

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BRIGSHAW HIGH SCHOOL**

Allerton Bywater

LEA area: Leeds

Unique reference number: 108090

Headteacher: Mr Peter Laurence

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights  
3268

Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2002

Inspection number: 249851

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brigshaw Lane Allerton Bywater Castleford West Yorkshire
Postcode:	WF10 2HR
Telephone number:	0113 2865317
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Graham Orr
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3268	George Knights	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils and students taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities? How well is the school led and managed? What sort of school is it?
8943	Margaret Manning	Lay inspector		Inclusion How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2561	Tony Byrne	Team inspector	English	
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30433	Chris Corp	Team inspector	Science	
12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Design and technology	
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music	
15396	Ron Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
2866	Bob Battey	Team inspector	Art and design	
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	
24127	Jim Kidd	Team inspector	History	
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Information and Communications technology Business education	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Brigshaw High School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years of age. The school is located between Allerton Bywater and Kippax, about six miles east of the centre of Leeds. Students generally live quite close to the school. Around three-quarters of the pupils come from six primary schools in the neighbourhood, the remaining pupils coming from around 17 other schools. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is just below average. There are 1302 pupils on roll, making the school larger than average. The school is increasing in popularity and there are no surplus places in the current Year 7. The school is situated in a former mining area and many pupils come from homes with relatively low socio-economic circumstances. Unemployment in the area is close to the national average, though with many parents working in low wage service industries. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. Only one per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and even fewer have English as an additional language. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is below the national average, though the number with statements of special educational need is above the national average. The school is designated by the Leeds local authority as a resourced school for pupils with physical disability. Currently there are 8 pupils on the school's role who receive additional support because of these disabilities and this number is set to rise. Around three-quarters of pupils transfer, at the end of Year 11, to sixth form or further education, most of these remaining at the school.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Brigshaw High School is a very good and improving school. Standards are improving steadily because consistently good teaching helps pupils make good progress in their learning and their personal development. Leadership and management of the school are both very good overall and the school gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Very strong leadership ensures that the school lives out its core values in practice.
- All pupils are helped to achieve their best, leading to steadily improving standards.
- Consistently good teaching, characterised by high teacher expectations, ensures successful learning.
- Very good relationships throughout the school community help to create a harmonious and supportive environment.
- The school ensures that each individual is fully included in all aspects of school life, irrespective of their abilities or aptitudes.
- The excellent induction and continuous professional development of both teaching and support staff leads to high levels of staff morale and to a commitment, on their part, to further improvement in the school.

#### **What could be improved**

- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11, especially regarding provision for religious education, information and communication technology and aspects of personal, social and health education.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Progress has been particularly impressive in the two years since most of the school was destroyed by fire. Results have improved steadily, with GCSE and sixth form examination results in 2002 being the best ever achieved by the school. Teaching has improved in quality. Opportunities to improve resources, afforded by the rebuilding of most of the school, have been taken very well. The school has responded positively to the issues raised in the previous inspection report. Assessment is now well used to provide information to pupils and their parents. The quality of the personal, social and health education programme has been enhanced following the appointment of a co-ordinator for this subject. A great deal has been done to improve provision in information and communication technology and the contribution made by the school to pupils' spiritual development is much improved. Monitoring is now a strong feature of most aspects of the school's work. There has been some improvement in the provision for religious education, especially in Years 7 to 9, but there is still no course in this subject in

either Years 10 and 11 or in the sixth form. The school still does not provide for all pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

## 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			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Key Stage 3 tests	B	B	C	C
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	D
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	n/a	C	

**Key**

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

Standards have risen faster than nationally at Key Stage 3 in recent years. In 2002 national tests, results in English were above the national average, whilst those in mathematics and science were broadly average. GCSE results overall in 2001 were lower than in the previous year, but in 2002 showed a marked improvement. They were the best ever achieved in the school and continued an overall trend of improvement in line with improvement nationally. Results in the sixth form have risen steadily and this trend of improvement was maintained in 2002, when the school achieved its best A/AS-level results so far. The school sets itself challenging targets. It narrowly missed its targets for GCSE results in 2001, but met the higher targets set for 2002. Throughout the school, pupils and students are achieving well because the needs of individuals are well attended to.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very proud of their school and appreciate what is provided for them. They show good attitudes to work and to other aspects of school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is good. Pupils respond well to the clear expectations of behaviour set by the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils form very good relationships, both with one another and with their teachers. Overall, pupils' personal development is good.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

The school has very good arrangements for dealing with the rare incidents of bullying and all pupils feel confident and safe in the school community.

## 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.*

Teaching is good overall, with very good or excellent teaching in around two-fifths of lessons. Only a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. This good teaching helps students learn successfully and is a major factor in helping improve levels of achievement. The

teaching of English is very good throughout the school, whilst in mathematics and science it is good. Teaching is good overall in most other subjects, and it is very good in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11 and in the GCSE course in physical education. Teaching is only satisfactory in art and design, information and communication technology and religious education. The main strength of teaching is the quality of teachers' planning, which takes good account of the needs of each individual pupil and student. Very good relationships, based on mutual trust, ensure that classrooms are well managed and, therefore, pupils and students are able to work productively and make good gains in their learning. The teaching of literacy is very good, with increasingly effective contributions from teachers of other subjects supporting the very good work of their English colleagues. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics lessons and steps have successfully been taken to support this in other subjects. The use of information and communication technology in teaching across the curriculum is only satisfactory, but very good plans are being implemented to bring about significant improvement in this aspect of teachers' work.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good overall and is very good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have a good range of subjects from which to choose their courses in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good. The school ensures that each pupil's individual needs are well attended to, either through carefully planned activities or by the provision of additional support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very small number of these pupils is well catered for because the school attends well to their individual needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall this is good. The school does not, however, currently do enough to help raise pupils' awareness of aspects of life in a multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils and students well, providing a good climate for learning.

The school's overall links with parents are good. The quality of general information provided for parents about the life and work of the school is good, and parents are kept well informed about the progress of their children. The curriculum for younger pupils in the school is enriched by all being able to study two foreign languages and by the provision for all of a course in drama. Not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an adequate course in information and communication technology and there is no course in religious education for pupils in Year 11. A good course of personal, social, health and citizenship education for pupils in Years 7 to 10 is not continued into Year 11.

Procedures for monitoring pupils' behaviour and attendance are very good. The procedures for assessing pupils' and students' work are much improved since the previous inspection.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives outstanding leadership to the school, ably supported by senior staff. This leadership, coupled to very good management, at all levels of the school, has been fundamental to improvement in recent years.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have been very supportive, whilst holding the school to account, as major re-development work has taken place.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is a developing strength of the school and has led to significant further development work being planned.

The strategic use of resources	This is very good.
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The school is fortunate to have a very well qualified, dedicated and committed staff. Resources are very good and the accommodation provides a very stimulating environment for teachers and pupils to work in. The co-ordination of all aspects of school life is very effective. Very good attention is paid to applying the principles of best value. Although governors fulfil their responsibilities very well, they do not ensure that older pupils and students are able to follow a course in religious education. Nor do they ensure that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 take a course in information and communication technology. They do not ensure that all pupils and students are able to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Before the inspection, 24 parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector. Questionnaires were returned by 64 parents (5 per cent) and additional comments were appended to around 20 of these.

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like school.</li> <li>• Pupils are making good progress in school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good, with teachers expecting children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The school is very approachable when parents have concerns or suggestions.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangements for setting homework.</li> <li>• Levels of pupil behaviour in the school.</li> <li>• The extent to which pupils are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>

Inspectors concur with the positive views of parents. In a very well led and managed school, teachers work well and encourage pupils to do their best. As a result, pupils are happy coming to school and feel fulfilled as they make good progress. The school is very approachable and parents are strongly encouraged to become involved in school life. The inspection team found no evidence to support the negative views of a small number of parents.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this large comprehensive school has 160 students and is about the same size as the average sixth form nationally. Numbers are rising steadily. It provides a good range of AS- and A-level courses and a small but increasing number of vocational courses. Around 60 per cent of those who completed Year 11 at the school in 2002 have entered the sixth form, with a small additional number remaining in full-time education at local further education colleges. Roughly similar numbers of male and female students follow sixth form courses at Brigshaw. The number of students from minority ethnic groups reflects the composition of the school generally. Students follow a mixture of courses. Most students in the sixth form follow AS and A2 level or advanced vocational (AVCE) courses. A smaller number undertake one- and two-year vocational courses at foundation and intermediate levels. In order to extend the range of courses available, the school has entered into joint sixth form provision of some courses with a neighbouring school. Courses in the sixth form are open to all students and, as a result, the overall ability of students entering the sixth form is broadly average.

### HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Overall the sixth form is very effective. Careful deployment of staff and other resources also ensures that it is very cost-effective. Standards are improving and results in 2002 were the best achieved by the school. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are consistently good and the work of the sixth form is led and managed very well. Careful and successful attention is paid to meeting the needs of each individual student.

#### Strengths

- Effective partnerships with a neighbouring school and with the local college of further education help extend the range of courses available to students in the sixth form.
- A positive atmosphere in the sixth form leads to very good student attitudes and to increasingly higher staying on rates in the sixth form.
- The sixth form is seen as integral to the whole school, enabling students to be good role models for younger pupils and raising overall levels of aspiration among sixth form students.

#### What could be improved

- Arrangements for all students to be able to follow a course in religious education in the sixth form.

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

### THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is now always at least good and students make good progress over time. Whilst standards until recently have been consistently below the national average, they were in line in 2002 and are steadily improving.
Chemistry	<b>Good.</b> The majority of students obtain grades close to or above their potential. Teaching and planning are good and delivered by well-qualified and enthusiastic staff. There are good relationships between teachers and students.
Physics	<b>Good.</b> Standards are improving and results for the small number who took the subject in 2002 were very good. Staff have strong subject knowledge, teaching is good and the subject is very well resourced.
Design & technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in the A2 course are satisfactory and those for the AS course are below what would be expected. Teaching is

	satisfactory but needs a sharper focus on students' development of independent study skills.
Business Studies	<b>Good.</b> Standards are good with the quality of teaching and the positive attitudes of students making a very good contribution to overall achievement.
Performance Studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Examination results in performance studies are broadly average. Students make sound progress during the course as a result of clearly structured teaching.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Standards are average and being maintained. The quality of teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is well matched to the requirements of the A- and AS-level examinations. Assessment procedures are thorough and effectively track student performance over time.
English	<b>Very good.</b> There is a rising trend in standards in both language and literature at AS and A2 levels. Students write thoughtfully on a whole range of topics. Teaching builds effectively on previous learning and offers a variety of approaches, which appeal to both girls and boys.
French	<b>Good.</b> Results are rising from a low base as a result of close co-operation between teachers and students. The quality of teaching is good overall, but there are insufficient ways for students to enrich their learning.

Work was sampled in a range of other subjects and courses in the sixth form. Overall, provision in these courses is good. This is the result of good teaching and the provision of a broadly based curriculum. This is enhanced by the recently established link with a neighbouring school so as to broaden the range of courses on offer and by the creative use of video technology to provide some teaching in law and psychology courses.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good advice and guidance, with careful attention being paid to the needs of each individual.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Overall, leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The sixth form runs very well on a day-to-day basis and monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of sixth form work is helping bring about further improvement. Very good attention is paid to the principles of equality of opportunity and access. There is a clear vision for future development of the sixth form.

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students appreciate the relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in the sixth form.</li> <li>• The range of courses available to them.</li> <li>• Good teaching, based on teachers knowing their needs well and being very approachable.</li> <li>• The care and support for them as they move through the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation for life in a multi-cultural society.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the views of students, both in terms of what they appreciate and what they think could be improved.

### COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

*Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement “outstanding” in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to “very weak”.*

**PART B: COMMENTARY**

**HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

**The school’s results and pupils’ achievements**

1. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is just below average overall, though all ability levels are represented within each year group. Pupils make good progress during their first three years in school and, by the time they are 14, they are attaining standards that are generally above the national average. Satisfactory progress is made by pupils in Years 10 and 11, and results in GCSE examinations in recent years have been close to the national average.
  
2. In national tests in 2002, 14-year-old pupils gained results in English that were above the national average. They were also above average when compared with similar schools<sup>1</sup>. In mathematics, results were close to the national average, but below the average for similar schools. In science, results were close to the national and similar school averages. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in these national tests. Details of test results are given in Table 1. Results in national tests have been improving at a faster rate than nationally for several years and this is a direct consequence of good teaching which takes account of the needs of each individual pupil.
  
3. In other subjects of the curriculum, standards of work are broadly average by the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments and inspection evidence indicate that standards are above average in modern foreign languages and drama, and average in all other subjects except religious education and information and communication technology (ICT), where standards are below average. This represents an overall improvement since the previous inspection, though in art and design standards are lower than previously reported. In all subjects, careful attention is paid to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. As a result, these pupils are able to make good progress in their learning and to attain good standards.

**Table 1: Key Stage 3 (Year 9) results 2002**

Subject	Boys	Girls	Total	Standards compared to similar schools 2002 are	Recent school trends
English	Above average	Above average	Above average	Above average	Improving
Mathematics	Average	Average	Average	Below average	Improving
Science	Average	Average	Average	Average	Improving
All core subjects	Average	Average	Average	Average	Improving

4. The work of pupils currently in the school suggests that the steady upward trend in overall standards will be maintained. Pupils in the first three years in the school are working at broadly average levels in lessons and are achieving well. The main reason for this is that the school has concentrated hard in improving the quality of teaching in recent years. Standards of work seen are above average in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and physical education and are broadly average in all other subjects except religious education, where they are below average. Pupils achieve particularly well in English and physical education. Good work has been

<sup>1</sup> Similar school comparisons are made with schools having a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

undertaken to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and these are improving well. For pupils in Year 7, information and communication technology skills are good, but the lack of consistent development and application of these skills in Years 8 and 9 results in standards being below average by the end of Year 9. Following a programme of re-equipping the school with ICT equipment, the school has begun to implement plans that will help improve these standards rapidly.

5. In GCSE examinations in 2001, results were close to the national average, though below those of the previous year. Full details of 2001 results are given in Tables 2 and 3. The number of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades has improved steadily in recent years until the dip in 2001. Boys continue to do less well than girls, but the gap is closing because teachers are mindful of the need to make sure that boys are helped to achieve their full potential. There has recently been a slight fall in the numbers of pupils gaining five or more A\* to G and one or more A\* to G grades. This is mainly because the school now provides an alternative curriculum for a small but significant number of pupils for whom a full programme of GCSE courses is not suitable. As a result of this provision, more pupils than previously leave the school with some accreditation for the work they have done<sup>2</sup>. Results in 2002 were significantly better, maintaining an upward trend in results over many years with only 2001 results showing a slight fall in overall standards. The results in 2002 were the best ever achieved by the school in GCSE examinations. Results in 2001 were for the group of pupils most affected by a devastating fire that destroyed most of the school buildings early in 2000. At that time the 2001 cohort of pupils were two terms into their GCSE courses. Whilst the school made tremendous efforts to minimise the overall impact of the fire, it is likely that the inevitable disruption will have had a significant influence on these pupils' results.

**Table 2: Year 2001 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results overall**

	2001			Standards compared to all schools 2001 are	Standards compared to similar schools 2001 are	Recent school trends
	Boys	Girls	Total			
Percentage 5+ A*-C grades or GNVQ equivalent	39	57	47	Average	Below average	Improving
Percentage 5+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent	80	91	85	Below average	Well below average	Improving
Percentage 1+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent	87	95	91	Well below average	Low	Improving
Average total GCSE points score per pupil	33	42	37	Average	Below average	Improving

6. Results in English language and literature were both above average in 2001 and improved still further in 2002. Mathematics results were below average in 2001, but improved in 2002, whilst science results declined slightly in 2002, having been above average in the previous year. In 2001, results were well above average in geography and French and broadly average in design and technology and physical education. They were below average in drama, history and art and design, and well below average in German and in music. The comparison for music needs to be treated with some caution because the school enters a larger proportion of pupils, covering a much wider ability range, than do most schools for this subject. There was an overall improvement in standards in most subjects in 2002. As at the time of the previous inspection, boys did less well than girls, particularly in terms of numbers gaining the highest grades.

<sup>2</sup> Courses leading to the award of Certificates of Achievement and qualifications such as ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) are not included with GCSE results for comparison with national statistics.

However, the difference was less marked than previously because the school has worked hard to adopt teaching and learning styles which help boys achieve well.

**Table 3: Year 2001 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results by subject (percent A\* to C grades)**

Subject	School			National			Recent school trends
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
English Language	54.9	78.0	65.4	47.9	64.3	56.1	Improving
English Literature	70.0	83.0	76.3	52.4	68.6	60.8	Improving
Mathematics	40.0	46.8	43.0	47.5	48.6	48.1	Improving
Science (Combined)	50.0	53.2	51.4	48.9	51.0	50.0	Improving
Art & Design	36.1	62.8	50.6	52.1	73.3	63.9	Declining
Design and Technology	35.4	61.3	46.8	42.1	59.4	50.6	Improving
Geography	67.6		71.2	53.1		56.1	Improving
History	35.7	41.9	38.8	54.0	60.8	57.5	Improving
MFL French	49.1	66.7	57.5	38.4	54.8	47.0	Improving
MFL German			19.2			53.1	Improving
PE or Sports Studies	48.4		46.2	51.2		52.3	Improving
Drama	57.1		56.3	59.5		69.1	Improving
Music			45.5			67.0	Improving
Business Studies	45.0	63.6	54.8	50.7	55.9	53.0	Improving
Communication Studies	66.7		65.9	46.4		55.6	Improving

N.B. Gaps in tables indicate that there were too few candidates to make reliable comparisons.

7. The work of pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 suggests that the upward trend in overall performance at the end of Year 11 will be maintained. Pupils are already working at well above average standards in English, at above average standards in modern foreign languages, geography and physical education and at broadly average standards in all other examination courses except music and drama. Literacy and numeracy standards in Years 10 and 11 are good. Pupils are achieving particularly well in English and physical education because of the very good teaching of these subjects to older pupils. Standards in ICT are good for those pupils who follow a course in this subject in Years 10 and 11. For other pupils, standards are below average because, hitherto, not enough has been done to develop their skills and the application of computer skills in all other subjects. Good plans are now being implemented to improve this situation.
8. The school has set itself challenging targets, both for national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. In recent years, these targets have been met, with the exception of 2001, when results were influenced by the fire. Targets for future years represent considerable aspiration to even higher standards, but are realistic and achievable.
9. Throughout the school, careful attention is paid to the needs of each individual. Work has been undertaken to make sure that classroom activities are such that boys will make the same sort of progress as girls. The particular needs of pupils with special educational needs are also carefully attended to. Teachers modify work, or additional support is provided, to make sure that these pupils are able to make as much progress as other pupils. The small number of pupils with physical disabilities are fully included in all aspects of work and, therefore, do well. The school has a small number of pupils for whom English is not their first language. These pupils are supported well and they are, therefore, fully integrated and are making good progress. Recently the school has successfully given particular attention to helping gifted and talented pupils to achieve their full potential.

## **Sixth form**

10. When students enter the sixth form they do so with overall attainment levels that are broadly average. In 2001 sixth form examinations, the results of male students were a little above average and of female students were broadly average. Overall, results in 2001 were below those in the previous year, but those in 2002 were the best ever achieved in the school. Numbers of students following advanced level courses in the school in recent years have been relatively small, with very few students therefore being entered for examinations. Comparing results on an individual subject basis therefore requires caution. Details of results by subject are set out in a table in Part E of this report. One notable feature of results is that a smaller than average number of students in recent years have been gaining the highest grades in A-level courses. This reflects the fact that a lower than average proportion of students entering sixth form courses does so having gained the highest grades in their GCSE courses. However, the school has worked hard to raise students' aspirations and to help the most able achieve high standards. The school sets challenging targets for each student in their sixth form study.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. Pupils of all ages are very proud of their school and appreciate what is provided for them. Those spoken to during the inspection were very positive about school life and there is a strong feeling of community. Pupils have good attitudes to school and they enjoy taking part in the activities provided. They support after school activities well and show a good level of interest in lessons. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson when the class was enthralled whilst converting fractions to decimals as the teacher had made the lesson fun. Similarly, pupils in Year 11 working on an alternative learning programme showed high levels of motivation in an English project using the Internet. Enthusiasm for other activities is exemplified by over 50 pupils attending a netball session.
12. Behaviour is good in school, both in lessons and around the site. Very little unacceptable behaviour happens in lessons and conduct around school is orderly. The atmosphere in the dining hall is very civilised and pupils are very mindful of the needs of others. For instance, those who may be chatting with their friends in the library at break time are careful not to disturb those who are working. The small proportion of parents who expressed some concern about behaviour can be reassured that the school has clear expectations of good behaviour from pupils and that pupils respond well to these. The number of permanent exclusions from school is at a very low level, but the school does exclude quite a high number of pupils for short periods. Similarly quite a high number of pupils are excluded from lessons within the school, but this is because of the very close monitoring and the high standards that the school expects. Bullying is not a problem because of the way this is handled in school and as a result pupils are confident and respect each other. Pupils are thoughtful and show concern for others; for example, making sure that pupils who have recently arrived from other countries understand what is going on and helping them in lessons.
13. Pupils' personal development is good. They form very good relationships in school with each other and with their teachers. Pupils listened intently in assemblies to teachers who spoke from the heart about their feelings for the future of this school community. They work well together, as was seen in a design and technology lesson when the pupils shared machines and decided how to divide up jobs between them. In a Year 8 personal and social education lesson, pupils were developing their social skills very well in their work in preparation for the re-establishment of the school council.

Their ability to take on responsibility is satisfactory and they cheerfully undertake any tasks that are requested of them.

14. Attendance at school is satisfactory and pupils are punctual so that lessons can start promptly. In fact many pupils arrive well before the start of school to meet their friends.

### **Sixth form**

15. Students have very good attitudes to their school and they, like the younger pupils, are very proud of it. Students' views were not surveyed as a whole but those spoken to were quietly positive. Their attitudes, sense of responsibility and independent approach to learning have a positive effect on achievements and standards. Not many students leave before finishing their courses. In time spent with form tutors they are attentive and involved, whilst in subject lessons they appreciate the support and the teaching they get. In a business studies lesson, for example, Year 12 students had very positive attitudes, showing good interaction with each other and with their teacher. It was noticeable in a Year 12 mathematics lesson that students were keen to please and offered answers promptly and in Year 13 science they were very co-operative in setting up apparatus. Brigshaw students are integrating well with the students of a partnership school<sup>3</sup> with whom they share some lessons. Students are happy to be trained to accept responsibilities such as being 'bully buddies' for Year 7 pupils and they also help younger pupils who need support in their reading and spelling. They have satisfactory attendance and arrive punctually at school.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

16. Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good and is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Very good or excellent teaching occurs in almost two-fifths of lessons and teaching is good or better in almost three-quarters of lessons. Teaching is marginally better for younger pupils than for those in Years 10 and 11. Only very rarely is teaching unsatisfactory.
17. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, teaching is very good in English and modern foreign languages. As a result, pupils in these subjects make very good progress. Teaching is good in most other subjects, though it is only satisfactory in art, religious education and music. There is some good teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 7, but in Years 8 and 9 this subject is taught within other subjects and thus the overall teaching of this subject is only satisfactory.
18. The teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good in English, modern foreign languages and the examination course in physical education. It is good in most other subjects, though it is only satisfactory in art. This good teaching overall is a major factor in bringing about the overall improvement in examination results in recent years.
19. Throughout the school, teachers are aware of the needs of their pupils. Good marking and assessment of work provides pupils with guidance on how to improve and is used as a basis for teachers' lesson planning, which is good overall and is very good for lessons in Years 7 to 9. A significant factor in good planning is the careful attention that teachers give to what they intend pupils will learn in each lesson. These intentions are then shared with pupils at the beginnings of lessons. This good planning has been influenced by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, ideas from which have been adopted well in the school. The teaching of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is particularly

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<sup>3</sup> The school has recently established a joint sixth form provision with a neighbouring school. This partnership is designed to provide wider choice to students, enabling them to study a range of subjects in groups which are large enough to promote effective group activities.

good within English and mathematics and good progress has been made so that teachers of all subjects can help pupils improve these skills across the curriculum.

20. Because teachers plan their lessons well, activities are interesting and, therefore, pupils enjoy their learning. When work is stimulating, pupils are able to concentrate well and they work with enthusiasm. As a result they quickly grasp what they are learning. Progressively, teachers are improving their skills of reviewing lessons with pupils, so that they have a good understanding of the progress they are making and of what they need to do to improve further. In many subjects, good use is made of practical or investigative work and this helps pupils develop their study skills and improves their ability to manage their work. This also supports them when they are set tasks to do beyond the classroom. Arrangements for homework in the school are good, with much of the work set being followed up in class lessons. Occasionally pupils get confused about the best strategies for managing the range of tasks set, particularly when homework is set over an extended period of time. Guidance to pupils on how to manage this varies from teacher to teacher.
21. Because teachers know their pupils well, careful attention is paid to the needs of individuals. Work is successfully modified to take account of their needs, as a result of which no individual or group makes significantly less progress than others. Those pupils with special educational needs who are given additional adult support in lessons are helped successfully. As a result they make good overall progress in their learning. Teachers are aware of the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Therefore they are able to modify work well, helping these pupils also to make good progress.

### **Sixth form**

22. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall. In around one in five lessons teaching is very good and in three-quarters it is at least good. No unsatisfactory teaching of sixth form students was observed during the inspection. The focus during the inspection was on nine subjects. Teaching was good in all of these except English, where it was very good, and in design and technology, where teaching was satisfactory.
23. One of the main reasons for the success of teaching to advanced level is that teachers have sufficient knowledge of their subject to be able to present it in interesting and challenging ways. As a result, students successfully acquire a range of knowledge and skills and are able to develop a range of activities, set up by their teachers, which help their understanding. Another strong characteristic of sixth form classrooms is the very good relationships between teachers and students, enabling teachers to manage students and their learning very well. Students have high levels of respect for their teachers and are, therefore, willing to work very hard.
24. Teachers plan their work, modifying it where necessary to ensure that all students are able to make good progress. Good attention is paid to helping students to develop independent study skills and to take responsibility for their own learning. This helps their understanding of the subjects being studied and is also a good preparation for further study when they leave school. Consistently good teaching has been the main cause of the steady improvement in overall examination results in recent years.
25. Where sixth form teaching is very good, as in English, teachers have high expectations of what students will achieve and they communicate this well to students. Teachers encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Where teaching is only satisfactory, as in design and technology, some planning is less well focused on students' needs and takes insufficient account of their previous experiences. As a

result, teachers' expectations of what students can do are lower. In turn this means that students of this subject work less productively and take insufficient responsibility for their own learning.

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

26. Overall, the school provides all pupils with a good range of learning experiences in lessons. This range is very good in Years 7 to 9. In their first three years in the school, pupils study all subjects of the National Curriculum and a course in religious education. In addition, the school provides for all pupils to follow a course in drama. Through this course, pupils are able to explore a wide range of issues that help them to develop their social and language skills. Pupils study either French or German in Year 7 and then study both languages in Years 8 and 9. This enables all pupils to experience a second language, but the time allocated to this study is short and, therefore, relatively few pupils maintain the study of their second language into Years 10 and 11. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject in Year 7. This successfully enables the school to ensure that all pupils have acquired a range of basic computer skills by the end of that year. From then on, ICT is taught within other subjects. This arrangement currently leads to some inconsistency, but steps are being taken to ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement in Years 8 and 9. In parallel, steps are being taken to assess how well pupils are applying and extending their ICT skills during these years.
27. The school has embraced much of the thinking within the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Already the mathematics and English strands are being explored within those departments and good steps have been taken to help teachers of all subjects to be aware of the contribution they can make towards developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The team of Key Stage 3 Strategy managers is working well and is putting in place arrangements to work with the further strands of the strategy as they become available.
28. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to choose from a wide range the subjects they wish to study to GCSE level, though effective arrangements are in place to ensure that each individual pupil maintains a good balance within their choices. The time balance to subjects has been improved since the previous inspection and the overall range of courses available has been extended considerably. The school now provides for pupils to study some aspects of religious education in Year 10, but there is no provision to study this subject in Year 11. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school therefore does not fully meet its statutory requirement to provide this course. Similarly, the school still does not meet the requirements for all pupils to study ICT, and for this to be assessed. This is because some pupils do not select an ICT based subject and the contribution of other subjects to enabling the development and application of ICT skills is currently inadequate. The school is aware of this gap in provision and has plans to rectify it in the near future.
29. A small but significant number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to select courses, as part of their overall programme, from an 'alternative curriculum'. Most of these pupils are those for whom a full range of GCSE courses would not be appropriate. The introduction of this option has helped pupils to see more relevance in their schooling and has improved their attendance and behaviour. The school has been supported well in establishing this course by colleagues in a neighbouring college and by members of the local community.

30. These links with local colleges are just one example of the very good partnerships that the school has established with its partner institutions. The school is continuing to strengthen its links with its main partner primary schools. This is enabling teachers to plan lessons for pupils when they arrive in the school that quickly pick up and extend what pupils have been learning in their primary schools. Links with local colleges are effective in giving very good guidance to those pupils who transfer, at the end of Year 11, to further education. The school has also established very good contacts with higher education institutions, which are helping those pupils wishing to go to university when they have finished their studies at Brigshaw.
31. The provision of the alternative curriculum option is just one of many examples of the school seeking to ensure that what it offers meets the needs of each individual pupil. Very good arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are able to benefit from the full range of courses. Similarly, the school is providing well for their gifted and talented pupils to be extended in order that they achieve their full potential. Minority groups in the school, such as those with physical disability or those for whom English is an additional language, have their needs and study programmes monitored on an individual basis and all are well catered for.
32. All pupils in Years 7 to 10 follow a course in personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE). This course is better co-ordinated than at the time of the previous inspection. It provides well for sex and drugs awareness education and, from Year 9, careers education and guidance and work experience. The overall impact of the course is weakened, however, by the fact that it is not taught in Year 11. The English department has successfully included some elements of the course within their activities, such as the writing of personal statements for pupils' records of achievement, but they do not include all aspects of a PHSCE programme. Good steps have been taken to explore ways in which the school is meeting the new requirement for a course in citizenship education. Rather than teach this as a separate subject, the school has successfully identified those aspects of citizenship that are included within the PHSCE course and has identified the contribution which history is making to this subject. Plans are at an advanced stage to review how other subjects can help teach aspects of citizenship.
33. Pupils of all ages can take part in a satisfactory range of activities outside lessons. A range of clubs and societies are provided and pupils appreciate this. They also recognise the benefits of activities that directly complement their classroom studies, such as revision clubs. As the school establishes its new facilities following relocation into new buildings, the range of opportunities for pupils to use the resource centre<sup>4</sup> and ICT equipment will be further enhanced. A range of activity days, held toward the end of the school year, is a very successful extension to the taught curriculum and activities are much enjoyed by pupils.
34. The school staff have a genuine commitment to promoting pupils' personal development and provision for this is good. Particular strengths lie in the way pupils' moral and social development are encouraged. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and there are firm guidelines for them to follow. School rules are consistently applied and pupils know what the results of breaking them would be but, more than this, the staff set pupils very good examples. Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good and these are developed through a good sharing of moral values and by planning to encourage pupils to work together. This planning is evident in the PHSCE programme and, in addition, several subjects make specific

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of the inspection, the library resource centre was not fully operational in the school. The new buildings were not available until very near the start of the Autumn Term and not all stock had been completely unpacked following the move. Very good plans were in place for the centre to become an important resource for all pupils in the very near future.

provision. In English, particularly good examples of this were seen as when Year 9 were asked to think about a moral dilemma posed in *Of Mice and Men*. In drama, pupils were asked to consider the moral aspects of the ways people behave by planning a scene based on a short story that raised difficult questions about peer group pressure. Pupils in most years are being prepared to take part in class, year and school councils as part of the planned provision for citizenship. Departments such as mathematics clearly believe that there is much to be gained from deliberately planned group or paired work in aiding pupils' social development.

35. Assemblies contribute much in supporting this good moral and social development and spiritual development is equally well promoted here, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Staff evidently have a strong personal vision about the future of the school community. This they convey well to the pupils, encouraging them to reflect on this exciting time of regeneration and moving forward. Few other structured occasions are planned, either in lessons or other activities, for pupils to have such times of reflection in order to help their spiritual development. However, in Year 8 and 9 drama lessons, pupils respond with genuine pleasure to the thought-provoking performances of others. The European Day of Languages was used well and entertainingly in an assembly to illustrate the notion that any steps people make to understand the ways of other communities can only be for the benefit of all. Pupils were encouraged here to value the qualities of their own community but also to reach out to others. In spite of such planned events, pupils' awareness of their place in a multi-cultural society is not as well developed as it should be. Little has been done to familiarise pupils with the very different communities within only a few miles.

### **Sixth form**

36. The quality and range of opportunities offered to students in the sixth form are good. Students can choose from a good range of AS, A-level and AVCE courses, including general studies, and a small number of vocational courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The range of courses has been extended through the partnership with a neighbouring school. The length of the taught day has also been extended on two days in the week to enable greater flexibility. Design of the curriculum is based on careful research with students and courses are open to students of all abilities. The key skills of communication, numeracy and information and communication technology are taught through courses and additional workshop sessions. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to make available a course in religious education in the sixth form.
37. In addition to examination courses, all students follow a weekly programme of personal, social and health education sessions, which are carefully planned to cover issues of direct relevance to the sixth form students. It deals with careers and higher education, covers a range of study skills, the theoretical aspects of learning to drive and also gives guidance on aspects of independent living such as personal finances. Students' access to careers information and guidance is satisfactory through computer software, research on the Internet and interviews with the careers officer.
38. Students are able to participate in a satisfactory range of enrichment activities. They take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, biology and geography field trips and study visits to theatres, and they become involved in the school's annual activities week. The school is working in conjunction with a local college to extend the range of enrichment courses it offers.
39. In the sixth form students have good provision for their personal development, in particular with an emphasis on their social and moral development. The teaching of

French makes a very good contribution to supporting students' awareness of social and moral issues. Drama is an important contributor to students' personal development and media studies raises their cultural awareness, although multi-cultural issues are not covered sufficiently. Students respond well to the chances provided by the school for them to show responsibility, such as being 'bully buddies' and helping younger pupils with their spelling and reading.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

40. The school cares for its pupils well and provides a good climate in which they can learn. Parents feel their children are happy in school.
41. The school pays proper attention to pupils' health and safety and has good systems for the protection of children, as they are required to do. Procedures for ensuring health and safety are very systematic and staff and governors are given very clear information about them. Pupils are carefully supervised onto the school buses, for example. The named person for child protection has up-to-date training and makes sure that all staff are regularly reminded about procedures.
42. Procedures in school for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating anything that is unacceptable are very effective. The recording of incidents of unacceptable behaviour is rigorous and the procedures that follow such incidents are very consistently applied. Similarly, good behaviour and attitudes are recognised and valued and pupils who behave well have the chance of simple rewards when their names are put into a draw. A particularly good feature is that the close monitoring of pupils' attendance is integrated with that of their behaviour. As a result staff review their situation both efficiently and sensitively and can decide on the best support to help pupils. This may involve the teachers in the learning support team and staff from external agencies such as the educational welfare officer or the educational psychologist. Meetings are held to see how individual pupils can be helped best and class teachers often attend them to get professional advice for the benefit of these pupils.
43. Attendance is very well monitored and, as with behaviour, those pupils who do well are encouraged by their names being entered into a draw for prizes. Parents are kept well informed if there is any concern about their children as letters are automatically generated by the recording systems. The school rings home on the first day of absence for those pupils whose attendance is not as good as it could be. From time to time checks are held, organised by the educational welfare officer and the police liaison officer, and last year this was effective in identifying a small number of pupils who had no good reason for being out of school.
44. Pupils' personal development is well supported. Some time is set aside for them to compile their records of achievement in form time and Year 11 pupils work on their personal statements in English. Pupils' achievements, such as sporting success, are celebrated in assemblies. Tutors monitor pupils' planners regularly in form time. This is fairly effective although, up till now, the intention for pupils to record personal short term targets resulting from teachers' marking of their work has not yet been fulfilled.
45. With the exceptions of art, religious education and the cross-curricular aspects of ICT, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good overall and represent a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Teachers receive detailed data on pupils' prior attainment and use this information to predict future performance and set realistic targets for improvement. Moreover, pupils are actively involved in this process and, although targets in a minority of subject areas are rather

ambitious, pupils respond well to these arrangements. They enjoy reflecting on their progress and spend considerable time deciding upon their learning targets. In general, pupil target-setting is a developing strength of the school.

46. Pupils benefit from a whole-school marking policy, which is followed consistently by most departments and which serves both to celebrate progress and to offer advice on how improvements may be made. Pupils pay tribute to the quality of marking and are grateful for the detailed comments they receive on how they may move to the next level. Teachers write regular reports on their pupils' progress, but those for pupils in Years 7,8 and 9 provide too much detail about what pupils have learned but not enough about how they could improve still further.
47. Form tutors and pastoral staff in general play a seminal role in assessing, recording and monitoring the academic achievements of the youngsters in their care. Procedures are good and the annual 'progress sweep' compiles information from subject teachers, which is collated by heads of year and which leads to a variety of outcomes. Pupils performing well, for example, receive congratulation, whilst those whose progress is less than it should be, have personal interviews and, sometimes, the involvement of parents. Pupils' progress is monitored and supported even further by the regular exercise book scrutiny in some, but not all, departments.
48. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is good overall, but is applied inconsistently. In areas such as English, history and modern languages, for example, there is a detailed analysis of examination results leading to a sophisticated evaluation of departmental performance. Furthermore, the information gained from these processes leads directly to development planning, enhances pupil target setting and informs future strategies for improvement. However, in a minority of subjects, assessment procedures are weak, target setting is underdeveloped and areas for improvement are, therefore, not fully clear.

### **Sixth form Assessment**

49. Procedures for assessing, monitoring and supporting students' attainment and progress are good. Students have individual reviews of their progress with their form tutor three times a year. During reviews, collated information from subject teachers is used in conjunction with target grades to track progress and any problem areas are identified quickly. This leads to the effective setting of targets for improvement by the students and their tutors, which are recorded in student handbooks. Parents are also informed. In addition, an effective referral system is in place and is used well by subject departments. Different degrees of support are provided to match individual student's progress towards their target grade. For example, students who are badly under-achieving are asked to work full 'office hours' until they improve, while those who achieve or exceed their target grades are allowed greater flexibility in managing their own time. The courses that are jointly taught through the partnership with a neighbouring school are recently established and teachers have been active in planning the courses. However, procedures for the implementation of the assessment and standardisation of these courses is not yet fully in place.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

50. Students receive good advice and guidance on their personal development in the sixth form. The continuity of having the same form tutor as they had in the main school gives them stability at a time when they are expected to become more independent. Basic routines, such as for attendance, follow the whole-school system and, therefore, it can be, and indeed is, well monitored. Students are allowed to sign themselves out

when necessary and they are familiar with the agreed procedures. About 12 students currently in Year 12 continue to receive some additional help with their numeracy and literacy from the inclusion team and they also have a learning mentor. This makes it possible for them to participate fully in sixth form education in school.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

51. Parents show high levels of satisfaction with what the school provides for their children. Parents who attended the meeting were very supportive of the school. Unfortunately, only a very small proportion of parents returned their questionnaires – about 5 per cent – so these views cannot be taken as representative of the whole parent body. Nevertheless they did express some negative opinions and the team has taken these into account. In particular, these parents were concerned about homework, to a lesser degree about behaviour, about the information they get from school and whether the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The team did not find evidence to support these negative views.
52. The school provides good quality information for parents, both in the formal documents that it is required to provide and in the less formal newsletters. A good feature is that summaries of all the school policies, such as the behaviour policy, are available for parents if they ask. Pupils' annual reports give parents good information at Key Stage 4. However, those at Key Stage 3 do not let parents know enough about how their children could improve in specific subjects. Parents also get 'sweep' reports that give them a basic summary letting them know how their children are getting on during the year. They are invited to talk to staff each year. The pupils' planners are designed to act as a form of communication between home and school. However, the use of the section on pupils' personal targets is not used effectively to help parents have access to this information.
53. The school works hard to involve parents in its work through, for example, the parents' forum that meets each term to discuss selected topics. A parents' support group also meets termly. This grew out of a group formed for parents of pupils with special educational needs, but has extended to include parents from the local primary schools as well as Brigshaw parents. Levels of consultation with parents are good, but overall parental involvement is only satisfactory. Parents do, however, rally round to support the school when the need arises and this help has been greatly appreciated in recent years. The parent teacher association has some input into the topics that will be discussed at parents' forums in addition to their useful function as a social and fund-raising group. The drama department has been able to make use of parent volunteers for pupils to interview and video and other parents work as teaching assistants or serve on the governing body in addition to the elected parent governors.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

54. The school is led by a very strong and effective headteacher. His work in holding the school together since the fire two and a half years ago and in creating a dynamic and vibrant school has been outstanding. In addition to ensuring the successful completion of a major re-building programme, he has ensured that the school has continued to improve in many ways. He is ably supported by a team of talented senior staff, by an active and very effective governing body, by teachers whose commitment to further improvement is excellent and by parents and pupils who believe in Brigshaw High School.
55. All of the work of the school is guided by a set of core values. These values, drawn up by all members of the school community, set out the aims and vision for the school.

They include a commitment to high standards and to the full inclusion of all pupils and students in every aspect of school life. Testament to the success of the school is that the statement of core values describes very closely what is currently happening in the school.

56. The overall management of the school is very good. Central to the success of management is the quality of delegation at all levels. Senior managers provide excellent support to the headteacher and middle managers are increasingly becoming very skilled in leading their staff teams. Over several years the school has developed a culture of self-evaluation of what it does in order to improve quality. This is best exemplified in the work to improve the overall quality of teaching in the school. Regular monitoring of all staff, together with well-structured professional development, has been a major reason for the improvements that have taken place.
57. All developments in the school are guided through a very effective school development plan. This plan sets out priorities over an extended period and thus guides financial, curriculum and resource decisions. Careful, forward-looking planning has helped the school to establish a secure financial base while at the same time radically improving overall resource provision in the school. To complement the overall school development plan, each subject department also produces plans for improvement and these, generally, are of high quality. Almost all heads of department give a strong lead to their staff teams and self-review is now a strong feature of departmental work. Monitoring and evaluation of what goes on is the basis for future actions in almost all aspects of school life. Only in subjects such as art and religious education has the role of the head of department not been fully developed. Here, the team ethos is not as strong as in other subjects and the full potential of these subjects is not being realised.
58. An exceptional characteristic of the school is the very good level of staff morale. All staff in the school feel valued and they therefore strive hard to give of their best. A strong team spirit has been fostered and staff are genuinely proud to be part of the school community. This is reflected in the fact that the school is fully staffed with qualified teachers, including specialists in all subject areas. Arrangements for the induction of teachers new to the school or to the profession are excellent, whilst procedures for professional development, appraisal and performance management are all very good. These arrangements are successful for both teaching and support staff in the school. Links with initial training institutions are effective, making Brigshaw a very good base for those training to enter the teaching profession.
59. Overall, the school is very well resourced and these resources are used very effectively to enhance learning. This represents a major improvement since the last inspection where, due to lower than average spending, some subjects were barely adequately resourced. Only in music are resources still inadequate. The adequacy and quality of learning resources in the library are good.
60. Governors play a strong part in helping to shape the strategic direction of the school. Very good working relationships between governors and senior staff are central to this. Governors are well informed about both the strengths and areas requiring further improvement in the school and they are fully involved in financial and school improvement planning. They have executed their role as 'critical friend' well in recent years. In particular, their support and guidance in the aftermath of the fire and the subsequent re-development of the school has been crucial to the school's success. Governors fulfil almost all their statutory duties very well, but do not ensure that all older pupils are able to follow courses in information and communication technology or religious education. Nor do they enable all pupils and students in the school to take part in a daily act of collective worship.

61. Opportunities afforded by the re-building programme have enabled the school to bring about a significant improvement in accommodation and resources. These are both now vastly better than at the time of the previous inspection. The school applies the principles of best value very successfully, ensuring that all resource and policy decisions are made in the best interests of pupils and students. The school is making good use of new technology, both in administration and in classrooms. As recently installed new systems become fully operational, this will improve still further. As a result, better services will be provided to staff, for instance, in providing ready access to the enormous database of information that has been developed on each pupil. This will help teachers refine their planning still further and will improve the quality of information available to pupils and students about their progress.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

62. There is a very clear vision of how it is intended the sixth form at Brigshaw should develop. This is exemplified in the commitment of staff and governors to establish a strong and effective link with a neighbouring school by which the range of sixth form courses on offer to students can be extended. Although in its early stages, there are clear signs of the potential success of this partnership. Governors and staff see the sixth form as an integral part of the school, with students modelling for younger pupils the high levels of aspiration and expectation that the school shares with them.
63. Arrangements for the overall management of the sixth form are very good. The sixth form runs very well on a day-to-day basis and good procedures are in place for the monitoring and evaluation of developments. The clear development plan for the sixth form reflects the good overview held by senior managers of current strengths and areas where further improvement is needed. Sixth form managers are playing a full and active part in long-term strategic planning and in the day-to-day review of progress.
64. The sixth form is growing in numbers and in the impact it is having on the rest of the school. Targets for both growth and for further improvement in standards are challenging but achievable.

### ***Resources***

65. The sixth form has benefited, as has the rest of the school, from the re-building programme. Accommodation for the sixth form is now good, with easy access to a range of facilities for when students are engaged in independent study. Staffing for the sixth form is good, with well-qualified teachers able to present their subjects well to students. Equipment levels are now very good, enabling students to undertake a full range of activities in lessons. Although some class sizes are relatively small, the sixth form is, overall, cost effective.

## **PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY**

66. The provision for pupils with a physical disability is very good. The school has adapted its accommodation very thoroughly to enable pupils with a physical disability to access all areas of the school. Pupils' needs, and targets to meet them, are clearly stated in their regularly reviewed individual education plans and statements. These reviews appropriately involve the pupils, parents and all professionals involved in providing support.

67. Led by the very effective management of the schools' inclusion co-ordinator, teachers and assistants support the pupils very well, according to their needs, from the time they arrive at school until they leave. Pupils receive appropriate help with transport to and from school. In lessons they receive very good levels of help so that they can take part in all aspects of lessons. Here they achieve well, make good progress and are able to attain at least satisfactory levels of attainment.
68. Equality of access and opportunity for these pupils is very good. Pupils work very hard at their tasks, displaying good attitudes. Their fellow pupils, who do not have a physical disability, make friendly purposeful relationships with them, assisting them willingly when required. Funding received by the school to support these pupils is fully integrated into the school's routine provision and is used very effectively to ensure that individual needs are met and pupils are included fully in the life and work of the school.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

69. In order to maintain and further improve overall standards in the school, staff and governors should:
- Undertake a review of the curriculum provided in Years 10 and 11, particularly to ensure that:
    - all pupils are able to follow a course in religious education in line with the local education authority agreed syllabus (paragraphs 28, 60, 170) ;
    - all pupils have access to the full range of information and communication technology experiences set out in the National Curriculum (paragraphs 17, 26, 28, 60, 115, 117, 137–141, 159, 161, 185, 96, 200, 215, 231);
    - provision is made for pupils in both Years 10 and 11 to follow a course of personal, social and health education that adequately covers elements of citizenship and careers education and guidance (paragraph 32).

### **Sixth form**

In order to enhance overall provision in the sixth form, staff and governors should:

- Ensure that the curriculum in the sixth form provides for all students to be able to follow a course in religious education (paragraphs 26, 60).

In addition, governors should include in their action plan:

Make arrangements for all pupils in Years 7 to 11, and all students in the sixth form, to be able to take part in a daily act of collective worship (paragraph 60).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	153
	Sixth form	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		69

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 - 11</b>							
Number	13	45	56	35	4	0	0
Percentage	8	29	36	24	3	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	0	9	28	12	0	0	0
Percentage	0	18	57	25	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1145	170
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	137	n/a

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	52	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	111	4

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	38
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
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	113	120	233

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	77	68	70
	Girls	105	80	80
	Total	182	148	150
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	79 (70)	65 (72)	68 (74)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	37 (33)	43 (45)	33 (38)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	78	75	74
	Girls	104	89	85
	Total	182	164	159
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (78)	70 (78)	68 (80)
	National	67 (65)	71 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	36 (40)	41 (41)	34 (39)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	33 (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
	2001	92	67	159

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	36	74	80
	Girls	38	61	64
	Total	74	135	144
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47 (51)	85 (88)	91 (92)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.8
	National	39.0

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

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

### 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	17	19	36

Average A/AS points score per candidate	Male	Female	All
	School	16.8	14.2
National	16.9	17.7	17.4

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
1296	101	1
5		
4		
5		
3		
1		
1		

*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)	77.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked per week	850.25

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	23.2
Sixth form	17.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001 - 2002
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	£
Total income	3,526,354
Total expenditure	3,574,232
Expenditure per pupil	2,985
Balance brought forward from previous year	122,720
Balance carried forward to next year	74,842

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	33
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1315
Number of questionnaires returned	64

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	50	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	38	8	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	36	17	0	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	41	23	5	0
The teaching is good.	47	44	6	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	31	17	11	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	26	5	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	31	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	38	43	13	6	0
The school is well led and managed.	56	36	6	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	44	11	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	30	9	2	6

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting expressed admiration for the way the school had maintained and improved standards during the aftermath of the fire. All were pleased that the school focused on the needs of each pupil and student as an individual and were pleased that all pupils, irrespective of disability, race or creed were well integrated into the school community.

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

**ENGLISH**

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

Strengths

- Very good overall standards and achievements by all pupils.
- Very good teaching, with effective planning and teachers' high expectations, leads to very good progress by pupils.
- Leadership, which supports the department's commitment to improve and capacity to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- The development of pupils' speaking skills.
- The contribution the department makes to pupils' experience of other cultures.

70. Standards are very good, with particular strengths in writing supported by reading a wide range of texts. Pupils listen well, but when speaking they sometimes lack confidence to do full justice to the quality of their ideas and reach an average level.
71. Standards in tests at the end of Year 9 have been above average over several years in comparison with national results and with results in similar schools. In 2002, results were once again above the national average and also above the average for similar schools. Girls did better than boys overall, but an impressive proportion of boys gained higher grades, indicating that teaching strategies to support the attainment of boys are working to good effect.
72. At the end of Year 11 the number of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in English and in English literature GCSE examinations in 2001 was above average. Results further improved in 2002 to exceed the school's previous best. Girls did better than boys, but the gap between boys' and girls' results is narrower than nationally. Suitable steps are taken to engage boys' interest in English lessons and this is positively reflected in the work seen.
73. The subject makes a strong contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills in lessons. Considerable work has been successfully undertaken to enhance pupils' literacy skills in other subjects, partly in response to the introduction of the English strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
74. A substantial proportion of pupils enter Year 7 with attainment levels below the national average. All pupils, including those who are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, make very good progress in Years 7 to 9 and continue to do so, mainly in GCSE courses, in Years 10 and 11. A small number of pupils follow a course that emphasises basic skills, leading to an externally awarded certificate. These pupils too make very good progress.
75. Lessons and work completed over time provide further evidence of good standards. Pupils study all genres of literature and a variety of non-fiction writing to understand content and techniques of expression. They use the knowledge gained to develop their own writing. The previous report noted that speaking was less good than other

elements of English, but lessons now successfully provide lots of opportunities so that pupils improve this skill.

76. Learning is based on comprehensive and imaginative schemes of work and all pupils build on previous achievements as they progress. In group and class work they listen to and learn from each other. Displays in classrooms of ideas about work in progress show how they build understanding through an incremental approach to texts and topics. In a Year 9 lesson, for instance, a pupil studying a poem by Seamus Heaney said of the lessons, "they don't just tell you ideas, they give you ways of having ideas". This approach leads to further very good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils work well, often in small mixed groups, which contributes well to social development. In a Year 10 lesson on advertising techniques, pupils interchanged between groups, sharing ideas and improving work as a result. Pupils' attitudes are very positive and their involvement is reinforced by the way teachers demand that they think about how they are learning. Some aspects of work extend pupils' thinking about other cultures and minority ethnic groups, but this is not sufficiently developed.
77. Teaching is very good overall and is better than at the time of the previous inspection. At times it is excellent and seldom is it less than good. Planning and teachers' expectations make an outstanding contribution to good standards. Marking is thorough and helpful and the department's approach has influenced whole-school policy to support literacy. Teachers use assessment data well to monitor individuals' progress. They implement schemes of work to good effect by offering well structured lessons conducted at a brisk pace and calling on the full range of skills. They refer pupils to what has been learned in previous lessons, or earlier years.
78. Leadership and management of the English department are excellent. Members of the department make a strong contribution to the cycle of review and renewal of schemes of work and resources are well organised. Notes on business items are circulated in advance of meetings to allow for discussions about learning. Analysis of performance data is used to focus on improvement strategies. The department is fully staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers of English, allowing delegated action on a wide range of improvement objectives. Since the previous inspection, when strength of leadership was recognised, the department has built on this firm foundation and made the most of its talents. The trend of improving standards has been sustained. Much is being done to improve speaking and listening skills, in which some pupils still perform less consistently well than in reading or writing.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards of work at the end of Year 11 are improving and are now at least in line with national expectation.
- All pupils make consistently good progress, including the gifted and those with special educational needs.
- Teaching is almost always good or better. It is often very good or outstanding and makes very good use of a wide variety of resources and teaching styles.
- Leadership and management of the department are of very good quality.

### **Areas for development**

- Arrangements for setting long-term target grades for pupils.
- Guiding pupils on their current attainment levels.

79. In 2002 national tests for 14-year-olds, pupils' results were broadly average. This continues a pattern whereby, since 1998, results have been close to or above the national average. Results in 2002 were slightly below the average for similar schools. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
80. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were below the national average, but maintained a steady improvement in results since 1998 at a faster rate than nationally. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Results in 2002 were significantly higher, particularly in the number of pupils gaining A\* to C grades.
81. By the end of Year 9, pupils are working at levels above those expected nationally. Those who are of just above average ability also achieve better than could be expected. In a good lesson on graphing real situations, the good quality demonstration by the teacher, using clear overhead transparencies motivated these pupils. Their interest was retained by working together in groups, thinking deeply about the graphs that represented real situations. The pupils developed a good understanding that is beyond what might be expected of them.
82. Pupils in Year 9 who are of low ability achieve extremely well compared to their prior attainment. In an outstanding lesson, they matched equivalent fractions, decimals and percentages confidently. They learned superbly because the lesson was fun, they were actively involved throughout and the teacher had very high expectations of their work. Pupils with special educational needs learn well. For example, the teacher and teaching assistant, working with a small group, were able to focus learning objectives very effectively at individual pupils by engaging in sustained one-to-one prompting. This stimulated thinking and provided much needed encouragement to these less able pupils.
83. The progress of pupils is good throughout Years 7 to 9. They enter the school with levels that are just below the national average and overall are working at levels above national expectation by the end of Year 9. They learn well from the moment of entry using the national bridging units for number and algebra, which the majority have just completed in their last two months of primary school. These bridging units, devised jointly by the school and some of its feeder schools, enable teachers to know exactly at which stage of development most pupils are.
84. Even whilst in their mixed ability groups during the first half term, teachers do their best to ensure that all pupils are working to achieve their potential. An enjoyable activity with pupils playing a game against each other, which required them to answer substitution questions, reinforced their learning very effectively.
85. Pupils are placed into sets by ability after the first half term in Year 7. Teachers continue to use a wide variety of activities and resources, including graphic calculators from Year 7, to motivate them throughout Years 7 to 9. Pupils of all abilities are actively involved in almost all lessons and make correspondingly good progress throughout.
86. Pupils currently in Year 11 are working at levels slightly above what would be expected for their age, suggesting that the upward trend in standards is being maintained. In a very good lesson with the top set, pupils raised their confidence in dealing with percentage error, by rounding population values of EC countries to one significant figure. They quickly moved on to calculating error bounds in measurement and then to percentage error. A real life problem was used in a whole-class summary to the

- lesson. This provided very good reinforcement of the work done in the lesson and extended the most able pupils.
87. Many pupils of below average ability make better progress than could be expected. In a good lesson on straight-line graphs, pupils used graphic calculators to reinforce their understanding of the concepts of gradient and intercept. They discussed their work sensibly and learned best by tracing graphs on their calculator to check their work, rather than the teacher's use of oral questions.
  88. Pupils make good progress in Year 10 and satisfactory progress in Year 11. Intensive paired work and discussion help pupils to gain an understanding in some classes. Pupils discuss their work seriously. The least able, including those with special educational needs and physical disabilities, also make good progress. For example, in a Year 10 class, pupils used a stimulating map exercise to reinforce ideas of direction and co-ordinates. The teacher's high expectations and varied approach led to good learning and understanding for all, including a physically disabled pupil.
  89. Pupils have a good attitude to mathematics throughout the school. They usually behave very well and regularly work in pairs or groups, discussing mathematics and sharing ideas. They are very willing to help those who need it most and are thoughtful about how their behaviour affects others. In the most stimulating lessons, they respond extremely well and show determination to work to their potential, whatever it may be. The most able pupils respond well to very challenging work, whilst those with special educational needs appreciate the helpful support of teaching assistants.
  90. Teaching is good overall. It is often very good or excellent. It has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers work very hard, planning imaginative activities that stimulate pupils to learn. Lessons have good pace with clearly identified objectives for learning that are shared openly with pupils, who accordingly respond well. Teachers break lessons up into clear well-timed activities and are good at making transitions between these activities as smooth as possible. The mathematics strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy underpins the best teaching. This is maintained well throughout Years 10 and 11, although occasionally teachers are tempted to direct pupils too much in these classes.
  91. Teachers assess work accurately and conscientiously. They are good at focusing pupils on what they must do to improve. However, long-term targets are sometimes too high and unrealistic, especially for average and less able pupils approaching GCSE examinations, and this has an adverse effect on some pupils.
  92. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is a very good teacher who has lifted morale and created the climate to raise standards of teaching and attainment. He has also led the way in the use of computers to enhance learning, despite difficulties of access to computer facilities. Teachers currently in the department provide very good support. They have taken responsibility for embedding the Key Stage 3 Strategy, providing work programmes for the gifted and talented and organising teaching assistants effectively.

## SCIENCE

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

#### Strengths

- Well qualified specialist teachers, who work as a team and are well supported by technicians and teaching assistants.
- Very good leadership and management of the department.
- Very good accommodation and resources available, including information and communication (ICT) equipment.
- Well-planned courses and individual lessons.
- The extensive assessment data, which is used in a constructive manner.

#### Areas for improvement

- Attainment, especially for middle and lower attaining boys, at GCSE.
- A more consistent approach to marking of pupils' work.

93. In tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 standards were close to the national average, but were slightly lower than in the previous year. Results have been improving for the past five years and are similar to those in similar schools.
94. Overall, the standards seen during the inspection were above those expected at the end of Year 9. The higher attaining pupils in Year 9 were able to describe the differences between elements and compounds and could draw molecular models of simple compounds. They were working at a level above the national average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress considering the relatively low level of attainment on entry.
95. Overall results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were average, though the number of pupils obtaining A\* to C grades was just above the national average. Girls gained better results than boys. Results in 2002 were slightly lower than in the previous year. The department has acted in a positive manner to raise the attainment of boys by forming specific target groups, who are given extra support. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 are making satisfactory progress considering their previous attainment at Key Stage 3. However, they have the potential to make better progress, especially the middle and lower attaining boys.
96. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory and the standard of work seen was close to the national average. By the start of Year 11 the less able pupils could perform investigations on the effect of temperature on the rate of a reaction and draw conclusions from the results. More able Year 11 pupils could explain the relationships between acceleration and speed to a standard well above the national average. The progress in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall and good for the most able pupils.
97. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good. Pupils in all years behave well and work hard in science lessons. There is, in most lessons, a friendly co-operative spirit between teachers and pupils, leading to a very pleasant working atmosphere. The attitudes and behaviour of a few lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not as good and this slows their progress.
98. The teaching of science is good overall. In a third of the lessons, teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned and taught by suitably qualified teachers who maintain good class control. Homework is set on a regular basis. It is structured and is an integral part of the lesson plans. Some teachers mark work to a very high standard. They set targets in a constructive manner and give a clear indication of attainment and what is needed to improve. However, this is not consistent across the department.

The monitoring of marking is currently not adequately undertaken. As a result, good practice is not sufficiently identified and shared and targets set are not always followed up with pupils.

99. Pupils are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end of topic tests and they are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis. The department also uses this data to monitor progress and the effectiveness of the teaching in a detailed manner. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in science and make good progress. These pupils have been identified and they are given additional support to raise their attainment. Pupils can readily use their literacy and numeracy skills, both in written work and class discussions. The numeracy skills of most pupils are good and assist their progress in lessons. The use of computers in science lessons is good.
100. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Good progress has been made within the department since the last inspection. Attainment, assessment and the quality of teaching have all improved. The head of department has been responsible for the introduction of many new initiatives associated with the priorities of school development plans. These include the introduction of a completely new science course for all pupils, linked to an effective assessment process. There is a formal departmental system for monitoring teaching and learning that has helped raise standards by sharing good practice. The department work as a team, supported by effective teaching assistants and by a very efficient group of technicians, who ensure that equipment and resources ordered are ready for the start of lessons. The staff are very well supported by a continual professional development programme, which is well co-ordinated, by the head of department. Teachers are aware of issues that need to be addressed and have drawn up appropriate and detailed development plans.
101. The accommodation for the science department is very good. The department has 12 laboratories, 9 of which are new and are of excellent quality. One includes a full suite of computers.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths
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- Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9 and have very good attitudes to the subject across the school.
- Standards improve from below average on entry to the school to average at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Relationships and behaviour are good and the staff and students work well together.
- There is a good equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. Inclusion of all pupils in lessons is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards, both at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations.
- The match of tasks more closely to individual needs.
- Planning of what is taught over a period of time.
- The identification of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching.
- Clear plans for the future development of the subject.
- Increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for image control, development and modification.

102. On entry to the school many pupils have limited experiences of art and design and standards are below average. By the end of Year 9, the majority of pupils, both boys and girls, are attaining average standards and achieve well. At present the school enters Year 11 pupils for the GCSE examination. Due to the good subject expertise of the teachers and the overall satisfactory quality of teaching, pupils attain average standards and achieve satisfactorily. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below average. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Since the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 have dropped from above average levels and there has been some decline in the GCSE examination results.
103. Inspection evidence indicates standards over time are not fully supported through consistent planning matched to a scheme of work that addresses each project being studied. Pupils are confident in the use of a range of media and materials, covering two and three dimensions. They demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how artists use colour, line and shape. In using the resources well that illustrate the work of a range of artists as a stimulus or starting point in their work, they usually show a good interpretation of the artists' work. For example, pupils in Year 7, supported by excellent teaching, used their developing awareness of the work and style of Vincent Van Gogh to develop their awareness of how he used different types of line and marks in his pictures.
104. The pupils' literacy standards are satisfactorily supported by the use of poetry as a stimulus for their pictures, with pupils writing evaluations of their work as they progress and the use of key words. For example, the teacher successfully introduced pupils in Year 11 examining a range of artists painting in a surrealist style to surrealist poetry. The application of numeracy is satisfactorily developed. In a Year 9 lesson pupils when examining the work of Hieronymus Bosch, who lived from 1450 to 1516, quickly calculated accurately the length of his life. It is also successfully applied with pupils using grids to analyse and enlarge pictures, as seen in a Year 8 lesson. Older pupils, in particular from Year 10, are starting to make a satisfactory use of their sketch and notebooks, with some careful presentation and development of their work. However, this is an area for further development. Many sketchbooks show insufficient self-evaluation and comment by the pupils to support the reasons for and an analysis of their work.
105. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, but it is variable across the department. During the period of inspection some excellent and very good teaching was seen, but

many lessons were at best satisfactory. Teachers plan their own work and there is no consistently applied policy within the department for how this should be done. The overall quality of planning is, therefore, unsatisfactory. High quality teaching is seen when teachers plan their work in detail over the time of the chosen project and modify the pupils' tasks arising from an assessed awareness of their needs. Whilst there are satisfactory procedures for the assessment of pupils' work, insufficient information is gathered on the progress of pupils to influence the content of future lessons or on how individual pupils may be better supported to achieve higher standards. There is no monitoring and evaluation of art teaching by the subject co-ordinator. As a result, good practice that could be shared with others is not identified.

106. The majority of pupils show high levels of enthusiasm, motivation and interest in their work in art. Overall, their attitudes are very good. When motivated by their teachers they readily apply themselves, working at a good rate to gain satisfactory levels of understanding and skill.
107. Due to the good efforts of the subject co-ordinator, a good range of contacts are made with artists from outside the school. Their work in school enhances the range of work studied by the pupils. Good examples of this work, including the work of the full-time teachers, are seen where pupils have successfully produced a series of clay masks, papier-maché gargoyles and sculptures in other materials displayed around the school. These good contacts have been put to effective use in the design of the school. A firm in Skipton is developing, in bronze, sculptures completed by older pupils which, when finished, will be displayed outside and around the school to enhance the surroundings. At present there is an art club, held once a week, where a former member of the support staff takes a group of pupils for the making of mosaic pictures. Information and communication technology resources are currently used insufficiently for control and image development. Newly purchased resources and the setting up of a computer suite, when in use, will meet this need.
108. The leadership and management of art and design are insufficiently rigorous. The head of department does not successfully co-ordinate the work of members of his department. Insufficient attention is paid to enabling all members of the department to share good practice and to plan together for further improvements. The range of displays in and around the art room and around the school support pupils' work and values their achievements.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

Overall provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths
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- Prior experience in planning and teaching a personal, social and health education (PSHE) course.
- Staff experience and expertise.
- The school's commitment to fully implementing citizenship in Years 7 to 11.

#### Areas for improvement

- The better use of curricular time to provide a course in Year 11.
- To complete audits in all departments.
- To clarify the role of the co-ordinator.

109. Levels of attainment in citizenship at the end of Year 9 are satisfactory. In Year 10, standards are also satisfactory, but no pupils in Year 11 currently study citizenship. A new course of study in citizenship was introduced in September 2002 and it is, therefore, not possible to judge progress over time.
110. Pupils in Year 9 have a mature approach to discussion and are beginning to investigate the concept of democracy, in preparation for voting for a school council. They readily join in discussion and benefit from good teaching that is based upon clear aims and objectives. Pupils gain in confidence and work hard. They display positive attitudes towards their work, behaving sensibly, and are prepared to listen carefully to one another. These factors ensure they make good progress during lessons. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 also respond well to good teaching and join in discussion readily. They show considerable sensitivity in listening to one another, where some pupils are less fluent than others. For example, pupils new to the school introduce themselves and provide information about their hobbies and interests.
111. Pupils in Year 10 carefully consider moral and ethical dilemmas, exploring, for instance, ideas such as the 'gift of life'. They confidently discuss their feelings for the environment and many form sensible opinions as they improve their speaking and listening skills. Pupils compile data on themselves, to inform possible career choices. They work sensibly and conscientiously in pursuing tasks that require considerable powers of concentration. These mature attitudes are successfully encouraged because good teaching effectively engages pupils' interests and needs. Careful planning ensures that all relevant information is made available and strong support is provided for those pupils who require additional help.
112. Provision for citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is planned carefully to ensure that all pupils have access to the three main study areas set out in the statutory curriculum. All pupils follow this course within their form groups. In addition, plans are in place to use visiting speakers in assembly and to involve pupils in community activities. The introduction of an elected school council is viewed by staff as an important step in promoting an understanding of responsible citizenship.
113. The overall provision for older pupils does not, at present, fully meet national requirements. In Year 10, there is a programme of study that provides good opportunities to all pupils and offers six modules of work in rotation. However, the school has no planned provision in Year 11 and no specific curricular time has been allocated to the subject this year. The co-ordinator for citizenship has yet to monitor fully what provision may already be in place within the schemes of work of other departments.
114. The school is taking active steps to plan for future provision in Year 11. It has made a good start in introducing this new subject within an already full curriculum. Promising steps include the thorough audit of provision already in place within the history

department and some on-going work in other departments to complete an audit. The school anticipates all departments will complete an audit by the end of this school year. Within the school's curriculum for Years 10 and 11, elements of citizenship have already been identified and represent valuable building blocks for future development. A number of staff already demonstrate an interest and enthusiasm for teaching this subject. All this provides a strong base for future staff development.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision for design and technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, leading to pupils having good attitudes to learning.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively.
- Accommodation and teaching resources are very good.
- The department is well led and managed.

### Areas for development

- There is insufficient emphasis on some elements of product design.
- There is insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning.

115. In 2002, the attainment of 14-year-old pupils was in line with national expectations, with standards being similar to those in 2001. Achievement overall is good and some pupils are attaining high standards of work. Pupils are able to examine and evaluate materials with a view to their suitability for a design project. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of specialist terminology, particularly in food technology. However, pupils do not always take account of likely users of their products. They do not make sufficient links between stages in the design process, for example, between their initial design sketches and an idea chosen for development. Pupils have satisfactory skills and work confidently in practical lessons, with due regard for health and safety. They have insufficient skills in the use of ICT to support their learning.

116. GCSE results for 2001 were close to the national average. The 2002 results were similar to those of the previous year. Pupils attained good results in the electronic products course. In food technology they were below what might be expected in 2002 and this was partly attributable to staff absence. Girls gained better results than boys, as they do nationally, but the department has been effective in reducing the difference between boys' and girls' results in 2002.

117. Currently, standards of work of 16-year-old pupils in all aspects of the subject are in line with expectations and their achievement is generally good. Pupils have sufficient research and practical skills to investigate possible materials and constructional methods when designing. They understand industrial methods of production, for example, batch production in textiles technology. Pupils studying electronics have insufficient understanding of the function of the components they are using. In electronics, pupils have a good understanding of how to use computer-aided design and those studying graphic products are developing similar skills. However, pupils generally have too few skills in the use of ICT equipment, with no evidence of work in computer-aided manufacture.

118. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan and organise lessons well to a standard format in the department. Good use of time in lessons motivates pupils and leads to them having good attitudes to learning. Teachers have good subject

knowledge and are skilled in the use of questioning to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Where ancillary staff are well deployed, they contribute to the good progress made, particularly by pupils with special educational needs. Teachers' high expectations, for example, in textiles technology in Year 9 lead to lower attaining pupils making very good progress with the development of practical skills and retention of specialist information. Some teaching focuses on applied decoration at the expense of fundamental elements of product design.

119. The department is well led and managed. There is a good sense of shared purpose amongst all members of the department, including ancillary staff. Department members make positive contributions to course planning, which is of good quality. There is a very good range of expertise in the department and teachers are well deployed according to their specialisms. The workshop technician and ancillary classroom staff make valuable contributions to pupils' learning. However, the lack of a food technology technician puts an unnecessary burden on teaching staff. The accommodation and teaching resources are of high quality. With good quality ICT resources very recently installed the department is well placed to implement plans for these to be used to enhance pupils' learning.
120. There is satisfactory coverage of curriculum requirements for all pupils, recently extended with the addition of textiles technology as a GCSE subject. Pupils respond very well to the good system of setting targets to improve their work and those following examination courses benefit from detailed information on how they can attain higher grades.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very well planned and results in good performances by pupils during lessons in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards in GCSE rose sharply to be above the national average in 2002.
- Pupils work well together in groups and the subject helps them to reinforce their literacy skills and supports their personal development.

### Areas to develop

- Standards in the current Year 11 are not high enough.
- Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 are too dependent on the teachers to give them ideas.

121. Drama is taught as a separate subject to Years 7 to 9 and is an option for GCSE from Year 10. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above expectations with good achievement in impromptu performances. Pupils respond well and use their own ideas to extend a simple tableau into a developing dramatic production. All pupils make good progress because teachers are clear about the aims of the lesson and convey these to the pupils. Pupils learned to express ideas sensitively about rites and ceremonies and to listen to the views of others in Year 7. Pupils practise the skills taught in literacy lessons. In Year 8 pupils listened attentively to a story with a highly moral theme read well by the teacher. In groups they moved smoothly from the text to performance and showed an understanding of how to portray character and use dialogue imaginatively. Year 9 pupils explored the importance of symbolism in the theatre as a preparation for their study on *Romeo and Juliet*. They were able to create an atmosphere of tension and expectancy, building on ideas discussed with their teacher. More able girls took an

active lead in the workshop, but all others listened and adapted their facial expressions and movements to match the developing mood. Pupils and teacher reacted to the performances with genuine pleasure as the scenario unfolds. The teaching is good. Drama contributes very positively to pupils' spiritual and moral education. Extra-curricular clubs and visits to the theatre extend pupils' experiences further.

122. Standards in GCSE were above the national average in 2002 and represented a considerable improvement on earlier years. Over two-thirds of the pupils recorded their best overall grade in drama. The current cohort in Year 11 are not achieving as highly because they lack the confidence and determination to learn for themselves. Many are content to wait for the teacher's lead. Despite well-planned lessons with a variety of pace and ideas, a significant proportion of pupils are slow to involve themselves in the work. Writing standards in drama are generally in line with expectations. The pupils show more commitment in their written work. Higher attaining pupils have clear ideas about how to choose a cast for *Macbeth*. In an ingenious update, the witches are cleaning women whose entrances with mops and brushes disturb the boardroom discussions of the leading characters. Teachers indicate in their marking how work can be improved. Pupils use a good range of reference books and the Internet. There are good reviews of plays and films studied, with pupils taking notice of the writing frames provided by their teachers.
123. Drama is well managed and teachers work well as a team. There are good facilities for practical work. Clearer planned links with English in Years 10 and 11 would give pupils more chances to read aloud and help them to improve their performance skills.

## GEOGRAPHY

The overall quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The consistently good quality of teaching leads to high quality learning in many lessons and good achievement over time.
- The curriculum offers good opportunities for pupils of all abilities. This has led to a significant increase in pupils choosing the subject in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils are taught well so that they display positive attitudes towards their studies and behave well in lessons,
- Leadership and management are very good, helping create a strong corporate ethos amongst staff.

### Areas for improvement

- Access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities and an increase in their use in teaching the subject.
- Greater flexibility in teaching methods, to help promote pupil discussion and confidence in debate.

124. In the 2001 teacher assessments for 14-year-old pupils, overall attainment matches the national average. Pupils' results in the GCSE examination were significantly above the national average. In both key stages, pupils' achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment. The trend over time is of steady improvement in overall standards. In 2002, teacher assessment and GCSE examination results suggest these standards have been maintained.
125. By the age of 14, most pupils achieve standards that match national expectations. For example, they understand the principal causes of coastal erosion and can distinguish

between different types of erosion. Higher attaining pupils often exceed those standards, making good use of vocabulary to describe in detail the impact of the sea upon the shore. Whilst most pupils with special educational needs achieve lower standards, a number exceed expectations. These pupils work in less detail, but many produce accurate diagrams and successfully complete short written tasks.

126. By the age of 16, a significant number of pupils produce work that exceeds national expectations. For example, they make good use of their mapping skills to assess the relative merits of different sites for a new science park. They offer rational views to support their choice. Pupils know of the importance of roads, rail and good housing to attract staff to such a venture. Higher attaining pupils display good knowledge and understanding of wider issues, such as the impact of new industry to re-generate an area and the environmental dilemmas posed. Pupils with special educational needs are able to determine, with support, a sequence of events from factory closure to neighbourhood decline and offer some valid comments to describe this.
127. The class setting arrangements in Key Stages 3 and 4 ensure all pupils have good access to the curriculum. The standards achieved result from a careful match of task to ability in many lessons. There is no significant variation in standards between boys and girls. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are good, though their ICT skills are under-developed. Standards in Key Stage 3 are higher now than at the time of the previous inspection.
128. In both Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They display positive attitudes towards their work and respond well to questions. For example, in a Year 8 lower ability set, pupils recognised and confidently named the Alps and the Adriatic. This is because they co-operate well with the learning support assistants, who encourage them to contribute. In Year 10, pupils participated thoughtfully in an exercise to visualise being an earthquake victim. Here, the excellent teaching provided good opportunities for pupils to respond to this challenge and they sensitively described their feelings as survivors.
129. The overall quality of teaching, by all staff, is good and this is a major factor in the standards achieved. In both Key Stage 3 and 4 teaching is never less than good, often very good and sometimes excellent. This has a direct impact upon the quality of learning by pupils of all age and ability and this matches the standards of teaching. The carefully planned lessons ensure pupils are clear about what is expected from them. All teachers possess a secure knowledge of their subject. On occasion, their enthusiasm for geography leads to an over-emphasis on teacher-led activity and reduces opportunities for discussion. However, questioning skills are good, pupil management is very good and all staff quickly establish a purposeful atmosphere at the commencement of lessons. The learning support staff have a valuable role in working with specific pupils, providing significant benefit for pupils with special educational needs. Examples of very good teaching include the promotion of challenging tasks for the most able pupils and the carefully tailored work for those studying for the 'Certificate of Achievement'.
130. The head of department provides very good leadership, which helps create a good atmosphere and strong team spirit amongst the staff. The department is managed very efficiently, financial control is secure and expenditure on resources is carefully monitored. The curriculum is of good quality and is enhanced by a significant range of field trips, such as the Year 9 visit to the East Coast and the Year 10 visit to the Yorkshire Dales. All pupils enjoy equal access to the curriculum and have good opportunities to achieve success.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and is leading to improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Pupils of all abilities are actively involved in lessons and evaluate their work accurately and effectively.
- Pupils behave very well and have very good relationships with their classmates and with their teachers.
- Leadership and management are excellent and ensure that areas for development are well founded and based on an accurate evaluation of performance.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment at GCSE, which is below average.
- Boys do not perform as well as girls in external examinations.

131. Attainment at GCSE over the past three years has been inconsistent. In 2000, for example, results were average but they were well below in 2001. There was somewhat of an improvement in 2002 and there were more grades at A and A\*, but boys were over-represented in the lower grades and there was a significant minority of pupils who failed to reach pass level.

132. However, because of a sophisticated evaluation of performance, better teaching and an emphasis on providing a variety of methods to meet pupils' individual learning needs, standards seen during the inspection were much improved and are rising at a rapid rate. Pupils in all years, including those who find much of the work difficult, achieve well and are making good progress in acquiring historical skills. In Year 8, for example, pupils in lower sets are beginning to understand the nature of evidence and those in higher groups speak quite cogently about bias. Moreover, because teachers place emphasis on objectivity and the accurate use of historical terminology, pupils in Year 9 can evaluate sources at a level that belies their years. Pupils build upon these strengths and in Year 10 are already beginning to write short essays, which discuss opposing views and come to reasoned conclusions. In Year 11, their understanding of cause and effect and their ability to make links between different periods of history, in relation to the growth of medical knowledge, for example, are leading to a significant number of pupils demonstrating the potential to attain the highest grades. The department has established a variety of methods to improve boys' achievement and this is already bearing fruit. There is no apparent difference in the performance of boys and girls in Years 10 and 11.

133. Teaching is good overall and in half of lessons it is very good or excellent. Pupils are offered a variety of methods to learn and present their work in their own ways, because teachers are concerned to meet the needs of each individual. Pupils benefit from collaborative work and they enjoy learning from and with each other. They behave very well and adopt a most mature approach to their studies. This is because they value the approach of their teachers, of whom they speak highly, and because they are often fascinated by the subject matter. Furthermore, pupils of all levels of attainment receive credit for their achievements, are questioned challengingly yet realistically, are required to think deeply about the lesson content and are expected to reach for the highest standards in everything they do. Teachers know their pupils well, are accurate in their assessment of how they are progressing and involve each pupil in setting targets for the future.

134. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection because of the excellent quality of leadership and management in the subject. Accurate and effective strategies have been introduced for development in teaching, learning and achievement. Because there is effective delegation of departmental responsibilities, and because teachers display high levels of commitment to their pupils and to the subject-area, there is a shared capacity to improve and teachers co-operate fully with each other.
135. Resources produced by teachers to support the progress of pupils of all ability levels are of a very high standard and serve to motivate, to challenge and to ensure that youngsters are fully prepared for the rigours of external examinations. Accommodation is excellent and, although the rooms are new and have only been occupied for a few weeks, teachers have already demonstrated their high levels of industry by producing displays of pupils' work that are of the highest quality. The department recognises the value of information and communication technology in the teaching and learning of history and the establishment of a local history website is a very strong feature in this regard.
136. The history department is concerned to raise standards in everything it undertakes. Teachers place great emphasis on the evaluation of their own performance and on the sharing of good practice. They care deeply for the welfare of the pupils and work unstintingly to provide each individual with exactly what he or she needs to progress. The department is, therefore, very well placed for continued development.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Provision of and access to computers is very good.
- The high standards of attainment in the GCSE Business and Communications course.
- The detailed plans drawn up by the head of department for the effective development of cross-curricular ICT.

### Areas for development

- Developing assessment procedures for cross-curricular ICT to develop pupils' learning and monitor progress.
- Formalising the monitoring procedures for cross-curricular ICT.
- Ensuring that all Years 10 and 11 pupils have access to the full range of experiences laid down by the National Curriculum.

137. At the end of Year 9 in 2001, the overall standards attained by pupils as indicated by teacher assessments were well above the national average. This is not the finding of the inspection evidence. Pupils in Year 7 reach the expected standard in skills in areas of word processing, desktop publishing and using the Internet to research information. Building on this foundation, pupils in Years 8 and 9 have a variety of opportunities to improve and develop their ICT skills through planned activities in different subjects. By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to use computers competently, particularly for researching, presenting information in a variety of ways and in the use of spreadsheets and databases. Their ICT skills are in line with the national average, but the depth of knowledge and understanding is below expectation. This is due in part to adverse circumstances that the school has had to deal with. The provision, planning and current delivery of cross-curricular ICT, particularly in Key Stage 3, has significantly

improved as school and department action plans are now being implemented effectively to secure improvements.

138. Standards attained in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were above the national average. Even though not all students in Years 10 and 11 take the GCSE course, many are involved in other courses. There is, for example GCSE Business, that supports and develops ICT skills in researching, presenting ideas in different ways and using ICT to measure, record and analyse information. Standards seen on the inspection in GCSE business applications lessons and in some other subjects across the curriculum were good, with pupils developing confidence in the use of the computer as a tool to present, evaluate and modify their work. ICT is planned into subject schemes of work and there are good examples of it being taught in lessons across the curriculum. In a Year 11 French lesson, for instance, pupils were using an Internet shopping programme to help develop their understanding and use of French in a familiar context. In a year 10 English lesson pupils were introduced to a multimedia programme that develops skills using information from various sources in order to answer key questions. However, not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to the full range of experiences required by the National Curriculum.
139. The quality of teaching in ICT courses is good. Good relationships between teachers and pupils encourage cooperation in lessons and this leads to good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils are highly motivated and learn effectively because they are actively involved in their lessons. They enjoy the opportunities to work independently and to develop their problem solving skills. Teachers make good use of a range of ICT in their teaching, including interactive white boards.
140. The assessment of the taught elements of ICT in Year 7 and in Years 10 and 11 are good. However the assessment procedures in the cross-curricular aspects of the subject are inadequate, and this restricts pupils' scope for building on previous learning and improving their knowledge and capability.
141. Leadership and management of ICT is good with the newly appointed head of department having a clear view of what needs to be done and the strategies needed to secure improvements in the teaching of ICT across the curriculum. The department is well supported by a hardworking and effective team of technicians.

## Media Studies

The provision for media studies in Key Stage 4 is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is well planned with interesting resources to help pupils understand difficult ideas.

- Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently to produce good practical work.
- Most pupils make good progress over the two-year course.

#### Areas for improvement

- Urgency at the start of lessons and less pupil dependence on their teachers.
- The technical accuracy in the writing of some middle ability pupils.

142. Media studies is a new subject for pupils in Key Stage 4. It was not reported in the last inspection. GCSE results over recent years have usually been above the average for communication studies subjects nationally. They dipped in 2002 but were still in line with national expectations. Girls tend to do better than the boys. The school has put right the inconsistencies in some of the teaching and standards are now better than in the previous year.
143. Pupils respond well to imaginative teaching. The use of ICT to provide pupils with the sort of vivid images produced in television news coverage was, for instance, excellent. The teacher created lively role-plays to help pupils explore issues of representation in topical news stories, such as that about Iraq. Questioning was incisive and challenged pupils to think about such difficult topics as censorship and the place of the media in a modern democracy. Most pupils made useful contributions to the debate and achieved well in the lesson, although the teacher had to work hard to try to involve girls in discussions.
144. Elsewhere in Key Stage 4 pupils study the techniques of advertisers. Many pupils are slow starters and rely on the teacher's enthusiastic approach to get the lesson moving. Once they are involved in the subject they do well and produce interesting ideas. They show a sound understanding of media terminology and they can discuss the difference between denotation and connotation, for example. Many are able to describe the way that language and image influence particular target audiences. Teachers provide a good range of worksheets and stimulus material. Most of these are helpful to the pupils, but occasionally they restrict them to brief and undeveloped responses.
145. The written work of pupils in Year 11 shows that most are working in line with national expectations. There are some good examples of media products by more able pupils, such as new designs for CD covers where they use ICT to very good effect. Some middle ability pupils are let down by inaccuracies in spelling and unclear expression in longer essays. Higher attaining pupils, however, write fluently and with flair about the way in which the media influences the rise of pop groups and perpetuate the popularity of soap operas. They use their good research skills to provide convincing explanations based on various media sources. In other examples of high quality work, pupils produce clear and detailed booklets showing how directors employ camera angles to create a different focus for the audience. Pupils are able to do this because of the skilful way that teachers help them to search for evidence in film extracts.
146. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are very secure in their knowledge of the subject and they plan lessons well, using suitable audio-visual resources to illustrate difficult ideas. The subject is well managed and pupils' progress is closely assessed. The subject makes a good contribution to the teaching of citizenship and adds to pupils' cultural understanding.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in Modern Languages is **very good**.

Strengths:

- GCSE results in French are well above average and those in German have much improved.
- Teaching is very good, teachers having very good subject knowledge and classroom management, so pupils learn very well.
- The department is very well led and managed through a concerted team effort.
- The assessment and monitoring of pupils' work is very good.
- The large majority of pupils learn both French and German.

Areas for improvement:

- Improve German GCSE results to match those in French.
- Bring boys' attainment into line with that of girls'.
- Use information and communication technology (ICT) more often for teaching and learning.
- Develop direct links with native speakers of French and German overseas.

147. The current attainment of pupils in languages at the end of Year 9 is well above the national expectation. Year 7 pupils have little or no knowledge of French or German when they arrive in school. They all study one language or the other, the large majority studying both in Years 8 and 9. Pupils immediately make very good progress because work is accurately matched to their abilities. Pupils are soon confident in exchanging greetings and courtesies, obtaining and providing real information about themselves, their friends, families and their life in school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, follow lessons taught entirely or substantially in challenging French or German. In Years 8 and 9 the most talented linguists rapidly develop fluency in various topics including leisure, shopping and finding one's way around town. Most pupils adapt their writing successfully to different styles, composing dialogues about eating out or travel, writing informal letters or postcards and arranging what to do depending on the weather. By age 14 most pupils are adept in using past and future tenses to describe recent holidays or compose weather forecasts. Pupils of all abilities benefit from being able to use computers, a minority showing very good proficiency.

148. In 2001, GCSE results in French were well above average and higher than in the previous year. Girls gained higher grades overall than boys, although both boys and girls gained higher grades than in other school subjects. In 2001, GCSE results in German were, unusually, well below the national average for numbers gaining A\* to C grades, but all pupils entering gained at least a grade G. Both boys and girls gained lower grades than in most other subjects. GCSE results in 2002 indicate a continuing upward trend in French and a good improvement in German.

149. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' current attainment in both French and German is above average. Boys and girls identified as talented linguists achieve particularly high standards and the gender gap in attainment is narrowing. A minority of lower attainers, including some pupils with special educational needs, consolidate their previous learning and work purposefully in small supportive groups towards success in the new entry-level certificate courses. Most average and above average pupils can effectively simulate unexpected situations, such as having to demand a refund in a store. All pupils enjoy practical exercises, such as obtaining, memorising and conveying information about classmates' hobbies and interests. They write interesting essays at various levels about their ideal school uniform and work experience. Many produce attractive tourist information, some using computers, telling visitors what to do locally. In both languages, most of the vocabulary, structures and grammar they use equate to the demands of higher level GCSE papers.

150. Pupils' attitudes to learning French and German are largely very positive. Most lessons are characterised by good humour and lively exchanges between pupils and teachers. Pupils of all ages speak briefly but confidently, answering questions or conducting small group discussions on topics such as school subjects, television or personal ambitions. Boys and girls work unselfconsciously together. They enjoy games and competitions, and enthusiastically join in the many chants, games and established routines that characterise each teacher's style. The colourful, informative displays that brighten the language area celebrate their creativity and involvement in study visits abroad. Many pupils help to work out and demonstrate rules of grammar, willingly volunteering to join the teacher in presenting and summarising lessons. Only a small minority finds the work hard and they fail to sustain their concentration.
151. The overall quality of teaching in both French and German is very good. Excellent lessons, where pupils took substantial responsibility for their own learning, were observed in both languages. Teachers are fluent in their languages, transmitting their own interest and enthusiasm through stimulating introductory routines. Teachers speak at a challenging or accessible level as suits their pupils best, encouraging them to do the same. Pupils are correspondingly active in class, many boys and girls making good, thoughtful or spontaneous contributions to their lessons. Teachers plan their work very thoroughly. They use varied techniques and resources, providing a logical sequence of tasks that exercise, in turn, the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Classrooms are arranged to promote co-operative work, so that less able linguists can learn from their classmates and receive the extra support they require from teaching assistants. Teachers manage their classes very well. Some lessons are boisterously convivial in tone. Others provide a circuit of pre-prepared activities enabling mixed gender teams to work quietly on problems and projects. Teachers co-operate closely with their assistants so that the pace and intensity of many activities is sustained throughout lessons. They make materials for pupils to manipulate and read, supporting their speaking and writing with useful visual aids and well structured writing exercises.
152. Teachers regularly assess and record their pupils' attainment, encouraging them through a continuous dialogue to track and plan their own progress. Older pupils negotiate targets for their performance in the GCSE examination, drawing on their teachers' expertise. Pupils with special educational needs have individual plans and correspondingly good support, which ensure their inclusion in all of the department's activities. Many lessons are complemented by homework set as preparation or extension of work done in class.
153. The leadership and management of modern languages are both very good. Teachers and their assistants display a strong team spirit. They are committed to pupils' success and their development as citizens of the European and World community. Teachers' substantial qualifications and experience are continuously developed and refreshed by reflecting on their performance and agreeing professional targets with their managers. The languages suite is an orderly, welcoming place where pupils' achievements are celebrated and learning stimulated through bright displays. The department benefits from the close interest and support of the governors and senior staff. It is well resourced, although with insufficient access to computers for teaching and learning. Much improvement in standards has been achieved of late, although German, while satisfactory, still lags behind French. The attainment of boys will be brought in line with girls if trends continue. The department will benefit when close, productive links with schools in Europe are more fully developed.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The commitment to provide musical opportunities for pupils of all abilities results in pupils of a wide range choosing music at GCSE.
- Pupils show good attitudes to learning and are well behaved in lessons as a result of the good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- The arrangements for assessing pupils' work are good.
- There is a good range of instrumental and singing lessons on offer to pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The standards achieved by pupils by the end of Year 11 are not high enough.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough.
- Schemes of work do not show the learning in sufficient detail.
- Resources are inadequate to enhance pupils' performing and composing skills, particularly for GCSE coursework.

154. Teacher assessments for 2002 show pupils in Year 9 attaining in line with national averages for music. In 2001, GCSE results were well below the national average. In 2002, fewer pupils achieved the higher grades A\* to C and girls continued to achieve better results than the boys. Since the last inspection results have fluctuated, but have continued to be below national averages. This is largely due to the range of ability within a cohort, the department's commitment to enabling pupils of all abilities to study music at GCSE and the lack of adequate resources to enable pupils to develop their performing and composing skills.

155. By the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. In Year 9 pupils' keyboard skills are developing well, but they are too reliant on having the letter names on the keys and written underneath the notes of the music. Through group and paired work pupils are developing good ensemble skills. They can compose effective compositions using melody, rhythm and chords and perform them fluently and confidently with awareness of how the parts fit together. However, their knowledge and understanding of the key features of music are insecure. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and the teaching assistant, who has expertise in music, contributes very effectively to their learning. Higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could because the work is not challenging enough for them.

156. By the end of Year 11 pupils' attainment is below average, but standards are improving. In their compositions, pupils in Year 11 show a good sense of phrasing in their melodies and those who use chords have a good understanding of the relationship between melody and harmony. However, pupils do not always develop their ideas sufficiently to achieve the higher marks. The higher attaining pupils however, show a good understanding of the style, are more imaginative in their use of chords and accompaniment and develop their ideas more effectively. These pupils also have more developed performing skills. Pupils generally perform their compositions fluently and with confidence. Pupils' listening skills are underdeveloped.

157. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. As at the time of the last inspection, good management of pupils, the good relationships between teachers and pupils and the integration of performing, composing, listening and appraising activities result in pupils concentrating and behaving well. They enjoy their music lessons and the take-up at GCSE has improved. Pupils are given opportunities to compose and

perform in groups and as a result they work sensibly around the music area without the need for constant supervision. Teachers contribute well to the development of pupils' listening and speaking skills through effective questioning and through the display of key words in the classrooms. However, lesson objectives often focus on the musical activities rather than on the musical learning. As a result, pupils are not always clear about the knowledge, skill or understanding they should have learned by the end of a lesson. Teachers' planning does not always provide sufficiently well for the needs of the more musically able in Years 7 to 9. Consequently these pupils do not always make enough progress by the end of a lesson. Where the learning is clearly focused, expectations are high, resources and tasks are planned to meet the needs of the pupils and pupils make very good progress. This was observed in a Year 10 lesson in which pupils made very good progress with their keyboard skills.

158. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory overall. The head of department has clear ideas for moving the department forward. Teachers work very effectively together and are strong in their commitment to improving the work of the department. Clear priorities for improvement are identified in the department development plan, but do not yet include strategies for raising the attainment of pupils and of boys in particular in Years 10 and 11. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to ensure greater consistency within the department. The arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good with clear criteria for assessing pupils' work and effective standardisation within the department. However, schemes of work do not show the learning in sufficient detail, particularly for Years 10 and 11, and provide limited opportunities for pupils to learn about the music of different world cultures.

159. Opportunities for pupils to learn to play instruments and to sing are good. The department usually provides good opportunities for pupils to extend their musical skills through the provision of a range of extra-curricular activities. However, these are not yet fully operational due to the opening of new school buildings and changes in the times of the school day. Pupils have limited opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their performing and composing skills due to the lack of sufficient and adequate resources, particularly for GCSE coursework. In the library the range of books is inadequate to support pupils' learning for GCSE. There has been some improvement in the provision of secure storage for equipment. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- Documentation is thorough and up to date.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- The department is well managed.

#### Areas for improvement

- The amount of individual responsibility given to pupils for their learning on examination courses.
- Better use of information and communication technology (ICT) in producing written coursework.
- Facilities in which to teach examination courses.

160. By the end of Year 9 boys and girls reach satisfactory standards in physical education. Most girls produce good work in games and gymnastics. In netball most pupils in Year 9 catch and pass the ball consistently and effectively. They operate footwork rules correctly. In gymnastics many pupils, girls and boys, confidently control their body weight on their arms to produce some good movements and link them together to form effective gymnastic sequences. These standards result from very carefully planned, enthusiastic teaching where teachers have high expectations of pupils. Occasionally, lessons lack pace and pupils' standards are consequently not as good. In badminton girls' and boys' skills are in line with national standards. Pupils with special educational needs, boys and girls, are very well integrated into lessons, learning support is very effective and they make good progress.
161. GCSE results are broadly average. Results have improved over the three years that the course has been running and 2002 results were above the national average. It is noticeable that each year many more boys than girls take the examination. Indeed no girls took the course in 2002. Most pupils write to acceptable standards, but much written coursework is stereotyped, suggesting that not enough emphasis is placed on pupils' planning their own work. Pupils' use of ICT is not apparent in any written work. Boys' standards are good in games. In soccer they control the ball well in small-sided games and practices. In badminton some combine different strokes very effectively, producing exciting, competitive play. The best badminton players are of excellent standard. Boys have good understanding of health-related exercise, showing correct form in exercises and very good knowledge about theoretical aspects. However, girls' performances in trampolining are only just in line with expected levels.
162. Overall, teaching is good and sometimes it is excellent. When it is, teachers have very high expectations of pupils and lessons run with pace and purpose. This is particularly the case in girls' gymnastics and boys' health-related exercise. All lessons are prepared well and have clear objectives, shared with pupils. Teachers understand the needs of pupils with special educational needs and the department has planned careful programmes for them. Some very good adapted equipment is used in lessons and there is very good teacher support.
163. Pupils have good attitudes and behave well. Very few fail to participate in the subject without just cause and boys and girls make sustained efforts. They collaborate and cooperate very well in lessons when required to do so. A good improvement since the previous inspection has been the introduction of the examination course. Management of the department is good. Documentation is effective and essential policies are in place. Teachers work together with strong corporate spirit.
164. The range of extra-curricular provision after school is very good with many pupils taking advantage of the activities provided by conscientious teachers, who give very generously of their time.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths.

- Pupil management is good, based on good relationships between teachers and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 7 to 9.
- The statutory requirement in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form is not met.
- The systematic monitoring of teaching and pupils' work.
- Greater use of assessment data to guide curriculum planning.
- The use of levels of attainment and the setting of detailed targets in order to measure pupil progress effectively.

165. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are below expectations in relation to the locally agreed syllabus. There has been no significant improvement since the last inspection.

166. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 to 9 is below expected levels. There are some useful examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts, such as rites of passage and worship. Pupils generally make sense of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. In Year 7, through the use of a good question and answer session, for instance, pupils understand the difference between fact and belief. They can relate it to their own experiences and express their views with confidence. In Year 8, pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the importance of worship. Through a well-directed exercise, they understand the relationship between Christian worship and hero worship. In Year 9, pupils develop a clear understanding of life as a journey and how the choices we make can have consequences for us. They are able to provide useful links with everyday experiences. The use of key words, subject language and discussion work are useful aids to improve speaking, listening and written skills. Overall, learning is satisfactory. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented make satisfactory progress.

167. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They behave well, are generally well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate well and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is good, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupils' good behaviour makes a positive contribution to their achievement and progress.

168. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good features. The teaching is of variable quality and this means that the quality of pupils' learning can be affected in some lessons. Planning is satisfactory, but needs to be more focused on the needs of all pupils. Lesson aims are shared with pupils in most cases. Teachers adopt styles that enable pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. However, not enough emphasis is placed on the variety of styles to assist pupils to maintain their interest and develop a deeper understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources, especially worksheets, are used well. These enable pupils with different needs to learn well. Teachers manage pupil behaviour well. Homework is not sufficiently well used as a means of helping pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough and thus they do not adequately challenge them to succeed.

169. Assessment of pupils' work is generally unsatisfactory. The procedures do not provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Furthermore,

assessment does not sufficiently inform the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department does not use levels of attainment nor does it set detailed targets against which it can assess pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised by the school as a key area for development.

170. The curriculum in Years 7 and 9 meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The schemes of work are in need of further development. Religious education in these years makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In lessons, however, the teaching does not sufficiently encourage pupils to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues. The school does not provide for pupils in Year 11 to be able to follow a course in religious education.
171. Departmental management is in need of further development. Currently, objectives for the department are not clear and many issues require attention if standards are to be raised. Planning is currently inadequate. The development plan addresses some minor priorities but requires significant updating to take account of current issues. The monitoring of pupils' work on a regular basis does not take place. Furthermore, the monitoring of teaching in the department is unsatisfactory in the light of the requirements related to the management of performance. Accommodation is good. Curriculum resources are generally good, but some updating is required.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the most recent year for which national comparative data is available.

**GCE A level and AVCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
Mathematics	10	80	87	0	43	3.20	5.80
Chemistry	7	86	90	14	43	4.00	5.90
Physics	5	100	88	20	40	5.60	5.67
Full design and technology	6	100	91	17	30	6.33	5.38
Economics	10	60	89	10	36	3.20	5.52
Art and design	15	93	96	27	46	5.60	6.57
Geography	2	100	92	50	38	5.00	5.74
History	10	100	88	40	35	5.80	5.45
English language	8	100	91	0	30	5.25	5.27
English literature	15	100	95	13	30	4.93	5.91
French	10	60	89	10	38	2.40	5.59
General Studies	22	100	85	9	30	4.09	4.91

**Vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11.25	10.45

**SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

**MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

**MATHEMATICS**

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

**Strengths**

- Results in 2002 showed a significant improvement over previous years.
- Students make good progress because teaching is now never less than good.

**Areas for development**

- Retention rates up to 2001 and in current Year 13 are low.
- Time for the subject is barely adequate.

172. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were below the national average, as they had been for several years, with few students gaining A or B grades. In 2002, results showed a significant improvement, with more than half of students taking the examination gaining the highest grades. Overall, this represents good progress for these students, given their previous performance in GCSE examinations.

173. The standard of work of the students currently following the course in Year 13 is slightly below national expectations, but students are achieving well given their previous GCSE results. This is partly because the time allocation for the subject is barely adequate. Good encouragement by teachers helps students become more confident about

discussing their ideas with each other. This was illustrated well in a discussion about the convergence of sequences of numbers. Students still lack confidence in basic number work, however, and frequently place too great a reliance on the use of calculators for simple calculations. Students are, however, capable of using scientific calculators very effectively.

174. Many more students are studying mathematics to advanced level in Year 12 than in Year 13, with a good mix of male and female students. Despite being early into their course, students are achieving well. This is because teachers are skilful in spotting where individual students are in need of help as they get to grips with many new concepts.
175. Students in Year 12 who are planning to re-sit GCSE mathematics are making very good progress. This is because of the skilful teaching, which pays close attention to the contributions students make to lessons. In an algebra lesson, for example, the teacher adapted what was planned in response to a helpful idea put forward by a student for solving the problem in hand. These students are persevering with considerable determination and working at a level that, if maintained, will enable them to gain at least a grade C next time.
176. Sixth form students learn well. They are conscientious, listen attentively and persevere with work in class and at home. Students have good relationships with each other and make good use of teachers' encouragement to discuss openly the mathematics they are doing and to help each other. They willingly attempt any tasks they are required to do. They respond well where teachers give them homework that is completely new and are developing good skills of independent learning.
177. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teachers work very hard. They have good relationships with groups and individuals and make themselves available to help outside timetabled lessons. Teachers plan effectively. They use resources well, keep explanations sharply focused and allow students plenty of problem-solving practice within lessons. Teachers ensure that students' work is assessed promptly and accurately and students have a good knowledge of their attainment levels. Homework is used well, not only to reinforce what is learned but also to prepare students for future lessons. Work between lessons is effectively used to help students learn independently and thus to prepare them for further study.
178. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has widened the curriculum on offer to include decision mathematics and most students prefer this. Teachers are well qualified and there are sufficient to provide a good range of learning experiences and styles. New teachers are supported well in their early years of teaching at advanced level. Schemes of work are up to date and encourage a variety of approaches, with recommendations for the use of resources including software packages.

## **SCIENCES**

179. The focus was on chemistry and physics, but biology was also sampled. In biology the small group of A-level students obtained results that were above the national average. The results for the AS students were just below the national average. In the lesson observed the teaching was good, with good relationships between the teacher and students. The lesson was well planned and resourced, enabling students to make good progress.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Very good planning, both of the complete course and individual lessons.
- Well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers with very good subject knowledge.
- Good teaching, which uses a wide range of very good resources including information and communication technology in excellent surroundings.
- Good relationships between teachers and students, who work together in a co-operative manner.

### Areas for improvement

- More support for lower attaining students to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- The number of students who choose chemistry in the sixth form.

180. Both GCE A-level and AS results have varied over the past five years. The department has detailed information of each individual student, which clearly demonstrates that the majority of students reach their target grades and in some cases exceed them. This is particularly true of students obtaining the higher grades at A-level.

181. The standard of work seen is wide ranging but is close to the national average. The students in Year 12 who have just started their course appreciated the support they are receiving in the transition from GCSE. They show a good understanding of the concept of molarity and are able to perform practicals in a mature manner, taking great care in the accuracy of the techniques followed. These students are able to perform the associated calculations using their numeracy skills. Their written notes and assessments are performed in a careful manner and most show a pride in their work. Some students have yet to produce their best work, but realise that a higher standard is possible.

182. The small group of Year 13 students also show a range in the standard of their work, but overall is just above the expected standard. These students are able to name organic compounds in a logical manner from the molecular models supplied. They were also able to explain the reasons why organic compounds such as amines show particular properties based on their molecular structure.

183. Teaching is good overall. Students respond to this teaching in a positive manner, but at times the lack of prior knowledge restricts their progress. Teachers are able to identify this and are sufficiently knowledgeable in their subject to deal with it. The lessons are well planned and resourced and thus have a structure that maintains the interest and involvement of all students. Each lesson observed was based on several discrete activities that enabled the students to work independently or as a group. Students were able to answer the questions asked of them, but at times were somewhat reluctant to enter into detailed discussions. The assessments and homework for Year 13 students are marked in detail with many constructive written comments being made by the teacher that help the students improve.

184. Relationships between the teachers and students, as well as among the students themselves, are good. This gives rise to a very pleasant working atmosphere where students make good progress. Teachers are supportive of all the students and ensure they all understand the work covered by asking well-structured specific questions throughout the lessons. In discussions, the students appreciate the support and

guidance given by the teachers and the fact that the teachers are prepared to help and assist outside lessons.

185. The department is well led and managed. The students are taught by well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers, who demonstrate a passion for the subject. The courses are well planned, as demonstrated by the recently produced new versions of the schemes of work. The lessons are now taught in excellent surroundings with very good resources, including sufficient information and communication technology equipment. The department is aware of the need to examine ways in which greater numbers of students choose this subject in the sixth form. Greater numbers will help to increase the potential for group work and enable a wider range of group discussion. The department is also aware of the need to maintain the assessment of student progress, especially of the lower attaining ones, so that suitable support can be given to students who start to fall below their potential grade.

## Physics

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

### Strengths

- Examination results are improving.
- Teaching is good and able students achieve well.
- The teachers have very good subject knowledge and communicate this with enthusiasm.
- Relationships in lessons are very good.
- The subject is well led and managed, with a clear commitment to improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- Some teaching and learning activities are not sufficiently well matched to the abilities of individual students.
- The use of information and communication technology is mainly limited to data logging and coursework.
- The monitoring of regular assessments is not rigorous enough to ensure that all students have clear targets for improvement.

186. The A-level examination results in 2002 show a marked improvement on the previous year. The three candidates all achieved higher grades, two gaining grade A and one grade B. In previous years the results had improved so that they were in line with national averages in 2001. Numbers of entries have been too small to make reliable comparisons between groups of students. No females took the A-level examination between 1999 and 2002, but there are currently two female students studying physics in the sixth form, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Overall, results have been as expected given the students' prior attainment at GCSE, with able students consistently achieving high grades. The results in the new AS-level examination in 2001 were good, with four of the eight students entered achieving A and B grades. In 2002, results at AS-level were below expectations, although they were similar to the results in the other subjects taken by the students. Most of the students achieving good grades at AS continue into the second year of the A-level course.

187. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. In Year 12, students are well supported through the transition from GCSE to AS-level by a carefully structured introduction to the course. In a lesson about the discovery and properties of electrons, for instance, the teacher established what the students already knew by skilful use of questions, helping them consolidate their ideas so they were able to ask relevant questions during a demonstration of cathode rays. By the end of the lesson

they had made progress well beyond GCSE levels and were confident about writing a report on the work they had done. In Year 13, students are achieving well, based on their prior performance. They achieve good standards in coursework and assignments. This is the result of good preparation and the following up of practice questions that have been thoroughly marked with helpful comments for improvement by their teachers. Year 13 students showed good problem solving skills. This was well illustrated by a group doing a practical investigation to measure the force on a wire carrying a current in a magnetic field. They used the apparatus effectively to obtain results, which they recorded and analysed well, and were able to relate their findings to the theory developed earlier in the lesson.

188. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate with enthusiasm. In a Year 12 lesson, for instance, the teacher was describing the development of vacuum tubes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. She gave a brief account of some of her own research work, which helped students understand better some of the technical difficulties faced by the early researchers and how they overcame these problems. Lessons are well prepared and carefully structured, incorporating appropriate practical work and demonstrations. A good range of learning activities is used during the course that stimulates and sustains the interest of students. Good use is made of computers for data-logging in experimental investigations and by students for their coursework assignments. There is limited use of other software, for example, in presentations by teachers and students to enhance learning.
189. In planning their lessons, teachers follow the agreed scheme of work, which provides an appropriate order of topics and an outline of activities and resources. They use their own assessment of students' knowledge and abilities to adapt their teaching to the needs of the students, relying on personal guidance to overcome any difficulties that arise. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students were planning a practical investigation and were experiencing problems re-arranging an equation. The teacher intervened and taught them how to rearrange equations so that they could apply the technique to their investigation and continue with their planning.
190. Students work well and make good progress because they are well motivated by the good teaching. Their attendance is good and the teachers' expectations are high. Relationships are very good and, because the classes are small, students receive a lot of individual attention. Students readily discuss any learning difficulties with their teachers because they are approachable and very supportive. In some of the lessons seen, the tendency to use whole-class question and answer and discussions led to the more able students dominating these sessions, with less capable students remaining rather passive. In the best teaching, activities were used to involve all the students. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students were working on planning an experimental investigation. After the teacher had explained what they had to do to meet the requirements at AS-level, and there had been an opportunity for discussion and questions, the students were all given a planning framework to complete individually within a short time limit. This resulted in all of them engaging with the task and they were all able to produce an outline plan, showing what they had learnt.
191. Leadership in physics is good. The course is well organised and the team of female teachers provides very good role models for female students. There is a clear commitment to continuous improvement and staff development, with good use of training opportunities. The accommodation is excellent. Resources are very good and well managed, with efficient technical staff providing effective support for lessons. There is good practice in the analysis of results, monitoring performance and evaluation at the end of each course, but the use of regular assessments to identify any

underachievement and strategies for improvement for individual students is less well developed.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

192. The focus in this curriculum area was design and technology, covering GCE AS and A levels in design and technology and product design courses. Two AS lessons were observed in Year 12 and two A2 in Year 13. Teaching and learning in three of these lessons were satisfactory and in one were good. Standards in the A2 course are average, with students' good attitudes to learning contributing to their satisfactory progress. In the AS course, standards are below expectations.

### DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

The quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- A2 results in 2002 are better than students' averages for other subjects.
- Teachers' good relationships with students on the A2 course lead to students having good attitudes to learning.
- Resources for learning are good.

#### Areas for development

- Some teaching takes insufficient account of students' prior experience.
- Students do not have sufficient responsibility for their own learning.
- The leadership and management of A-level courses are not clearly enough defined.

193. A-level GCE results for 2000 and 2001 were above the national averages. The A2 results were slightly lower in 2002, but both male and female students attained better results for design and technology than the average for their other subjects. Work of current students is in line with expectations. They are able to carry out detailed analyses of existing products, with due regard to materials used and the function of the items. Students have a satisfactory working knowledge of the importance of ergonomics in product design. Presentation of design work is below what might be expected at this stage, with students spending time on unnecessary illustration. This is at the expense of design sketching, which is only satisfactory.

194. AS-level GCE results for 2002 were below what might be expected, as is the case with current work. Students have inadequate skills to represent their design ideas in graphic form. Case studies from last year lacked the analytical detail required to obtain higher grades. Some Year 12 students do not yet have a grasp of the higher standards required for the AS-level course. They begin the course with insufficient understanding of constructional materials and the necessary graphic design skills. Teaching is focusing on these areas and the teachers have high expectations of improvements in students' work.

195. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is used well, for example, when they use questioning techniques to extend students' understanding. Good relationships between students and teachers engender good attitudes to learning in Year 13. Students learn well when working on an individual basis with teachers. Elements of citizenship are well covered, for example, when looking at the environmental implications of recycling. Students in Year 13 respond well to individual targets set and try to improve their work. Where teachers provide a

good level of resources, for example when analysing existing products, this helps students to build on their prior knowledge. However, teaching of Year 12 students takes insufficient account of the range of their prior experience, for example, when all are expected to carry out the same basic graphics exercise. These students are not given sufficient responsibility for their own learning, in some cases having to rely on the teacher as the sole source of information.

196. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although there are now good levels of information and communication technology resources in the department, including computer controlled machines, too little use is being made of them to enhance students' learning, but this is planned to change.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus in this curriculum area was on business education.

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

### **Strengths**

- Standards are good with students achieving very well in relation to their previous attainment.
- The review and target setting procedures are very good, helping students to improve their work.
- Teaching is good, with carefully planned lessons that cater well for students' different needs.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The ability of students to make balanced and informed judgements, based on information gathered, to further raise attainment.
- Students' understanding and application of information and communication technology (ICT) in the business environment.

197. The department offers a good range of programmes in business, from GNVQ intermediate level to GCE A-level. This provision is maintained in partnership with other institutions that is proving successful. The courses are popular with students and recruitment is growing in a number of areas, such as the AVCE business programme.

198. Standards in AVCE and GNVQ Intermediate business are good and improving, with many students achieving at or above their expected grades in 2001. Results for 2002 have continued this trend of improvement, with more students gaining B and C grades at AVCE level and distinctions at GNVQ. Standards of achievement seen during the inspection are also good and sometimes very good.

199. The improving standards are due to the quality of teaching within the department that is overall good with examples of very good teaching. This enables students to consolidate and effectively apply their knowledge and understanding of business organisations and concepts to their coursework. Teachers' planning and organisation is good, providing opportunities for students to develop a range of business techniques and concepts necessary for success in their course. For example, Year 12 students on the AVCE course are provided with a good knowledge base that helps their discussions and decision-making about the most effective market research approach to use. GNVQ Intermediate students are able to analyse and interpret case study information, producing good reports that identify benefits and constraints of different types of business ownership.

200. Overall, students have good writing and oral skills that they apply well to their coursework and in discussions using appropriate technical and extended language. Students' ability to make decisions and form judgements using a range of information is less well developed. Teachers are aware of this and are developing strategies to help students become more competent in this area. Students' use of ICT is also underdeveloped. There is little evidence of extended knowledge, understanding and application of ICT within the business environment.
201. Students are well supported to improve their work through the review and target setting procedures that operate in the department. This gives students valuable information about their performance and helps them set achievable and challenging targets.
202. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department gives it a clear direction and this is shared and supported by members of the department. He is aware of the strengths and areas for development and the departmental development plan identifies ways to promote and sustain improvements.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

203. No work was inspected within this curriculum area during the inspection.

### **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

204. Work in this curriculum area was sampled in physical education. In the one lesson observed, students were achieving well and reaching average standards because teaching was good.

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

205. Work in this curriculum area was sampled. In the one lesson seen, Year 12 students on a course leading to an advanced vocational qualification were achieving average standards. Teaching was good, particularly because the teacher was careful to make clear to students what was required of them. As a result, students were achieving well at this early stage in their course.

### **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

206. The focus was on drama as an element of performance studies, together with dance and music, but art and design and media studies were also sampled. In art and design, examination results were broadly average in 2001 and students did as expected considering their GCSE grades. Two lessons were observed and were satisfactory. In one, the teacher helped students to produce good interpretations of the work of famous artists in their own style. In media studies, two lessons were seen and both were good. Examination results in 2002 were very good with students showing evidence of very good progress from their grades in GCSE. The good teaching gives students a clear framework within which to develop their understanding of various media representations. They show good knowledge of key technical terms and techniques in film-making.

#### **Drama, as an element of performance studies**

207. Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

Strengths
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- The teaching is well planned with clear aims, and good marking helps students to improve their written work.
- The facilities are good and give students a supportive learning area.
- The subject contributes well to students' personal development.

#### Areas to develop

- Improving students' confidence in practical activities, with more support in the early stages of preparation.
- Improvement in students' understanding of technical terms in order to help their ability to write more coherently about the subject.

208. Standards in performance studies were in line with course requirements in advanced level examinations in 2002. They were similar at AS-level. Results were broadly the same in 2001. Standards of students currently in the school are below expectations at advanced level. Students make satisfactory gains in their understanding of dramatic techniques, choreography and musical understanding from a fairly low base in Year 12. Many students had not studied dance or music before but are keen to learn.

209. In Year 12, the large group of students from two different schools are collaborating well, supported by good teaching. They worked hard to build up a series of dramatic movements in dance based on the idea of 'chance'. For instance, after a good introductory session led by the teacher to reinforce their understanding of how to apply the Laban effort table to their own work, students showed good commitment to planning their routines. The teacher has high expectations and asks detailed supplementary questions to test their knowledge and understanding of the homework.

210. In rehearsing dance movements, students work as a team and ask for the music to be played as a stimulus and guide to their planning. This helps them to improve. Performances are satisfactory and one group adapted well to a change of pace and rhythm in the music, which fits well into the theme of 'chance'. The same group were less confident in dealing with the influential work of Stanislavski, but the teacher intervened to ensure that they understand the technical language associated with his ideas.

211. In Year 13, the small size of the group makes interaction difficult. Teachers try hard to stimulate responses and provide encouragement through demonstration of techniques in music, dance and drama. Video is used effectively to show various dancing techniques and the teacher leads useful discussions on how best to choreograph the action. Students evaluate their performances honestly and examine the timing of the dance and how to include variety in movement. They develop greater awareness of the cultural and social background to drama, supported by knowledgeable teaching and questions that force them to think. However, the lack of prior knowledge in music is a barrier to learning in that element of the performance studies course.

212. The good contribution made by the teaching is seen in the marking of written work. The questions posed on students' essays help students to explore their responses to works such as *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in greater depth. The few higher attaining students show good understanding of stagecraft in looking at the development of themes in Shakespeare. They structure answers carefully, using apt and succinct quotations to show how the theatre could be seen as a microcosm of life.

213. Teaching is good in most lessons and this helps many students to raise their levels of understanding by the end of the course. The space in the studios is well used and students appreciate the facilities available. They speak highly of the good opportunities

to learn new skills in music, dance and drama. Co-ordination and management of the different elements of the course are good. However, the attainment of the small number currently taking advanced level performance studies is below course requirements.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on geography, but history and psychology were also sampled. Two lessons were observed in history. Teaching was good and students responded well to high levels of challenge, which led them to produce work that met national expectations. In the one psychology lesson observed, teaching was satisfactory, though unimaginative. Students were making adequate progress.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- The good quality of teaching leads to high quality learning and good achievement over time.
- At AS and A-level, appropriate courses are taught, which are well matched to the strengths and needs of students, and hence take up rates for this subject are rising.
- Students are taught effectively and because of this they work hard and express positive views about the subject.
- Departmental leadership is very effective and supports both staff and students extremely well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities to support students as independent learners.
- To increase opportunities for discussion work.

214. In the AS-level and A-level examinations for 2001, the standards achieved were average. However, the relatively small numbers of students entered makes statistical comparisons with national trends difficult. Results in 2002 indicate that standards are being broadly maintained.

215. By the end of the course, most students achieve standards that match national expectations. By studying 'tourism', they form a clear view of the benefits and problems associated with it. Students know that tourists help generate wealth and employment for a region, but may also harm its natural environment. Students research thoroughly and present their ideas carefully, although some are more confident than others when doing so. A good example was a student presenting a thoughtful argument on the advantages and disadvantages of eco-tourism. Students have a sound knowledge of coastal erosion and use correct subject vocabulary when describing it. They describe how sea caves are formed and can accurately define such terms as 'abrasion.' Overall, standards of written work are satisfactory, with good standards being evident from a number of students. However, in discussion, students do not always express themselves sufficiently clearly. Students achieve well over time, developing their ability to analyse a problem and reach constructive conclusions to resolve it. They make good use of statistical information to recognise trends in, for example, population statistics. This work helps improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, ICT skills are underdeveloped.

216. Students enter the sixth form courses with a variety of prior experiences. All work hard and have positive attitudes towards their studies. For example, they make detailed notes and use these effectively to inform essays and test papers. Students clearly respect the teaching staff, relationships are positive and this leads to productive lessons. Students have positive views about the subject and they recognise a number of benefits in studying geography, including access to future employment.
217. The overall quality of teaching and learning are good. Lessons are carefully prepared and well resourced. For example, OS maps, information and question sheets were used to support a lesson on urban development. The secure subject knowledge and understanding of teaching staff ensures that lessons proceed at a good pace, with ample information being provided. On occasions, teaching strategies do not sufficiently encourage discussion, but good questioning skills help students focus upon relevant detail. Students learn effectively and gain secure subject knowledge. They display this more readily in written tasks than in speaking and listening, where some lack confidence. Overall, the good teaching prepares students well for the examinations at the end of Years 12 and 13.
218. Leadership and management are very good. The teaching staff are effectively supported in their work and are given clear guidelines by the head of department. The management of resources and finance is efficient. The curriculum is well matched to the AS and A-level examination requirements. It is effectively enhanced by residential field trips. The careful monitoring of students' progress ensures that steps can be taken to modify the teaching programme when necessary. Assessment procedures are thorough. All students are given good opportunities to achieve success in this subject.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

219. The focus in this curriculum area was on English and French, but German was also sampled. In Year 12, A-level German is taught in a consortium arrangement with a neighbouring school. This arrangement works well. Students from both schools appreciate the chance to meet, work together and experience different teaching styles. In the one German lesson sampled, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Students were making steady progress in extending their use of grammar prior to preparing a piece of descriptive writing about ideal homes.

### **English**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching based on good subject knowledge and high expectations.
- Progression from previous learning in English.

- Monitoring and evaluation of performance.

There are no major areas for improvement.

220. Results in both language and literature at AS and A2 levels in 2001 were below what was achieved in 2000. However, results in 2002 strongly restored an upward trend. The subjects are popular with both male and female students and a broad range of ability is represented, with good standards overall observed during the inspection. Higher ability students do well, as exemplified in a student's fluent essay on Doctor Faustus, but the teaching also enables students who have less command of criticism and analysis to make very good progress. As students move from AS to A2 level, topics are explored in appropriately increased depth and complexity. Range of thought and coherent presentation of argument were evident, for example, in an essay about how language can be used as a barrier to the equal treatment of women. Students' spoken contributions are sometimes a little weak and teachers work hard to develop this skill.
221. Students respond well to imaginative teaching, which builds on earlier learning. For instance, a group encountering *The Tempest* were confident because of the work they had done on Shakespeare for GCSE and even recalled their studies in Year 9. Students enjoy lessons and their keenness was shown in the extent of preparation they had undertaken to present characters in *The Duchess of Malfi* to other members of the group, as well as in the amount of work compiled over time.
222. Teaching is consistently very good. Teachers have high expectations, which they make clear when they discuss the quality of response required at this level. They communicate very good subject knowledge and model critical insights and vocabulary as they talk to students. They use a wide range of resources, as in a lesson about how language drifts from grammatical rules. In the smaller groups in Year 13, teachers arrange changes in the pattern of activity so that students remain involved and maintain concentration. Teachers encourage students to develop good study habits that take account of personally preferred approaches. At the same time they provide good props to support learning, such as diagrams and note-taking structures. Marking of work is detailed and helpful.
223. Courses are well organised and excellent management ensures that the progress of individuals and groups is monitored. Results are analysed to determine actions that should be taken to further raise standards.

## French

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

Strengths:

- The subject is well managed, so standards of attainment are rising.

- Teaching is good, with good subject knowledge and class management helping students learn well.
- Most students are well motivated and show interest in the language.

Areas for improvement:

- Greater consistency in A-level results from year to year.
- Encouraging students to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Making the curriculum stimulating enough to retain and motivate many students.

224. In recent years low numbers have entered for French. Some classes are initially well subscribed, but get smaller when many students give up the subject after poor AS-level results. The most recent results show an upward trend on the previous year, with all four students who entered gaining D or E grades. The quality of most current students' work is at least satisfactory and some of it is good, but few students excel. Their standard of listening is good but speaking is less so, since a minority of students are reliant on their teachers, show little initiative and are hesitant in handling more complex language. Writing is generally satisfactory, with some good essays based on careful preparation and redrafted according to teacher's comments. Lower attainers initially produce simple written work expressing limited ideas and with frequent grammatical errors. Their teachers give good advice about how to rethink and improve their essays. The most recent A-level success reflects close co-operation between teachers and students and teaching methods that involve the students' own interests or engage their curiosity.

225. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are rising. The numbers taking French at AS and A2 level have started to increase. The Year 12 students include some talented linguists with a good record of success, who work hard and methodically. They extend their vocabulary and consolidate the grammar they need for discussions and writing discursive essays. Most students are confident and accurate in well-structured exercises on verb forms and other grammatical features. The most talented students speak and write convincingly on topics related to their personal experience, such as family relations, the media and ways of earning and spending money. Students soon learn to read a variety of texts, including newspaper and magazine articles. Most refer to the wider resources of the Internet, finding further authentic material from which to draw their impressions. A minority of students find the transition from the basic demands of GCSE hard. They mostly gain confidence due to the intensive, well-planned support they receive in class.

226. Most students' work is at least satisfactory and an increasing proportion is good, with some in Year 13 equivalent to the higher A-level grades. As they gain in proficiency, students pool their ideas to talk and write co-operatively or individually. They explore social or moral issues ranging from healthy living to political issues, such as immigration and homelessness. They write interesting discursive essays revealing their ideas and personal aspirations, or adapt a more direct declamatory style to produce display work, summarising and sharing their views with other students and pupils.

227. The students in Years 12 and 13 have a wide range of linguistic ability. Most students absorb or recall key phrases and grammar quickly and their progress is good. The majority show satisfactory understanding when presented with authentic texts or the rapid natural French that their teachers speak. Both male and female students make useful contributions to informal debates, the stronger linguists providing the whole group with a good model to emulate. Lower attainers extract the gist of what they hear, asking confidently for clarification when they require it.

228. The quality of teaching is good. This is reflected in the interest that most students show and their close co-operation with their teachers in setting targets for examination success. Teachers are often demanding of their students, but sympathetic when the tasks are complex or students' understanding is incomplete. There is usually a strong French ambience in lessons. Occasionally, teachers resort to English to explain new grammar or difficult texts, or allow their students to do so. The best teaching involves lively presentation and the use of interesting source materials that stimulate group discussion, giving students responsibility for their own learning. Teachers are constructive in helping students to acquire the complex language they need to tackle a demanding series of topics. They help them to prepare discursive or imaginative writing on subjects such as changing relations within families or international issues such as AIDS and pollution. Teachers encourage students to bring to their work their own experiences and observations gained when travelling abroad with the school or their families. The school's foreign language assistants give the students an additional authentic experience. While students download some useful material from the Internet, teachers do not yet take full advantage of this huge resource. Teachers encourage their students to enrich their studies with books and videos borrowed from the school library. They arrange visits to French productions at the cinema and the theatre when the occasion arises
229. Teachers mark their students' work regularly and thoroughly, ensuring that they have an accurate picture of their performance in relation to targets they have negotiated. As a result, an increased sense of purpose and higher expectations of success are evident both in classes and subject management.
230. Most students of French are conscientious and relate positively to the teaching staff. They appreciate the extent of their teachers' knowledge and are keen to develop their own. Many initially lack confidence in speaking at any length without written prompts, but converse more naturally as they progress through the course. They can, however, rapidly compose short statements using the new language they have learnt, which they use as a basis for discussion. The tone and structure of lessons varies considerably, including intimate small group discussions, and methodical grammar lessons. Lively brainstorming sessions give freer expression to the initiative, interests and personalities of the students. They bring their own experiences to many of the topics they study, such as changing social patterns, but most do not yet have the benefit of living or working in a French speaking country.
231. Despite the small and fluctuating numbers of students taking French, the subject is thoroughly organised with clear and helpful documentation. It is well staffed with experienced, well-qualified teachers who are starting to inspire in their students a love of French language and culture. Greater continuity is evident in the day-to-day work of the department and its clear aim of improving students' success in the future. Plans include raising A-level results to include the highest grades, the wider application of information and communication technology and further enriching students' work through school links and travel.