are strong teams of well-qualified teachers, especially in mathematics, geography, biology, physics, business studies and design technology. The school, like many others, has struggled to fill vacancies in information and communication technology and music. The school has built up, over a period of time, effective links with teacher training institutions that have been of benefit in overcoming some of these difficulties. The technical staff are effective in supporting the teaching in such areas as science and information and communication technology. The clerical office staff, librarians and site management staff make an effective contribution to the smooth daily running of the school.
64. The school's arrangements for the induction of new staff are good. Newly qualified teachers are well supported on joining the school. There is a well-organised induction process within the school with staff being guided by a departmental mentor as well as a senior member of staff. The newly qualified teachers hold regular meetings with the school development officer and receive constructive advice on their career development.
65. The school also oversees the in-service training effectively based on the school's priorities and the individual professional needs of staff. Whole school training has recently focused on pupils' behaviour management, curriculum development and the use of computers. The arrangements for performance management are satisfactory, but are not yet adequately linked to strategies for bringing about improvement in individual teachers' work.

Resources

66. Resources for learning are good overall. Departments have sufficient resources to teach the planned curriculum. They are especially good in French and German with a wide range of resources such as videos and tapes. The school has made significant

investment in resources for information and communication technology. Even so, some departments such as mathematics, English and geography still find access to the computer facilities difficult for classes as the rooms are frequently in use. The school is aware of this problem and has plans to further increase the number of suites of computers for all subjects. Students do have opportunities to use computers in the library and elsewhere during lessons and other times. There are sufficient textbooks in most areas, but the history department has insufficient books for some aspects of the course, as numbers following the examination courses have increased. The school makes it a priority to provide textbooks for students.

67. The library is very good and has a very pleasant atmosphere. The stock of textbooks is very good, especially in English and the science subjects. It is well resourced with a wide range of reading material such as newspapers, magazines as well as compact discs, periodicals and magazines. There are also computers for accessing information through the use of information and communication technology. The students are well supported by the two librarians who can assist in a range of ways such as searches for reference material. The librarians are also effective when supporting Year 7 English lessons held in the library. There are facilities for independent learning, but these are restricted when the library is being used for whole class activities.

Accommodation

68. The accommodation is good overall with most subject areas being suited together. This makes the sharing of resources and communication between teachers easier. In French and German the accommodation is very good. However, the accommodation for mathematics is poor with rooms housed in unsuitable temporary huts. Other rooms are in need of redecoration, but the school has an on-going plan of refurbishment as seen with some of the science laboratories. Some rooms are rather small for the larger classes. The sixth form students have their own common room, but lack a dedicated room for private study. This is considered important by the students and the inspectors, as facilities for independent study would considerably enhance the students' learning. The main hall is too small to hold whole school assemblies regularly.

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

69. In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England ¹²	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	40	90		43		2.93	
Chemistry	49	82		43		2.69	
Biology	45	91		33		2.60	
Physics	36	94		56		3.44	
Design and technology	17	88		71		3.53	
Business studies	46	100		33		3.15	
Physical education	21	100		52		3.19	
Art	8	63		38		2.13	
Music	6	100		50		3.33	
Geography	44	100		55		3.59	
History	24	100		50		3.54	
Religious studies	32	97		38		2.97	
English literature	21	100		76		4.19	
French	16	88		33		2.63	
German	10	80		20		2.40	
Economics	16	81		31		2.69	
Electronics	12	100		83		4.25	
Japanese	1	100		100		5.0	
Latin	4	100		0		1.5	
Politics	20	95		45		3.1	
Russian	1	100		100		5.0	
Spanish	9	100		44		3.1	
Theatre studies	5	100		40		3.0	

¹² Comparative national results are not yet available

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	48	98		54		6.7	
Further mathematics							
Chemistry	40	90		43		5.9	
Biology	48	94		44		6.1	
Physics	36	92		53		6.9	
Design and technology	14	100		71		7.9	
Business studies	22	100		50		7.1	
Physical education	13	92		46		6.0	
Art	5	100		60		7.2	
Geography	17	100		76		7.8	
History	29	100		62		7.4	
Religious studies	9	100		78		7.8	
English literature	19	100		79		8.1	
French	5	100		80		8.0	
German	1	100		100		10.0	
Economics	12	100		33		5.5	
Electronics	6	100		100		9.3	
Latin	3	100		100		9.3	
Politics	11	100		64		7.8	
Russian	2	100		100		9.0	
Spanish	9	100		55		7.6	
Theatre studies	3	100		66		8.0	
General studies	110	89		25		5.1	

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership of the department has ensured significant staff and curriculum improvement.
- Results in external examinations are well above average.
- Teacher's excellent subject knowledge is used to stretch students to attain academic excellence.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and display great enthusiasm for the subject.
- By the end of Year 13, students are confident independent learners.
- The quality of relationships between students and with their teachers is excellent.

Areas for development

- There is insufficient monitoring of students' progress across different sets and modules in order to provide feedback to them and to ensure that the less confident are identified early and their needs met.
- The department uses a limited range of teaching styles and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool to enhance learning is underdeveloped.

70. In 2001, students' results at A level were well above national standards and continued the recent record of 100 per cent pass rate. In 2002, results were even higher, though they have not yet returned to the very high levels at the time of the last inspection, particularly in the proportion attaining higher grades. Students' standards of attainment on entry are well above those seen nationally and they maintain high levels throughout their courses, representing good achievement. Assessment data shows that students make better progress from GCSE to AS than in Year 13, in part due to the very good enrichment during Year 11 so that they are very well prepared for Year 12. Retention rates are virtually 100 per cent on courses and almost all students completing AS courses in Year 12 continue to study mathematics in Year 13. Students greatly enjoy the challenge of learning mathematics.
71. Students currently studying mathematics show equally high standards. For example, they confidently use algorithms to solve problems of roots and use algebra, trigonometry and calculus to solve complex problems. This is helped by the high quality note taking and worked examples which students produce, so that they have a secure basis from which to tackle less familiar problems. The majority of students can recall information from other aspects of mathematics, such as using trigonometry when solving differentiation problems. The few who cannot do this make less progress.
72. Teaching is good overall. The atmosphere in lessons reflects the very positive relationships that have been forged, students' respect for their teachers, their exemplary attitudes to learning and their determination to succeed. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they use to anticipate students' problems and to talk through exemplars that address these. Teachers involve students in discussion and in the presentation of their solutions to the class and students co-operate both in and out of class to find successful approaches. Teachers challenge them about the various methods used to solve problems and why they work, so students begin to

evolve a greater insight into understanding how and why these methods do or do not work. For example, in a Year 13 lesson a student suggested an approach to a complex problem. He was asked to work this through on the board until he and his peers could see that it would not help to solve the given problem. Students are encouraged to mark their own work and to seek help from their teachers as necessary. They thus develop well as independent learners. Teachers mark some assignments and provide guidance to help the students to solve the problems where they have not succeeded. Individual progress can be masked by the extent of peer co-operation in working on assignments. Students who can progress more quickly are allowed to study in their own time, marking each chapter for themselves and using their teachers for tutorial support. This is particularly effective for the confident and high attainers. Less confident students would benefit from more frequent formal assessments and feedback on how well they are doing. Lessons proceed at a very good pace and some students find this, and the degree of independence, daunting. These students would benefit from a greater variety of teaching styles. ICT is underdeveloped in the department as a tool to enhance learning.

73. The head of department provides very good leadership of the department and has ensured significant staff and curriculum improvement since her appointment. Overall, management of the department is good. The work of the large number of teachers is monitored through observation and work sampling and there is a planned programme of professional development to address departmental and individual needs. The department meets formally and informally and there is a weekly briefing sheet. This in part overcomes the disadvantage of split accommodation. Formal systems for assessing and tracking students' overall progress are under-developed. The department makes insufficient use of the large amount of data available to set targets, identify under-achievement at an early stage and take prompt action to address this. The department is aware these are areas for development. Schemes of work set out clear expectations across the curriculum. However, students' experience is dependent on which set they are in. Gifted mathematicians are stretched through mathematics competitions, challenges and Olympiads. Although the department sets very high standards of entry to the course, some students are less confident mathematicians and less attention is paid by some teachers to identifying and providing for their needs.
74. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. High standards have been maintained, work is marked more fully and the rooms are enlivened with displays of students' work. Underneath this display, the accommodation is still unsatisfactory as identified at the time of the last inspection.

SCIENCES

The focus was on physics and biology, but chemistry and electronics were also sampled. In A-level chemistry, the department's 2001 results were the best since 1998 and were above the national average. The 2002 results produced by a larger number of students show an improved pass rate at 100 per cent, although the average points score and percentage A/B passes showed a decrease. These results were broadly in line with expectations based on previous GCSE results. One lesson was observed. The very good teaching included a very thorough explanation of displacement reactions and encouraged students' participation. The questioning of students was very effective and ensures that all make very good progress in their learning and understanding of oxidation and reduction principles.

The overall quality of provision in electronics is outstanding. An excellent engineering lesson was sampled. Students received very good individual support for their interesting circuitry projects, having first planned their ideas on computer. Students quickly learned from their mistakes, with excellent guidance. The teacher's expertise helped students gain top grades

of A and B in the recent trial AS examination, well above school and national averages, continuing the very high trend from previous years. Students' progress is reinforced by the considerable time they spend at home trying out ideas for building their own circuit boards. Students are very well motivated and have excellent skills in planning and carrying out their ideas. Most students try out additional circuits they have chosen to design, using their own initiative.

Biology

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

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attainment of students overall, at A level, is above national average. • There are very good relationships between teachers and students. • Students have very good attitudes to the subject. • Teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified. • Lessons are well planned and delivered in an effective manner.
Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide further support to those students who are under-achieving. • Increase the use of computers in order to widen the range of teaching styles.

75. In 2001 the GCE A-level results were above the national average and were at an even higher level in 2002. Results are higher than the last inspection, but there has been a downward trend over the past few years. The department has some individual student data from 2002 that clearly demonstrates that over half of the students reach their potential grades and in many cases exceed them. However, there is a significant number of slightly lower attaining students who do not do as well as they should. Attainment at AS level is similar to that at A level and this is due to the fact that almost all students continue the biology course into Year 13. Overall, achievement in both Years 12 and 13 is good, with the highest attaining students achieving much better than the lower attaining students.

76. Standards of work seen were above the expected national average in Years 12 and 13. Year 12 students showed a good understanding of the process of incorporation of genetic material into bacteria. Year 13 pupils showed that the standard of their work was above the expected national average. These students described the structure and function of complex biological substances with confidence and in accurate detail. Year 13 students also performed complex investigations into enzyme action and explained their findings, based on their scientific knowledge of protein structure.

77. Teaching is good overall with some very good teaching being observed in lessons. This results in most students learning the topics effectively and making good progress in lessons. The lessons observed were taught with enthusiasm and by teachers who had very good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and resourced. This gives them pace and a structure that maintains the interest and involvement of all students. Students answered the questions asked of them with confidence and in detail due to the skilled manner in which teachers managed the class discussions. Assessments and homework are marked in detail, with many constructive comments that help the students improve.

78. There are very good relationships between the teachers and students as well as between the students themselves in both Year 12 and Year 13. The attitudes and

behaviour of the students are very good and this gives rise to a very pleasant co-operative working atmosphere in lessons. Teachers are supportive of the students and ensure they understand the work covered by asking well-structured specific questions throughout lessons. When students do not fully understand a topic the teachers offer further explanation with patience. In discussions, students appreciated the support and guidance given by the teachers and the fact that the teachers were prepared to help and assist.

79. The leadership and management of the department are good. The recently appointed head of department is determined to raise attainment to an even higher level by ensuring all students reach their potential. There has been good progress made since the last inspection due to the improvement in attainment and in the quality of teaching. The teachers are well qualified and effectively supported by a specialist biology technician. The department is aware of the need further to enhance the assessment of students' progress, especially the relatively lower attaining ones. This should enable suitable support to be given to any students who start to fall below their potential grade. It is planned to introduce a process during scheduled departmental meetings that will allow all staff to share a common approach on expectations. This should improve the monitoring of teaching and sharing good practice amongst the team. The department is also aware of the need to incorporate techniques that will support learning, such as extending the use of relevant computer software within lessons.

Physics

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

Strengths

- The teachers' dedication, enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge.
- The consistently very high academic standards achieved by the department.
- The excellent working relationships between the students and teachers.
- The desire of the students to learn and to obtain high standards.

Areas for development

- The further use of assessment to monitor students' progress, assist in the setting of students' targets and guide planning of the curriculum.
- Enhanced levels of support for students who are likely to achieve less well.
- Sharing of good practice, both within the department and with other areas in the school.

80. Results obtained in the 2001 A level examinations were well above the national average for the subject. These have remained steady at this high level in recent years. The 2002 results were of an equally high standard and a 100 per cent pass rate was obtained. The AS results for the one-year course are also very good. The vast majority of students generally performed better in physics compared to their other subjects. The good grades achieved by the students reflect the balanced science BB grade entry requirement for the physics courses. These physics grades are generally in excess of those predicted from the students' previous GCSE results. The numbers of students studying the subject have decreased since 1998 and are now less than those for biology and chemistry. The current retention rate for students continuing to study physics into Year 13 is high.
81. The overall quality of work seen in Years 12 and 13 is above the national average and there is no noticeable difference between different groups of students. The performance in lessons, especially from the higher attaining students, is impressive and reflects the high expectations of the teachers. The students have a very good

understanding of the subject and a positive attitude to the course. They find the subject to be both intellectually stimulating and challenging. They appear to thrive in the learning environment created by the enthusiastic and very knowledgeable teachers. An example of this was in a Year 13 lesson on explaining Feynman diagrams in particle physics. Coursework is of a particularly high standard. It is well researched, competently performed and students articulate their investigations well.

82. The overall high quality, brisk pace and thoroughness of teaching are a particular strength of the physics department and students learn quickly as a result. Exposition is clear and is coupled with careful development of the main teaching points. This is complemented by good use of question and answer techniques to test knowledge and understanding. The high level of students' motivation to achieve success and the development of individual learning skills add to the learning environment. A variety of teaching styles, pace and effectiveness of lesson content was observed. Insufficient opportunity is planned for staff to discuss different approaches to teaching and learning, both within the physics and the science departments.
83. Homework is well planned to reinforce the teaching. The department's practice of reviewing the majority of this in class, as opposed to formal marking, does not fully meet individual needs. It also fails to provide adequate assessment information for future use. However, it provides a good learning opportunity for the whole class and the teachers use such time well. Where marking is undertaken, it is done thoroughly and includes helpful comments as well as appropriate levels of encouragement, though is not graded. The progress of individual students is monitored, chiefly through the use of tests and module grades. This data is used in the school's regular assessment reports. However, there is little discussion with individual students in reviewing their progress or of the provision of minimum target grades. The lack of such formal assessment data also limits the effectiveness of planning further learning requirements.
84. The modern syllabus that is followed adequately addresses the development of the students' 'key skills'. The high quality of the teaching further enhances such areas. As a result the students are numerate, literate, eloquent, co-operative and well-rounded mature individuals. The use of computers is encouraged for independent web research and background information and all students have a copy of the course CD for private use. Some students indicate that they would like more use of information and communication technology in lessons. This relates to the use of data loggers and sensors by students and also the use made of 'multi-media' type presentations to enhance the learning. Although the department is well resourced, it is accepted that difficulties exist concerning the current availability of science computers and access to computer suites, together with network issues for physics programs.
85. The leadership and management of the physics department are good. The organisation of the courses is based on the suggested scheme of work developed by the syllabus. Levels of equipment are adequate, but continued expenditure is needed to provide fully for the requirements of the new syllabus. Since the last inspection, relevant issues have been addressed, although the department still provides few extra-curricular activities, apart from encouraging students to attend university 'open days' and 'revision conferences'. The previous high standards have been maintained and the students show good progression. The physics department has its own technician who serves the department well. The dedicated physics laboratories meet the needs of the A level course in terms of accommodation and areas to conduct investigations.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on design and technology.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths.

- Leadership and management of the department are very good, resulting in improving standards and high achievement by students in examinations.
- Hardworking and committed teachers work very well as a team to teach design and technology effectively.
- The very good relationships and the excellent attitudes students have towards the subject create a very good learning atmosphere and enjoyment of the subject.
- The very good examination results and high quality and imaginative work produced by students.
- The very good individual support given to students enables them to take responsibility for developing their ideas and improving their work.

Areas for development

- Access to workshop resources to support the students who are hindered by constraints of the timetable.

86. The GCE AS and A level courses inspected were product design in graphics, resistant materials and systems. Standards achieved in the AS and A level examinations in 2001 were well above national and the school averages. In 2002, standards were still well above national expectations with an increase in the number of students achieving A and B grades.
87. Achievement in lessons and in work seen is very good with some examples of excellent project work and design folders. Students use primary and secondary research techniques effectively to explore a range of ideas and develop their final design. The very good knowledge of existing products, extensive understanding of materials and their functions, coupled with creative flair and aesthetic sensitivity, results in students producing imaginative and high quality work. During the product analysis stage students use prototype models very effectively to identify and solve production problems and display high levels of persistence in order to find solutions and modify work in order to achieve the desired outcome. For example, in a Year 13 lesson students were applying a range of practical skills with knowledge of materials and an understanding of ergonomics to produce an extensive range of final products.
88. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with hardworking and committed teachers sharing their very good knowledge and expertise with students. This enables them to learn effectively and develop a depth of understanding of design and technology to achieve very high standards. Teachers provide very good individual support and guidance at the same time as allowing students opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and develop an independence to explore and develop their work. This independent approach to learning is hindered by difficulties students have in accessing the necessary equipment due to timetabling issues.
89. Relationships are very good and attitudes in lessons and to the subject are excellent. This creates a very positive learning environment and enthusiasm for the subject. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Staffing difficulties

have been managed well to minimise any adverse effect on students' achievement. There is a strong team approach to the work of the department with all staff committed to high standards and exploring ways to sustain and improve the provision within this subject. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies and economics.

Business

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

Strengths.

- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- Improvements in the standards of attainment at AS and A level in 2002.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and commitment to improving standards.
- Students' very good knowledge and understanding of business concepts and organisations.
- The good attitudes students have to their learning, supporting good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies to develop students' analytical and evaluative skills.
- The use made of assessment information for reviewing students' progress and setting targets for improvement.
- Students' application of information and communication technology (ICT) in the business environment.

90. The department offers business studies at AS and A level. The number of students choosing to take the subject at AS and A level has increased with the majority of students successfully completing their chosen course. The department offers this subject to students who have not undertaken a business studies course before.
91. Standards in A level and AS business studies in 2001 were barely satisfactory. The department experienced staffing difficulties that affected the standards in that year. However, the results in 2002 show an improvement with many students gaining B and C grades at A level with good achievement when compared to their overall attainment at GCSE. Standards of attainment seen during the inspection were good and sometimes very good, particularly in Year 13. The good achievement is due in part to the well-planned and organised teaching which enables students in Year 12 to develop an understanding of a range of business techniques and concepts. This provides a good foundation for success at AS and A2 level.
92. Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge that they share effectively with students. They also provide good opportunities for students to develop, consolidate and apply knowledge and understanding of business concepts and organisations into their coursework. They do this through a good combination of input from the teacher and opportunities for students to work independently. For example, in a Year 13 lesson students have an effectively taught session that provides them with good knowledge for discussion and essay work on human resource strategies and their use in business organisations. Students use technical and extended language very well in their coursework and display very good knowledge and understanding of the world of business in discussions.

93. Students' ability to analyse and interpret information to formulate judgements is less well developed. The department is aware of this and is developing strategies to help students become more competent in this area. Students' use of ICT is satisfactory, but the extended knowledge, understanding and application of ICT within the business environment is limited by access to the appropriate networked equipment.
94. Students are supported to improve their work through the developing review and target setting procedures that have been introduced in the department. This gives students valuable information about their performance and helps them set achievable and challenging targets.
95. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear direction and this is shared with members of the department. On taking up the post, the head of department identified the strengths and areas for development and put in place a range of procedures that have supported the improvement in standards. The actions needed to promote and sustain improvements are clearly articulated, but are not as yet identified clearly within the departmental improvement plan. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and consequently students develop very good attitudes.
- Teachers have very good relationships with students.
- Standards of attainment are average, but improving.

Areas for development

- Links with industry are underdeveloped.
- Access to computers is insufficient for students to develop and use information and communication technology skills in lessons.
- Lower attaining students do not receive sufficient support in lessons.
- There are not enough timed essays to develop students' attainment.

96. Economics is a popular subject at AS/A2 level and well established. Results for the last three years show an upward trend, although the ability of groups fluctuates. There is no GCSE in Years 10 and 11 in economics.
97. Standards are broadly average and are improving. Results for the 16 A Level students entered in 2001 were close to the national average, although below the school average. The proportion of high grades was near the school and national average. However, A2 results were not as good as they should have been in relation to students' high average GCSE points scores on entering the course. In the first year of the A2 examination in 2002, all 11 students achieved above the expected average, but the number of students gaining top grades was considerably less than in 2001. There were no A grades and over a third of students achieved below teachers' expectations based on their GCSE grades. Significant steps have been taken to solve this problem and work seen in lessons shows improved standards, which are above average expectations.
98. AS level results show a drop in the pass rate from all passing in 2001 to 12 of the 15 students entered passing in 2002, but higher grades increased to nearly a third of the entry. Achievement from GCSE results was better in AS than in A2, but several

students still performed below the teachers' expectations. Three students who were ungraded were allowed on to the course because of the department's open entry policy, and did not intend to move on to A2. Most students remain on the courses they started and more than a half are predicted to gain top grades in A2, similar to the national average.

99. A considerable improvement was noted during the inspection in lessons and work seen, with a good deal of work above average in quality and, on occasions, well above in A2 classes. AS work is of average quality at this fairly early stage of the course. Students can compare abnormal and normal profit and develop good skills in evaluating good and bad features of monopolies. A2 students showed well above average skills in drawing graphs to represent different effects of supply policies and several students fluently described the role of state benefits in increasing incentives and freeing up the economic market. Some lower-attaining students struggled without extra support to explain how positive externalities operated in terms of benefits outweighing costs. Overall, fewer students are under-achieving now in relation to their potential due to better monitoring of their progress by staff.
100. Teaching is good overall. In lessons seen, teachers had very good relationships with students and showed very good subject expertise. This helped students develop very good attitudes to their work and they supported each other very well. Higher attaining students were encouraged to develop their answers to teachers' probing questions. In a very good A2 lesson the teacher raised the level of challenge significantly by engaging students in sharp, critical discussion about the links between supply side policies and neo-classicist theories, and helped them consolidate their rapid learning by drawing and evaluating supply curves from their memories. Sometimes, lower attaining students who struggled with new concepts were not always given enough help in drafting answers to exercises.
101. Teachers use sound methods overall, but, because of a lack of computer resources, students are not given enough opportunities to use information and communication technology to develop data analysis and present work in lessons. They do not gain enough first-hand knowledge from visits, speakers and work shadowing. Students' essays are regularly marked, to examining board requirements, and students are given constructive comments to help them improve. Timed essay practice in lessons to improve examination technique is too infrequent.
102. The subject is well led and managed by an experienced teacher, who, since his fairly recent appointment, has begun to make significant changes to improve standards. Schemes of work are now in place. Better monitoring of students' progress to identify under-achievement relative to target grades is being introduced. Plans for the future are realistic and visionary, and prospects of further improvement are good, to build on the satisfactory progress from the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, so students develop very good attitudes to the subject.
- Teachers have good relationships with students and support them well.
- Students' coursework projects are interesting and many are linked to local organisations.

Areas for development

- The teacher, an experienced non-specialist, is over-stretched when managing coursework.
- Weaker students do not practise their spreadsheet skills enough and require additional support.
- Few students have GCSE qualifications in the subject upon which to build.

103. The subject has been introduced this year at AS level. Computer studies, run for several years, was discontinued in 2001. The former subject co-ordinator left, but the school hopes to make a new appointment shortly. In the meantime, the subject is being taught and well managed by a senior manager who, though not a subject specialist, has made considerable efforts to prepare for the new course. About a half of current AS students intend to proceed to A2. Very few have a previous GCSE qualification in ICT.

104. There are no published results, as students have not yet taken any external examinations. In lessons and work seen students made good progress and their attainment was broadly as expected nationally at this stage, though only a small proportion (about a quarter) were working at higher grades of A and B. They had previously obtained a GCSE qualification in ICT. All students produced good examples of macros, well applied to a theatre booking scenario. Most, but not all, of the students who had not previously taken ICT at GCSE used time in lessons and at home well to acquire new database skills. Several good examples of database searches were seen. A small number of the weaker students did not practise their spreadsheet skills sufficiently, lacked full knowledge of the potential of formulae and would have benefited from additional support.

105. Examples of coursework projects, partially completed, showed quite a good range of topics, nearly a half of which were linked to local real users. This is an area for further development, particularly if students are moving on to A2 examinations. A gifted student had clearly specified the software required to computerise the records for his youth club. Another higher-attaining student had identified a number of problems faced by his karate club and suggested a number of clear computerised routines to streamline the club's financial control. Other student projects included a video games shop that sought to expand and a sandwich shop that wished to computerise its stock control. Some students' specifications were too brief and lacked sufficient detail, for example in business uses of stock control.

106. Teaching in the small sample of two lessons seen was good. The teacher had a good relationship with his students and managed their coursework projects effectively. During lessons he monitored individual students' progress well and helped them to deal with any problems that arose. His teaching methods involve an input of theory followed by opportunities for students to apply it to different subject contexts. Students have worked in groups of four to produce Power Point presentations on a business idea.

These lessons were not seen, but, in the sample, students' coursework projects were well supported.

107. As the sole teacher of two groups of able students, the majority of whom have had no previous ICT qualifications, the subject co-ordinator has been considerably over-stretched, as he has too large an amount of coursework to monitor in addition to his other duties within the school as a senior manager. Some weaker students require additional support. Leadership of ICT in the sixth form is satisfactory. The school expects to appoint a specialist subject co-ordinator for ICT; however, strategies for sixth form subject development are not yet sufficiently detailed.
108. Management of the AS course to date is good given the current staffing situation. Several good features were observed: a thoroughly constructed scheme of work and well-planned lessons to meet AS/A2 syllabus requirements. Rooms, computer equipment and software programs are well used and technical support is very good. It is not possible to evaluate improvement since the last inspection, as computer studies, a quite different subject, was then in operation. ICT as a subject has a good capacity for further improvement.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in examinations.
- Good teaching and learning contribute to the good standards achieved.
- The department provides a very good range of curriculum opportunities and students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- There is good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for development

- The department should continue to raise attainment of the most able students by making use of the assessment information available to set targets of achievement.

109. Standards in the 2002 AS and A2 examinations were good overall. However, the proportion of students achieving the higher grades was below expectation given their prior attainments. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, but those students who join the school for the first time in the sixth form do not always achieve such good examination results as those who come through the school. During the inspection, standards in Year 13 were above the national average, which represents good achievement for the great majority of students. There is evidence of improving trends within the department.
110. By the end of Year 13 most students make good progress in developing knowledge, understanding and the skills of practical performance. In Year 12 they show good knowledge and understanding of the historical context of modern sport, for example its impact upon society. Particularly pleasing are the standards achieved by many students in independently compiling assignments on a range of topics such as the impact of technology on various sports and the differences between skill, ability and

technique. Students collaborate well in practical tasks and develop the ability to evaluate their performance, for example when carrying out a fitness test.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is good and builds upon the very positive attitudes that students have towards the subject. A particular strength is the encouragement that teachers give to developing students' collaborative and independent learning skills, as when Year 12 students carried out an anaerobic fitness test. Students rise well to the challenge and consequently make good gains in understanding as well as developing positive social skills. Teachers display good subject knowledge in the quality of their explanation and questioning, as demonstrated in a Year 13 lesson on the implications of using ergogenic aids. Occasionally the teaching does not focus sufficiently on encouraging students to debate rather than answer directly in response to the teacher. Teachers provide good feedback to students on how well they are doing, showing them how they can improve their work. They also use resources imaginatively, as in a Year 12 lesson when students carried out a series of 'blind' exercises that helped them appreciate the relationship of sensory perception to performance in sport. Insufficient use is made of assessment information to challenge students to gain the very highest examination grades.
112. Leadership and management are good. The department monitors progress well and makes effective use of the very good facilities. It also provides a very good range of sporting opportunities for students both in recreational activities for the whole of both year groups and in extra-curricular sport. The school is successful in this; for example, they have achieved well in national and regional rugby competitions. The department successfully encourages students to use information and communication technology in producing coursework and in recording and evaluating performance. In the previous report there was no judgment on the quality of sixth form physical education apart from a reference to the high take up of sporting opportunities and, therefore, no judgment is possible on improvement since the previous inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

113. No work was inspected because the school currently offers no subject in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art was sampled in this curriculum area. The provision in art is good. After a decline in numbers over several years, a small entry achieved good results last year. Numbers have picked up this year and standards remain high. Teaching is very good and students have very positive attitudes to the subject.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography and history, but religious education was also sampled. The quality of provision in religious education is very good. The high quality teaching results in

very high standards, with a 100 per cent pass rate in 2001 at A2 level. In 2002, students at A2 level achieved very well, given their standards when they started the course. At AS level, achievement was in line with expectations.

Geography

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Students' attitudes are excellent.
- The very good management has brought about an improvement in results.
- The very good curriculum provides extensive opportunities for learning.

Areas for development

- Students' assessments are not yet sufficiently well used to set targets for individuals and the department.
- Planning lessons to meet the needs of all students.
- Accommodation has shortcomings and some classrooms are too small for large groups.

114. In total, 68 students are studying geography at AS and A2, with two groups present in Years 12 and 13. Very few students drop the subject between AS and A2.

115. Standards overall are above average. In 2001, A level results in the A to B range were below the national average after being above and well above average in previous years. Results in the A to E range were in line with the national average. Following a change of syllabus to one more suited to the aptitudes of the majority of the students, results rose dramatically in 2002. They were above expectations for that particular group of students and the work of current students suggests that high standards will be sustained. In 2002 the majority of AS level entrants gained results that were above expectations for that particular group, based on their GCSE results.

116. The value that is added to GCSE standards means that achievement by the end of Year 13 is good. Because of the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and the very interesting way this is conveyed, students learn very well. Year 13 students showed an excellent understanding of the principles involved in the global distribution of modern industry. A Year 12 group was learning very well about sustainable methods of improving living conditions in cities in less economically developed countries. Most students produce a very high standard of notes, diagrams and essays. They collect their own data in the field and present it to support sophisticated geographical hypotheses, for example local studies relating to urban development. The comparatively less successful students have missed some detail and examples from their work and sometimes make unsubstantiated statements related to their hypotheses. No students were seen with special educational needs. Gifted and talented students progress very well and are on track to attain the highest grades.

117. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers plan lesson activities so that students are challenged to develop their thinking skills at every opportunity. For example, in a lesson about boreal forests the teacher used students' existing knowledge to build a picture of the problems faced by plant life in semi-arctic regions and challenged them to design a tree that would be perfect for the conditions. Key vocabulary was constantly emphasised and homework very well used to extend the work done in class. The requirements of the examinations are made clear to

students at every opportunity. A comparative weakness is some planning that does not allow for the range of students' needs in the class. Students use Internet sites for research and further independent learning. They use spreadsheet programmes to process their fieldwork data and they word-process their coursework expertly.

118. The students have very positive views of the subject and the quality of the teaching they receive. They thoroughly enjoy geography and several of them are studying it because it will contribute to their chosen careers.
119. The subject is very well managed by a head of department who was appointed 18 months ago and has worked well to update syllabuses, schemes of work and teaching styles. A very good range of learning opportunities is provided, including good fieldwork expeditions and specially produced coursework and study guides. Students' progress is well assessed; very good marking gives plenty of information for improvement. However, assessment results are not yet used for target setting either for groups or for individuals, with the result that students do not always know what grades they are likely to achieve. Accommodation is not good, with insufficient storage and office space and some classrooms that are too small for large groups.
120. Improvement since the last report has been good. Examination results have improved and curriculum provision has been improved. The subject has the capacity to continue as a strong and successful sixth form department.

History

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

Strengths

- Well above average attainment as a result of the very good teaching and learning.
- A very good curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities.
- Students' excellent attitudes enable them to gain the maximum benefit from their lessons.

Areas for development

- Students' assessments are not yet used to set targets for individuals and for the department.
- Accommodation has shortcomings.

121. Some 70 students are studying history at AS and A level with two classes in each of Years 12 and 13. The number of students dropping the subject between AS and A2 level is very low. Standards are well above average. In 2001, A level results were above the national average and well above in the three preceding years. The 2002 results show good improvement on this, after re-marking of the papers by the examination board. At A level the majority of students gained results that added value to their GCSE results. At AS level the results were in line with expectations for that particular group and three students attained full marks in some sections of the papers. The work seen during the inspection indicates that previous high standards are being sustained.
122. The value added to GCSE standards means that achievement by the end of Year 13 is good. Because of the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and the very interesting and stimulating way this is conveyed, students learn very well. Year 13 students showed an excellent understanding of the differences between physical and moral Chartism and Year 12 students had a very good grasp of the events governing the rise

of Fascism in Italy. Students write essays and analyse source material with a mature level of perception. They understand and quote the views of different historians and formulate and express their own opinions clearly. The only comparative weakness is that some are not able to organise their time effectively to meet the heavy demands made on them by this level of work which can lead to them failing to achieve their true potential. No students were seen with special educational needs. Gifted and talented students are amongst the best learners and are set to attain the highest grades.

123. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students quickly become independent learners because teachers use every opportunity to challenge them and make sure they think for themselves. Expectations are always high. For example, during a series of excellent presentations by students who had researched the lives of the leaders of the Chartist Movement, the teacher insisted through frequent questioning that they clarified their statements and made no unsupported assertions. Work is always well-marked, giving maximum guidance for improvement and also concentrating on the style and flow of students' written language. Information and communication technology is well used as a tool for research and also to word-process students' work. Teachers know their students well and are aware of the progress they are making. However, assessment results are not used as a basis for setting targets for groups or for individuals, so students are not always clear about the grades they are expected to attain.
124. The students have positive views of the subject and find their studies rewarding. The courses have lived up to their expectations. Their attitudes in class are excellent, as are relationships between students and teachers that engender an excellent atmosphere for learning.
125. Leadership and management are good. The long-term absence of a member of staff has generated a lot of extra work, but has not been allowed to jeopardise standards. The accommodation is not good, with too little office and storage space and some classrooms that are too small for the larger groups. The range of learning opportunities is very good, offering some additional tutorials for students who are in danger of falling behind, lecture visits by eminent academics and close links with the local Historical Association. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with high standards maintained and a change towards teaching styles that foster independent learning skills. The department has the potential to continue and develop further its strong and successful sixth form provision.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus in this curriculum area was on English, French and German but the work in Spanish and Latin was also sampled. The provision in **Spanish** is satisfactory. In Year 12 students are not achieving as well as they should, given their GCSE results. Students achieve good examination results in Year 13 because they are well taught and are made to work hard. They have a particular strength in speaking fluently and confidently by the end of Year 13. The provision in **Latin** is satisfactory. The few students who are entered for this examination achieve satisfactory standards because they are adequately prepared for the demands of the examination. Students make better progress in Year 13.

English

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

Strengths

- Students achieve high standards.
- The depth of teachers' knowledge promotes great enthusiasm for the subject.
- The range of teaching strategies is developing to meet a widening range of students' needs.

Areas for development

- Fully identify and share the range of strengths within the teaching team.
- Strategies to help the less motivated students to achieve higher standards.

126. Almost 80 students take the GCE AS and A level courses offered in English Literature and the numbers opting for the subject have doubled in the last year. Standards achieved in GCE AS and A level examinations are very high. They have been well above the national average for the last four years and have maintained the high standards seen in the previous inspection. Students do very well, building on their already high standards at GCSE. The department consistently achieves higher grades in English than in most other A level subjects. Retention rates and attendance are high.

127. The observation of work during the inspection confirms these standards. Students' attainment is well above average, particularly in the depth of their analysis of texts. Students reach high standards in extended critical writing and have an assured command of the language of criticism. Other written skills enable them to adopt the style of writers they are studying and so explore their ideas and characters, for example by devising an alternative ending for a novel. The majority of students maintain a very high output of written assignments. However, a small number who are enrolled on the course are less effectively motivated and find the workload difficult to sustain.

128. Students have well developed personal views of the texts they study and are confident to explain writers' intentions and to evaluate their skill. In one example, Year 12 students debated the significance of religious vocabulary in a modern novel. The argument was well informed and showed a very good grasp of the themes and references within the text. In this and other discussions students listened very well. They were open minded – ready to be persuaded – and they evaluated other people's contributions carefully. As a result, discussion was a very effective way of deepening their understanding of concepts, techniques and philosophies.

129. The achievement of AS and A level students is very good. The demands within lessons are intense and the majority of students respond very well. Consequently, they make the transition from GCSE very quickly. Students in Year 12 develop a detailed knowledge of their texts so that they can justify their interpretations by ready reference down to individual words or phrases. They quickly learn to assimilate the views of authoritative critics and to compare different interpretations.

130. The teaching of English is good overall. Some teachers demonstrate a scholarly knowledge of the subject that has been enhanced by extensive experience. They have high expectations that challenge every student. Others bring an innovative range of teaching and learning strategies. In one lesson, for example, students were invited to extend their study by watching video clips from contrasting interpretations of Hamlet. The extracts were accessible via the teacher's website. This complementary range of

skills leaves the team poised for further development by sharing and extending their individual practice. Planning is usually very thorough. Teachers find stimulating ways of presenting and exploring the texts. They are particularly careful to allow sufficient scope for the most competent students to use their own initiative and personal perspective. This maintains their very high levels of enthusiasm for the subject and contributes significantly to the proportion of higher grades that students achieve. Some teachers are less assured and skilled in dealing with students who do not share their enthusiasm or who are less motivated or distracted by other concerns. Teachers promote informed debate and are skilled in questioning to extend the understanding of the most competent students. However, the less motivated students are sometimes being left behind by the pace at which ideas develop.

131. Teachers provide very clear guidance on individual research – again developing independent learning. They supplement classroom activities with regular written assignments that offer scope for students to organise and refine their own views. They mark written work thoroughly and their comments support students to develop well-organised and well-substantiated arguments. Teachers use their assessments to ensure that students know how well they are doing and the majority of students feel well supported. When assessments show that students are not keeping up with the intensive pace of learning there are insufficient alternative strategies to support them. Additional activities such as theatre visits and conferences enhance classroom learning. There is a well-stocked library to support research and teachers are readily available to give additional help and guidance.
132. The leadership and management of English are good. A new head of department came to the school at the start of the year. He has already gained a clear understanding of the strengths within the team. He is fostering a climate of mutual support and discussion that has already led to developments in teaching practice. He has made an overdue start on using assessment data and information to anticipate and evaluate individual achievements. This is beginning to enhance the already established process of reviewing the team's performance.

French

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

Strengths

- Students in the current Year 13 have developed the ability to speak with confidence and argue their case convincingly and persuasively.
- Teachers use recent and relevant resources well in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not given sufficient guidance on structuring their writing or how to draft it and in Year 12 it is often full of basic grammatical errors.
- Students, especially those in Year 12, do not always complete the work that is set as some find it too easy and others too difficult.
- Students do not read extensively outside the classroom.
- Leadership is unsatisfactory. There is no one person teaching French who has overall responsibility for providing an oversight and ensuring that the weaknesses are identified and addressed.
- Using the information available from the assessments of students' performance to raise standards.

133. In 2001 students achieved results in the A level examination that were above the national average and results in the AS level were around the national figure. In 2002 students attained A level results that were slightly better, but the AS results declined. Students performed as well as expected at A level, given their results at GCSE in both years, but did not do as well in the AS examination.
134. The number of students who started the French course at AS in the current Year 12 was 19, of whom 16 are still studying for the AS. For the current Year 13, 20 students started the course; three students left during the year and seven are currently studying for the A level. In the previous year there had been a very significant number of students who left the AS course before the end of the year and only five continued to A level. This a disappointing level of examination entry, especially considering the school has Language College status.
135. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that students currently in the sixth form are attaining standards that are above the national average overall. They are achieving satisfactory standards. By the end of Year 12, their spoken language is good and for some of the highest attainers it is excellent. Students practise with the foreign language assistant in order to improve their spoken work and get frequent opportunities in class to talk about issues such as adolescence and the transport system in France. They understand videos and tapes well on these matters and often express their own points of view. Students are beginning to read beyond the texts studied in class, but this is an area that the teachers have correctly identified as in need of further work. Students' written work develops more slowly as they progress through the course, often because their grammatical knowledge is weak and they do not have a wide enough range of expressions. In Year 12 some struggle with expressing themselves in a more sophisticated manner or at any length in writing. Several relatively lower attaining students make basic grammatical errors of gender and tense. The department does not have successful strategies to motivate these students always to hand in their work on time and complete longer pieces of writing. Students use dictionaries and other reference materials well when told to do so.
136. By the end of Year 13 most students present their arguments clearly and accurately and have developed a persuasive and confident style when speaking. Many students have benefited from trips and work experience abroad and return with improved spoken skills. Students in Year 13 are making good progress, they understand discussions in French on topics such as politics and racism and they argue their case convincingly. They study some works of literature and show a good understanding of the main themes. Students who have English as an additional language make good progress, as they are committed linguists who often have a very good level of French before embarking on the course.
137. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory and during the inspection all lessons contained many positive features. One of the positive aspects is that lessons are well-organised and allow students to build up their understanding of both the factual content of the topic and the vocabulary and structures to be able to speak about it fluently. Teachers transmit their knowledge of France and the language well. They use current materials to good effect; for example, in one lesson students had to understand recent television news broadcasts on everything from a skiing accident to the political situation in Iraq.
138. In Year 12, the course is planned so that students cover less complex topics such as the role of the family and the education system in France before moving on to more difficult areas such as the effects of advertising and the role of the media. In Year 12,

key grammatical points and vocabulary are revised at the beginning of the course so that all students have the opportunity to plug gaps in their knowledge, but this does sometimes mean that more able students mark time. As the course progresses the work becomes much more demanding and it is at this point that some of the less motivated students drop out or make insufficient progress as the support is withdrawn.

139. The marking of written work is satisfactory, errors are signalled and suggestions are usually made to students about how they might improve both content and style. However, teachers do not have adequate strategies to ensure students heed the advice and the same mistakes occur repeatedly. This tendency is especially marked with the less motivated students.
140. Students work hard during lessons and complete a lot of work, especially in Year 13 when they are well prepared for the examination. They are, however, less willing to use the extra reading and listening materials that are available, such as access to the foreign television channels, to enable them to make progress outside the classroom. The lessons often concentrate on oral discussion, which contributes to the high standards that students are achieving in this area, but this is sometimes at the expense of written work. Students are not given sufficient guidance on structuring their writing or how to draft it. Several students said they found the work too easy or too difficult. The inspectors agree, as work is not sufficiently planned to meet the differing needs of students within the group.
141. Currently, information and communication technology is used during some lessons, particularly for revising grammar, but more frequently students are encouraged to use the Internet in their free time to research topics. Students use dictionaries and other reference materials well when told to do so, but a few students have difficulty referring to notes they have made on grammar, for example, because they do not always file their work carefully and teachers do not keep a regular check on this.
142. The leadership of the sixth form course is unsatisfactory. There is no one person teaching French who has overall responsibility for providing an oversight and ensuring that any needs are identified and addressed. Much of the monitoring is informal and there is not a clear vision for improving the current situation. There is, for example, little analysis of the information available from assessment of students' performance. This means that strengths and weaknesses are not identified and students are not set specific targets. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory as the overall provision has not improved and the number of students studying French at A level has declined.

German

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

Strengths

- The highest attaining students in the current Year 13 are making good progress.
- Most students benefit from spending time abroad and return with improved spoken skills.

Areas for development

- Lower achieving students are not given enough support to help them improve their writing.
- The quality of teaching. Lessons are not sufficiently planned; students are not prepared well for examinations; teachers do not always ensure that homework is regularly completed or marked.
- The use of assessment information, as very few students in Year 12 were aware of how they were doing or what they needed to do to improve.
- Leadership of the department as there are few monitoring systems in place accurately to review the poor performance of the department and set clear targets for improvement.

143. In the A level examination in 2002 too few students were entered to make statistical comparisons with national data valid. In 2001 the few students entered attained results that were above the national average. In the 2002 AS examinations, students achieved results that were significantly below what would be expected, given their results at GCSE. In 2001 most students completed the full year of the AS course, but only one continued to A2. In 2002, almost all continued to A2 despite their weak performance in the AS examination. However, the relatively few students taking A2 remains a concern for the school.
144. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files during the inspection shows that students in the current sixth form are working around the level expected nationally, but are achieving unsatisfactory standards overall given their results in the GCSE. In Year 13 the higher attaining students are, nevertheless, making good progress.
145. During Year 12 students make some progress in understanding grammar and deepening their vocabulary, but they are not confident with any of the more complex aspects usually covered during Year 12. The strongest area for all students is speaking. They get regular practice in class and they work with the foreign language assistant and so make good progress. There are a few students who have English as an additional language in these groups. They speak excellent German before arriving at the school and so they have no difficulty coping with the course.
146. The writing of the relatively lower attaining students is weak because they are not given enough support in lessons. Students develop satisfactory listening skills; they get plenty of practice listening to tapes and videos and can understand most of the details. Students do not read widely outside the lesson, although they do get the opportunity to study works of literature that increases their vocabulary.
147. Students in Year 13 understand complex language and ideas on subjects such as political issues in Germany or works of literature. Their spoken language is satisfactory overall, lower attaining students lack accuracy and fluency, but the highest attaining students speak confidently and at length because they get plenty of practice in class. Those students who take the opportunity to visit Germany on the exchange programme also return with much improved pronunciation and fluency. The quality of students'

written work varies greatly. The most successful students use complex language and express their opinions and arguments clearly; however, several have a limited recall of vocabulary related to the topic and make basic grammatical errors in their written German.

148. The teaching overall is unsatisfactory. Lessons are not always well planned and students are not well prepared for the demands of the examination at the end of Year 12. They suffer in particular from a lack of practice of written work in lessons, which rely on translation of individual words or very short texts. The teachers spend some time concentrating on improving students' knowledge of grammar during Year 12 by doing grammatical exercises. This is not, however, followed up, as they do not allow students the opportunity to apply the rules they have learnt in extended writing. They also do not insist that students then keep this information so that it is easily accessible and do not always ensure that homework is regularly completed. When it is completed, it is not always marked. The use of assessment information is poor as very few students in Year 12 were aware of how they were doing or what they needed to do to improve.
149. Students are encouraged to use the Internet in their free time to research topics and extend their knowledge. However, the teachers do not have strategies to motivate the students to work hard outside the lesson and several of them fail to complete even simple homework tasks and arrive at the lesson unprepared, thus wasting valuable teaching time. Often the work is not sufficiently interesting to engage the students and the use made of resources lacks creativity. Consequently, students are frustrated as their progress is impeded by ineffective teaching strategies and recognition of their individual learning needs.
150. In Year 13 students make better progress because the lessons are more closely related to the demands of the examination and students do more work at home. The very highest attaining students make good progress as they benefit from the very demanding lessons and the open-ended tasks that they are given. The relatively lower attaining students say they often find the work too difficult. An example of this was seen in a lesson when they had great difficulty in being able to express their opinions about the characters in a film they had seen. They experienced difficulty as the teacher had not sufficiently prepared them for this task.
151. The leadership and management of the German department are unsatisfactory. The head of department has identified some of the problems, such as the significant weaknesses in Year 12, but has been unable to resolve them. For example, there has been an effort recently to tailor the teaching to the requirements of the examination, but this has not yet led to improved results or learning. Despite very good resources and support staff there has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There are few monitoring systems in place to review accurately the poor performance of the department and set clear targets for improvement. The school has invested a considerable amount of support from senior managers to improve the current situation, but much of this has been ineffective in increasing student numbers or improving the examination results. The provision in German has declined since the last inspection, student numbers have fallen and students are not doing as well as they should, especially at AS level. This is a very serious situation for a Language College and one that the school should take all possible action to resolve.