

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARK'S SCHOOL

Bath

LEA area: Bath and North-East Somerset

Unique reference number: 109328

Headteacher: Miss C Pope

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 18th - 20th November 2002

Inspection number: 250018

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11 - 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Baytree Road Bath
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs A Leroy
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

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30597	Robina Howells	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12844	Michael Saunders	Team inspector	English	
24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science	
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10695	Tony Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology	
31686	Gill Greany	Team inspector	Art and design	
17808	Sue Orpin	Team inspector	Geography	
31772	Alan Kelly	Team inspector	History	
17522	Nigel Stiles	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
32324	Frances Buckler	Team inspector	Music	
1353	Paul Canham	Team inspector	Physical education Educational inclusion, including race equality	
1517	David Griffith	Team inspector	Special educational needs	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to students?
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Citizenship	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Mark's is a voluntary aided Church of England comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 16. The school is very small, with 331 students, and has significantly more boys than girls. Almost all students are white, with a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. These include a very few with English as an additional language, some of whom are in the early stages of learning English. A significant proportion of students join and leave the school part-way through their secondary education, mostly because their families move house. Many of these students have special educational needs related to behaviour, often coupled with very poor attendance records. The proportion of students with special educational needs is well above average and many have statements of special educational needs, often combining learning and behavioural difficulties. Students come from a broad variety of backgrounds and the school's social and economic context is, overall, below average. There has been an improvement in the standards among students joining the school in the current Year 7, but overall standards reached by students on entry to the school are well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mark's is a good and effective school. It makes good provision for individual needs and all students are fully involved in its work. Achievement is good in relation to the standards reached by students when they join the school. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, where GCSE results are rising. The headteacher and governors provide a strong lead and, overall, the school is led and managed well. Although the cost per student is high, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in Year 11 and GCSE results show good achievement against the standards reached by students joining the school.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and have some outstanding features.
- Management and leadership are good, and provide a clear vision for the school's future.
- There is very good provision for art and music.
- There is good provision for students' personal development and for citizenship.
- Relationships, care and guidance are good, particularly in the learning support unit.
- The school's Christian values are reflected in its work and involve all students.

What could be improved

- Some teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not matched closely enough to students' needs.
- There is a significant amount of unsatisfactory behaviour in Years 8 and 9.
- The organisation and consistency of middle management need to be improved.
- The allocation of time to subjects and the organisation of teaching time could be improved.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in January 1997, it had serious weaknesses in many aspects of its work. There was much unsatisfactory teaching, the school had no distinctively Christian atmosphere and there was a very small sixth form. Value for money was unsatisfactory. Overall, the school has made good improvement on this position. Teaching has improved, with a sharp fall in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching, and GCSE results have risen. The school has built up a clear commitment to Christian values and all students are involved in its work. Improved financial management has allowed the school to develop buildings, grounds and resources and money has been saved by closing the small sixth form. The school is led and managed well and has good plans for future development. It is well placed to improve its work further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	C

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

GCSE results showed good improvement in 2002, and students with special educational needs achieved at least two graded results. Standards in Year 11 during the inspection were broadly similar to the GCSE results. Standards in Year 11 are below average in English, mathematics and science, but above average in art and design and well above average in music. Results in 2002 national tests in Year 9 were below average in mathematics and science, and well below average in English. Standards in Year 9 during the inspection were lower than those shown in these test results, reflecting a very high proportion of students with special educational needs in this year group.

Following a sharp fall in 1999, GCSE results have shown good improvement over the past three years, and are now significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school sets demanding targets for improvement at GCSE and beat its targets substantially in 2002. Targets for Year 9 are satisfactory, but are not focused closely enough on the needs of different groups of students.

Across the school, students do well in artistic subjects, such as art and design and music. They also do well in science and in design and technology. Many, however, have weaknesses in their literacy skills and in speaking and listening that hold back their achievement in subjects that depend heavily on these. The achievements of students with special educational needs and of the much smaller number who have English as an additional language are good. Gifted and talented students achieve the high standards of which they are capable by Year 11, but not always in earlier years. Overall, standards in Year 11 represent good achievement for students from their starting point when joining the school.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most students enjoy school and work hard, and want to accept responsibility. A significant minority have poor attitudes when they join, particularly to learning. Older students develop good attitudes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Good in Years 10 and 11, but often unsatisfactory in lessons in Years 8 and 9. All students behave well around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Teachers and students form constructive relationships across the school and develop respect for each other.
Attendance	Broadly average. Attendance has improved greatly over the past year.

Even where students do not behave well in lessons, they develop constructive relationships with teachers and with each other. The learning support unit makes a major contribution to developing good attitudes and behaviour. Racial harmony is excellent and students are willing to help others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good

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

The quality of teaching in English and science is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In mathematics, teaching is good throughout the school. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and computer skills across the school is satisfactory, but needs to be more closely planned.

In most subjects, lessons are better planned and more closely focused on students' learning needs in GCSE courses. However, teaching is good throughout the school in modern foreign languages and ICT and very good in music. The teaching of art and design is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is unsatisfactory in geography and in a small number of other lessons in Years 7 to 9, where work is not matched closely enough to the needs of the class. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to teaching and learning in most lessons and the quality of work in the learning support unit is often excellent.

The range of students' learning needs is particularly broad and all are met to a satisfactory standard over the course of their school career. For example, teaching is well matched to the needs of higher-attaining students, including those with particular gifts and talents, on GCSE courses, although they are often not challenged enough by teaching in Years 7 to 9. Students' attitudes and behaviour also contribute strongly to the quality of their learning. Across the school, most higher-attaining students behave better, work harder in lessons and complete homework regularly. Many lower-attaining students learn more slowly than they should because they do not understand the importance of working consistently and are too easily distracted. The school has reduced the impact of poor behaviour since the last inspection, but has more to do in this area, particularly in Years 8 and 9.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All students have suitable learning opportunities, but the range of vocational courses is limited, and there are some timetabling problems.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students receive effective specialist teaching and support, particularly in the learning support unit and from teaching assistants.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good overall. Students make very good long-term progress, though some older students who have arrived very recently with no knowledge of English are struggling.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Students have good opportunities for reflection, to learn the difference between right and wrong, to develop positive attitudes to society and to learn about their own and other cultures. There are some very good features in spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its students	Well. The school makes good provision for health, safety and personal guidance. Guidance on studies is satisfactory, with good features. These include performance reviews and target-setting at GCSE.

The school works hard on its partnership with parents. Most parents respond well, but some do not ensure that their children attend regularly, behave well and complete homework. The learning support unit contributes to the care of a significant number of students, including those returning after serious illness. The school encourages students to see citizenship in the context of the world and to develop a spirit of service. Acts of collective worship are of high quality, but do not take place each day.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher's clear lead and very effective development planning have played a key role in improving the school. Other key staff carry out their duties effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. The governors have good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and good plans for its development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school uses modern techniques very well to gather and analyse data on its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources, including additional grants, are used very carefully and all decisions are soundly based on educational priorities.

Staffing, resources for learning and accommodation are adequate overall. Teachers and educational support staff are well qualified. There are good computing resources, but facilities for sports are limited. Office staff are very well qualified and make an outstanding contribution to management.

Leadership and management create a warm climate for learning and provide good opportunities for all students. The school's aims have a good balance between personal and academic development and are reflected consistently in its work. Planning to raise standards in some subjects and in some aspects of behaviour could be more precise and progress in these areas needs to be more closely tracked. The school applies the principles of providing and obtaining best value very effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is approachable. • It has high expectations of students. • Leadership and management are good. • The school works closely with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on progress. • Homework. • Behaviour.

A high proportion of parents have positive views of the school, and several expressed very favourable views in letters to inspectors. Inspectors agreed with these positive views. The proportion of parents making negative points was smaller than in most schools. Inspectors found that the overall quality of information for parents was good, although some could be more clearly presented.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. In most years, students have joined the school with well below average standards for their age. Standards are higher in the current Year 7, although they are still below average. A very high proportion of students who join the school after Year 7 have special educational needs, often related to behaviour, and poor records of attendance; a few have scarcely attended school at all. These problems are particularly significant in Years 8 and 9. The standards reached by boys and girls joining the school do not follow the national pattern, as girls have achieved significantly less well than boys in some year groups. In most work seen during the inspection, there were no significant differences in standards reached by girls and boys, but boys tended to do better in English, in response to work that had been selected to meet their needs. The school has not yet taken similar action to support the work of girls.
2. The results of Year 9 national tests in mathematics and science in 2002 showed good improvement on those for 2001 and were broadly average. English results were still well below average, however. The standard of work seen in Year 9 was below average in almost all subjects. It was lower than that indicated by the 2002 national test results, in which students did well to reach average standards in mathematics and science. Overall, standards in Year 9, both in students' work and in national test results, represent satisfactory achievement when compared with the standards with which the students joined the school, and good achievement in subjects where the teaching is consistently good. These include mathematics, art and design and ICT. Standards in music in Year 9 are above average because of the high quality of teaching and standards in music GCSE groups are well above average. This represents very good achievement in this subject. Standards in citizenship among Year 9 students were also above average. Students' good understanding of all elements of the National Curriculum for the subject reflects the school's provision for personal development and the improved representation of Christian values in its work. Overall, improvement since the last inspection in Year 9 has been satisfactory.
3. By Year 11, standards are closer to average levels, although they are still below average in English, mathematics and science. Overall achievement by Year 11 is good. Standards show particular improvement in Years 10 and 11 in history and art and design, where they are above average. Standards in music GCSE groups are well above average as a result of the strength in teaching and represent very good achievement on the part of the students. At the time of the last inspection, overall standards in Year 11 were well below average and only three tenths of students achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE. The proportion of students achieving these grades has risen steadily over the past three years and in 2002 well over two fifths did so. This is a good improvement, particularly in view of the standards reached by these students in national tests in Year 9. Lower-attaining students also achieved good results and all students on the school's register of special educational needs achieved at least two graded results at GCSE. This represents good progress by these students.
4. Standards in reading and writing are below average in Years 9 and 11 and the school's use of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 has made only limited impact on the problem, chiefly because of the significant number of students who are still in the early stages of literacy. As at the time of the last inspection, speaking and listening skills in lessons are weak. Students listen carefully in assemblies and in individual discussions with teachers and teaching assistants, but many do not use their speaking and listening skills effectively when working in groups and too many speak out of turn in class. As at the time of the last inspection, some teachers do not handle this firmly enough, even where other aspects of teaching are good. Standards in number work are below average in Year 9, but broadly average by Year 11 and show good progress over the students' time in school. Good provision for ICT is ensuring average standards in Years 9 and 11.
5. Gifted and talented students benefit from additional courses, including an additional weekly mathematics lesson in Year 10, and reach the high standards of which they are capable by Year

11. Students with particular aptitudes for a subject, such as those with near-native knowledge of a foreign language, are entered for examinations early, and do very well. Most younger gifted and talented students, however, are not fully challenged in all of their lessons and should be achieving more by Year 9. The overall achievements of students with special educational needs are good, and there are some examples of outstanding progress in response to the work of the learning support unit. The range of special educational needs in some classes is very great, however. In some lessons, mostly in Years 7 to 9, steps taken to match work to their learning needs do not go far enough and they learn less than they should. This is a particular issue in work that requires skills in literacy and speaking and listening, such as English and modern foreign languages.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

6. When the school was last inspected, there were serious weaknesses in students' behaviour and attitudes, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Improvement here has been satisfactory. Although the number of students with special educational needs related to behaviour has increased greatly, there is little permanent exclusion, and the staff form good relationships with all students, even when their behaviour in class still needs to be improved. Behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory overall and improve as students move through the school. Overall, behaviour in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is good. The behaviour of students in the learning support unit and in special educational needs withdrawal classes is excellent.
7. Students in all year groups behave well around the school, in the dining room and at breaktimes. They are polite, friendly and often courteous, frequently opening doors and offering help to visitors. There are no signs of graffiti or vandalism. Where they can, students are very willing to help each other and to accept responsibility, for example as members of the school council. Bullying is rare. Boys and girls and students from all ethnic groups get on well together. As one student in Year 7 put it, "Everyone is friendly; it's like a big family."
8. On the other hand, there is still too much variation between classes and subjects in students' behaviour and attitudes in Years 7 to 9, and particularly in Years 8 and 9. In some subjects, where good management of behaviour is combined with interesting work, students behave and learn well. This is a particular strength in design and technology, and students also behave well in science and in most mathematics lessons. Where there is any weakness in teaching, however, the behaviour of a significant minority of students deteriorates. It is particularly weak in geography, but there are also significant weaknesses in individual lessons in several other subjects, even where other aspects of teaching are good. The school's family orientation takes time to foster, particularly for students who join the school after the start of Year 7. These students have often had a very poor educational history in their previous schools and their negative impact on behavioural and attendance statistics is very high in such a small school. Chiefly for this reason, the school still has a high number of fixed-term exclusions for its size.
9. Most students understand that their behaviour has an impact on others and respect other people's feelings, values and beliefs. Students respond well to opportunities to display citizenship, for example in their work on worldwide education rights and their fundraising for charity. There are, however, limited opportunities for students to learn independently and to show initiative. Much of the school council meeting seen during the inspection, for example, was taken up with issues raised by staff.
10. Following a major initiative by the school, attendance has improved dramatically over the past year, and is now close to national average levels. Only Years 9 and 11 have attendance rates of below 90 per cent, and this is largely due to the effect of students transferred from other schools. Students arrive punctually to school, except when buses are delayed. Punctuality to lessons is usually good, although there are minor difficulties in timekeeping where classrooms are very far apart.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The rise in standards between Year 7 and Year 11 is the outcome of teaching that meets the long-term needs of all students well. The last inspection found that teaching was unsatisfactory in a quarter of lessons across the school and in a third of lessons in Years 7 to 9. While teaching is still better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen very significantly and the amount of good and better teaching has risen, so that it is now comparable to that in most schools. On the other hand, some teachers in Years 7 to 9 still do not take quick and effective action to deal with poor attitudes and behaviour. While there has been some improvement in this aspect of teaching, it remains a significant issue. Overall, however, teaching has shown good improvement since the last inspection.
12. In most lessons across the school, teachers provide interesting activities that engage students' interest and lead to good long-term progress. They have good relationships with their classes, and there is a climate of mutual respect. Where the teaching is very good, teachers know their subject in very good depth and detail, and plan demanding and interesting tasks that contribute to cultural development as well as to the subject, for example, when interesting links were created in a very successful English lesson between poetry and art. The school has also introduced very good and excellent teaching in the learning support unit for students with the most serious learning and behavioural difficulties. This teaching is closely matched to the work undertaken in classes and is supported by clear explanations and very effective personal encouragement.
13. In most lessons, teaching is well matched to students' learning needs in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of older students is well planned to meet the requirements of GCSE examinations and coursework is well organised. The teaching of gifted and talented students is also good in Years 10 and 11 and the most able students reach high standards at GCSE. In Years 7 to 9, the students' needs are met well in some subjects and in additional courses, but there is no consistent focus on their achievement across the school. Specialist teaching for students with special educational needs in small groups is effective and these students learn well in their normal lessons in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, students with learning and behavioural difficulties learn well in lessons where they have support from teaching assistants. However, this is not always available, even in subjects that they find particularly difficult, such as modern foreign languages. In many lessons, teaching in Years 7 to 9 needs to be more closely matched to the full range of learning needs in the class, even when this involves very substantial modification of work that meets the needs of most students.
14. There are some variations in the quality of teaching between subjects. In music, very good teaching throughout the school is based on outstanding knowledge and understanding of the subject, extensive experience in performance and very clear understanding of patterns of learning among students, particularly those who have a strong interest in the subject. In art and design, teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 7 to 9, where learning in some lessons is held back by unsatisfactory behaviour. Teaching in mathematics and in modern foreign languages is good throughout the school; this is based on consistently good planning and understanding of these subjects. In English, teaching is good overall in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9; the difference is caused mainly by a better match of work to learning needs in classes for older students. Teaching in science is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 for the same reason. Teaching in geography is unsatisfactory across the school. Work is not planned effectively to challenge all students and there are some weaknesses in relationships. Teaching in physical education is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9; some teaching is good, but teaching in a significant minority of lessons is not focused closely enough on the skills students need to develop. Teaching in this subject improved following feedback during the inspection. In most other subjects, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, but in design and technology the quality of teaching is better for younger than for older students.
15. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory across the school, but both need to be more closely co-ordinated. The teaching of ICT skills is good and benefits from the range of subjects involved in Years 7 to 9, as well as from good specialist teaching skills. The teaching of citizenship, in subjects, tutorials and assemblies, is good. The number of students with English

as an additional language is small, but the school tracks their progress well and provides good additional teaching where it is needed. Like other students from minority ethnic backgrounds, these students are fully involved in all aspects of the school's work, and learn well.

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

Learning opportunities

16. The range of learning and other opportunities is satisfactory across the school and has good features. All subjects of the National Curriculum are offered, including two foreign languages, and there is satisfactory provision for health education, sex education and education on the misuse of drugs. Strengths include good provision for students with special educational needs, including an excellent contribution from the learning support unit, good careers guidance and work experience and well-planned schemes of work in several subjects, including art and design, science and music. On the other hand, timetabling difficulties result in an uneven use of time from week to week in some subjects, such as German, where GCSE students have only one double lesson in some weeks. Time for mathematics is significantly shorter than in most schools and some lessons in design and technology are too short for students to complete practical work properly.
17. Provision for citizenship is good. The school is committed to equal opportunities for all students, and is particularly effective in enabling students with behavioural difficulties to take part in lessons, for example by using video links to practical subjects. There are some opportunities for vocational education in Years 10 and 11, but the range of vocational courses is narrower than in most schools. Good research has been carried out into the learning of gifted and talented students. This has not been carried through into the design of lessons in most subjects in Years 7 to 9, but provision for these students improves in Years 10 and 11, so that they do well at GCSE. The school is making satisfactory use of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, but the quality of work is not consistent between departments. Literacy, for example, is well developed in history, particularly for older students, but not in geography. The strategy has led to the introduction of good ICT lessons in Year 7, but these are not provided for all year groups. Overall, provision for ICT is satisfactory.
18. The school has a good working partnership with other schools and with the local further education college for vocational work. The local Anglican community makes a strong contribution to its work - for example, by providing a very effective Chaplain – and the school has a growing partnership with local business, which is providing excellent help with long-term planning. The range of learning opportunities for students outside lessons is good. It includes very good opportunities for music and well-established European trips. The school site provides limited opportunities for sport, although some students take part in community clubs.

Personal development

19. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Since the last inspection, the school has created a distinctive approach, based upon Christian values and care for individuals. This places students at the heart of the school's work. It has developed links with the diocese and local church and a chaplain gives much valued support to students. The chaplain leads weekly assemblies and students benefit from speakers with experiences of ministering abroad, for example in Mozambique, Zambia and the USA. There is a sanctuary for students' quiet reflection.
20. Whole-school assemblies are of good quality. The assemblies seen during the inspection affirmed the values of the whole school community and provided opportunities to celebrate the achievements of individual students. Assemblies also provide students with good opportunities for live musical performances. However, assemblies take place four times each week and therefore do not provide a daily act of collective worship.
21. The school has introduced several initiatives, including a Global Education Campaign in which students were given opportunities to write to children in Africa and share their hopes for the

future. Students' involvement in the project generated strong feelings and thoughts about moral and social issues and they have discussed them with the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street. Spirituality underpins work in lessons. For example, students in Year 8 showed good understanding of the values of Aboriginal art in their work on values and beliefs.

22. The school helps students to feel valued and to accept the ideas and values of others. Moral development is fostered well, with high expectations, consistent guidance and example from adults about the principles of right and wrong. Students know what is expected of them. As a result, a substantial majority of students have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, which is consistently reinforced through support and encouragement. A celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights led to a one-day festival in which Latin America was strongly represented. The school supports local charities and students have given willingly to help those suffering from natural disasters. Throughout the school, most students' strong sense of self-discipline can be seen in the way they conduct themselves as they move around the school. Students with behavioural difficulties are given sensitive support. This strategy helps students' personal development; in Year 11, students behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
23. The school offers students of all ages many opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative within a setting where a strong sense of community has developed. This is closely linked to the caring ethos promoted by the staff and governors, where teamwork, co-operation and a supportive working environment are valued. As a result, students' social development is fostered very well by the school's daily routines, where students are treated with respect, and within subjects such as science and art and design, where they willingly work in partnership. Students get on well with each other. They respect one another's ideas and are not afraid to express contrary views. Personal, social and health education provide good opportunities for discussion of moral and social issues.
24. Cultural development is well promoted. Through the curriculum, extra-curricular activities and visits, the school teaches students to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the rich diversity of other cultures, including those represented in modern Britain. The school celebrates other cultures by inviting guest speakers to talk about their own experiences and traditions. For example, students were addressed by a Chilean exile, who had been tortured by the Pinochet regime. Displays around the school celebrate art and music from a wide range of world faiths and cultures, and often inspire students' own work. In English and drama, students are given good opportunities to study other cultures linking the work with other subjects such as media studies and art. Their work in music reflects a broad range of cultures and respect for the evolution of music from different traditions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

25. The school has made significant improvements in this area since the last inspection. Particular strengths have been the increased influence of its Christian mission, the provision of personal learning support through the learning support unit and improved arrangements for promoting attendance.
26. The school has good arrangements for child protection, health and safety and the welfare of students. Staff are trained in aspects of child protection and there are suitable arrangements to protect students using the Internet. Regular health and safety checks and risk assessments are undertaken. There is a suitable medical room and proper records are maintained. Parents are informed of all medical incidents. Students have considerable help in welfare matters, including the school nurse, chaplain, learning support teams and pastoral staff. All students interviewed were able to identify at least one adult with whom they felt fully able to discuss any problems. Staff provide practical help to raise students' self-esteem and encourage them to overcome personal difficulties.
27. The school is making strong and effective efforts to improve attendance and its procedures are set to improve further once the system is fully computerised. There is first-day contact with parents, who are fully involved in attendance procedures. There is a reward system for good attendance and most students are responding positively to the school's efforts.

28. Arrangements to monitor behaviour and promote good behaviour are satisfactory. Monitoring of student behaviour is adequate, with appropriate systems in place and individuals' behavioural targets reviewed as necessary. Exclusions are used appropriately as an integral part of behavioural strategy and the reward and sanction procedures are sound. Teachers promote good behaviour by developing good relationships with students but the behaviour policy is not consistently applied in all lessons, particularly when dealing with minor misbehaviour. The school has created an ethos based on Christian values and this has all but eliminated oppressive behaviour of any kind.
29. Students' personal development is very well tracked and supported. Arrangements for transfer from primary schools are good and much appreciated by students in Year 7. Students are encouraged to take responsibility, for example, by starting their own skateboard club and participating in citizenship and charitable activities. Performance reviews include personal, as well as academic, targets and improvement plans. The learning support unit (Orchard Lodge) plays a major role in involving all students in education. It helps students to rejoin the school after illness or exclusion and provides strong and sensitive support for those with academic or behavioural difficulties. The school chaplain is trusted and provides very effective additional support and advice. Tutors and heads of year know their students well. Students' annual individual reviews with tutors are effective. Students receive good personal guidance on careers and help to set up their own work placements.
30. The school has satisfactory arrangements to assess and track progress in students' work and to use the outcome of assessment to plan future learning. Assessment is particularly well used when it is linked to clear targets for improvement, as in history, English lessons taught by specialist teachers and art and design in Year 10. Students in Years 8 to 10 have good individual performance reviews with their tutors each year. Elsewhere, both long-term and day to day assessment are satisfactory, but are not always tied in closely enough to lesson planning. For example, while most lessons in English and in modern foreign languages take account of the learning needs of the students, some do not ensue that work is well enough matched to the needs of the lowest attaining.
31. The proportion of students with special educational needs is high and the school's arrangements for assessing their needs are satisfactory. All statements of special educational needs are reviewed annually, in line with legal requirements and local advice. These reviews are supplemented by very good informal assessment in the learning support unit. Individual education plans (IEPs) for these students have suitable targets and are kept up to date. Other students with special educational needs have IEPs, but they are not used to record progress, and some at the time of the inspection were overdue to be updated. The school is taking steps to do this.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

32. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire and comments at the pre-inspection meeting with parents showed that most parents have a high opinion of the school and an increasing number are making it their first choice of secondary school. The inspection team received several letters strongly supporting the school and its work on behalf of individual students. The proportion of parents strongly approving of the school's work has risen significantly since the last inspection.
33. The school keeps in good touch with parents on matters of concern, such as special educational needs, behaviour and attendance. There is a good range of meetings for parents, including students' performance reviews. The quality of information provided to parents is good. The school brochure is of high quality and informative, parents receive good information on the curriculum for each year group and the school has a new and attractive web-site. There are two formal progress reports each year. These are informative, with good diagnosis of students' strengths and areas needing improvement, as well as accurate information on their progress in the National Curriculum. Advice on areas to be improved, however, is often too generalised, such as "needs to concentrate more", and most targets are not clear enough to be helpful. Parents have opportunities to contribute to the school's development plan and provide feedback by means of regular questionnaires. They support school events well, particularly when these involve musical or other performance.

34. However, too many parents are not meeting the school half-way. Parent-teacher association functions are often well attended, but attendance at many other meetings is poor. Many parents do not sign their children's homework planners and a small but significant minority do not ensure that their children attend regularly and on time. These weaknesses hinder the efforts of more active parents to improve the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

35. When the school was last inspected, it had serious weaknesses in management. Senior management was poorly organised, there was a substantial budget deficit and the school did not have a Christian character. The improvement in management since that time has been good, with some very good features. Careful financial planning and management has enabled the school to extend its services, purchase new equipment for ICT and eliminate its budget deficit. The governors' decision in 2000 to cease provision for the school's very small sixth form was a major step in this process. The school has obtained substantial grants to extend provision for students with behavioural and learning difficulties and to promote attendance. It uses these very effectively to enable students who were at risk of permanent exclusion to remain in school and to promote attendance. This is reflected in the low rate of permanent exclusion and in the rising attendance rate. The school's large site gives it considerable additional expenses for maintenance and this contributes to the high cost per student, but this factor is not within the school's control and value for money is satisfactory. The headteacher and governors have very good plans for the school's further development, including a strong link with local businesses and a scheme to develop the site. This includes improving facilities for sport and access for people with disabilities.
36. Because of the small size of the school, the headteacher and her senior colleagues have to spend much of their time in teaching, and many heads of subject also have pastoral responsibilities. This seriously limits the time available for management duties. The effectiveness of management under these conditions owes much to very high levels of skills and efficiency throughout the administrative staff. However, the organisation of middle management, and links between middle and senior management, are not ensuring that all policies and initiatives are carried into practice consistently. Senior managers use ICT very well to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance. This contributes to the pattern of rising standards, particularly at GCSE. There has also been some effective monitoring of teaching, which has helped promote good teaching and has led to a significant reduction in unsatisfactory teaching since the last inspection, through the use of competency procedures where necessary. The school development plan is an effective working document, with clear links to plans for subjects. There is a strong sense of teamwork and commitment to the school among the senior managers, and the care they have taken over the appointment of new teachers has led to improvements in key areas, including English, mathematics and ICT.
37. Work in most subjects is managed effectively on a day-to-day basis, but many targets in subject development plans lack the detail needed to improve provision for specific groups of students, often the highest-attaining and progress towards targets is not monitored rigorously enough to ensure that quick action is taken if any are not met. Performance management is in place, but the school has encountered some problems in applying the approach recommended nationally because of its small size. The overall quality of management is very good in art and design and good in mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and ICT. It is unsatisfactory in geography. School policies for behaviour and for improving the work of gifted and talented students are not followed through systematically in all lessons and this leads to some inconsistencies in progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9. There are, on the other hand, very good arrangements to provide additional teaching to students who need additional support with English and there is a good policy for race equality, which is followed through well in the school's day-to-day work.
38. Management has ensured very good improvement in the school's climate for learning since the last inspection. Christian principles are now present throughout its work and have contributed to improvements in provision for spiritual development as well as to the successful introduction of citizenship. There is a strong and effective commitment to equal opportunities throughout the

school. The governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work closely with the headteacher and senior managers. They have been particularly effective recently in establishing links with local business leaders and in improving the links between the school and the local Christian community.

39. The school is adequately staffed with qualified teachers and some teachers have very high levels of professional skill and experience. Teaching assistants are highly qualified for the work they do. Many are graduates or have other higher educational experience and all have good understanding of the needs of students with learning difficulties. The school deploys its staff effectively, making the most of specialist skills. It has satisfactory arrangements for professional development, although it does not always adapt training quickly enough to deal with weaknesses that it has identified. For example, new literacy materials are not yet fully adapted to the needs of lower-attaining students.
40. The school has good computers and teachers in most subjects have built up good collections of resources for learning, particularly in art and design and music. There are too few resources in geography and physical education. The library is an attractive room, with well-designed displays and good computing facilities. It has a good collection of books on music and satisfactory collections of books for most other subjects. There is a pleasant working atmosphere in the library and it is used effectively. Accommodation is adequate overall and has been improved since the last inspection by refurbishment and by landscaping, some of it the work of a former student. Accommodation is kept in very good condition by the site manager and his staff, and is treated with respect by the students.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

41. To build on the broad programme of improvement that they have established within the school, the headteacher and governors should pay particular attention to the following points:
- (i) improve the match of teaching to students' learning needs in Years 7 to 9 by:
- planning specifically for the needs of higher-attaining and gifted and talented students in all lessons;
 - making further adjustments to work to ensure that students with special educational needs can learn effectively; and
 - improving the use of speaking and listening and of literacy skills in all subjects.
- (Paragraphs 2, 4, 5, 11, 13-15, 17, 39, 46, 75, 80, 102)*
- (ii) improve behaviour in Years 8 and 9 by:
- applying agreed procedures for managing behaviour more consistently in all classes;
 - making clearer provision for rewarding good behaviour; and
 - dealing more consistently with students who speak out of turn in lessons.
- (Paragraphs 8, 11, 13, 28)*
- (iii) improve the allocation of time to subjects, and the organisation of teaching time by:
- ensuring that all subjects have a balanced timetable each week;
 - providing enough time for practical work in all design and technology subjects; and
 - ensuring that the timing and organisation of modern foreign languages lessons enable all students to learn effectively.

(Paragraphs 16-17, 84, 83)

- (iv) improve the organisation and consistency of middle management by:
- setting clear targets for improvement in each subject;
 - focusing planning on the needs of specific groups of students; and
 - monitoring teaching and progress more closely, and taking action when targets are not met.

(Paragraphs 4, 5, 36-7, 60, 76, 87)

Other issues to be included in the governors' action plan

- Improve resources in physical education and geography.
(Paragraph 40)
- Take further steps to improve the standards reached by girls in English.
(Paragraphs 1, 44)
- Improve the use of IEPs to record and track progress.
(Paragraph 31)
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.
(Paragraph 20)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	89
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Years 7 – 11

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	4	17	34	27	7	0	0
Percentage	4	19	38	30	8	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 as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of students on the school's roll	331
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	69

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	26
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	96

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	43

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.2
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	31	25	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	12	16	15
	Girls	15	13	11
	Total	27	29	26
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (49)	53 (47)	47 (47)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (13)	24 (22)	15 (19)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	8	17	20
	Girls	12	13	18
	Total	20	30	38
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	36 (59)	54 (59)	68 (65)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (16)	25 (22)	16 (29)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	38	32	70

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	13	32	37
	Girls	13	26	28
	Total	26	58	65
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	37 (33)	83 (86)	93 (100)
	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	32
	National	39

Ethnic background of students

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 students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
311	76	2
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	1	1
0	0	0
0	1	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.3
Number of students per qualified teacher	14.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	258

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.4
Key Stage 4	18.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	1,389,736
Total expenditure	1,339,066
Expenditure per pupil	4,199
Balance brought forward from previous year	61,526
Balance carried forward to next year	112,196

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
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Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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	331
Number of questionnaires returned	65

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	46	5	6	2
My child is making good progress in school.	43	43	9	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	54	9	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	58	9	2	5
The teaching is good.	35	55	5	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	26	12	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	25	2	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	34	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	55	31	6	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	60	26	3	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	32	2	5	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	42	5	2	3

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 **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Specialist teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- There is good long term planning in schemes of work.
- Writing tasks make a good contribution to students' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is not monitored closely enough.
- Standards in speaking and listening are too low.
- Girls achieve significantly lower standards than boys.

42. Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11. However, results in Year 9 national tests and at GCSE improved in 2002 and the Year 9 results were similar to those of comparable schools. National data for GCSE in 2002 were not available at the time of the inspection. Students make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Although boys tend to do better than girls, both boys and girls make good progress from their standards when joining the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Wider reading is now carefully monitored and students write much more accurately. The match of work to students' needs has improved and more effective attention is given to basic skills.
43. In Year 9, students undertake a broad range of writing. Lower-attaining students are helped by writing frames and individual support to write simple but well-organised pieces. The writing of average and higher-attaining students is often extended and imaginative. Original writing in poetry is a particular strength. By Year 11, progress has accelerated and GCSE coursework shows developing command and confidence from all students. High-attaining students write capably to argue, reflect and explain. Students' best writing often occurs in personal accounts, such as imagined diaries of Romeo and Juliet. Teachers' marking is close and helpful, though it does not always include effective targets for improvement.
44. There is a good range of texts for students to read, though many look to the potential interests of boys rather than girls. In Years 7 to 9, students are encouraged to read aloud, engage with class readers and follow a programme of wider reading. Few students are keen and motivated readers, however, and this shows in the level of comment in reading diaries. Satisfactory progress is made nevertheless, so that low-attaining students by Year 9 can give a personal response to a range of written and media texts. Higher-attaining students can manage critical commentary with reasonable confidence and grasp. By Year 11, students have made good progress. Through carefully directed teaching they have a good understanding of a variety of types of writing and the critical vocabulary to analyse and comment on them. Low-attaining students operate at a simple level, but others, for example, in analysing horror stories from different centuries, comment intelligently, and often at length.
45. Work in reading and writing is given satisfactory reinforcement in other subjects, although this is not consistent across the school. There is satisfactory use of ICT in lessons and in students' writing. Students (particularly girls) depend heavily on their teachers for the progress they make. Their lack of confidence shows in low standards of speaking and listening. Most students are reticent and they do not listen well to each other. Consequently, few understand how to use talk to learn.
46. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed in Years 7 to 9. Otherwise lessons were at least satisfactory and a third very good. Where students are taught by specialists, expectations are generally high and they make good progress. For example, Year 8 students examined a painting and a poem based

upon it. Through carefully directed discussion, they gave sophisticated readings of visual and literary images and subsequently used them to inform their own creative writing. Expert teaching in Year 10 brought students to a close understanding of poems from other cultures. Some English lessons are currently taught by non-specialist staff, however, some of whom do not know the subject well enough to promote students' learning with sufficient rigour. This is the main reason why provision for English is satisfactory rather than good.

47. The head of department has been in post for only a year and has made good progress in improving leadership and management. Schemes of work have been revised, a departmental review has been carefully undertaken and strategies developed to raise achievement generally. This includes a focus on the needs of girls. Accommodation for English teaching is bright, well-kept and motivating. Good use is made of assessment data to track students' progress and to set targets, although it is not always used sufficiently to modify work in lessons, particularly by non-specialist teachers. The department's support for the non-specialist teachers is held back by the lack of time available to monitor their work.

Drama

48. Work in drama was sampled and teaching and learning were satisfactory. Other evidence of students' work, including the quality of their writing and examination results, show good long-term achievement. Currently no drama is taught in Year 7 and this is a bar to students' development in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are rising and are better than those in similar schools in Year 9.
- Teaching is well planned and effective in all lessons.
- Relationships and the working atmosphere are good; students want to learn.
- Teachers make good use of ICT.
- Leadership and management are good, focusing on standards.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment information to inform teachers' planning could be improved.
- There is too little teaching time for mathematics throughout the school.

49. Standards are below average in Years 9 and 11, but there is a strong pattern of improvement. Results in national tests in Year 9 were better than those of comparable schools and there was a significant improvement in GCSE results in 2002. Students in Year 10 during the inspection were also achieving well. The department's work has shown good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers expect more of students and there have been significant improvements in planning and in the management of the department.
50. Between Years 7 to 9, students show increasing confidence and competence in all areas of mathematics. They extend their knowledge of number and algebra, shape, space and measure and handling data. They become adept at managing fractions, decimals and percentages and understand the relationship between them. They learn how to solve algebraic equations and to plot and interpret graphs, using them to solve problems. In a Year 9 class, students created graphs to calculate the cost of electricity according to the number of units used. Others calculated the gradient of distance-time graphs to find the speed of vehicles. Students use protractors and pairs of compasses to measure and construct angles and shapes and do a variety of practical exercises to help them understand patterns, symmetry and shapes. They use their developing skills in geometry to solve problems.
51. By Year 11, students have covered all the topics of the GCSE syllabus and are sufficiently prepared for the examination. Higher-attaining students confidently tackle quadratic and cubic equations and graphs to solve problems. They make good progress in handling statistical data.

Average and lower-attaining students handle simple algebra competently and develop sound skills in number work. Students at all levels display a mature attitude towards the examination course.

52. The good achievement in mathematics is the result of good teaching. Teachers plan well and use a variety of teaching styles according to the needs of the students. They are skilled in explaining new concepts. Lessons for younger students begin with imaginative mental starters, which allow them to reinforce basic skills or to focus on the skills needed for each lesson. In one lesson, students used white boards to record answers to questions on square numbers and square roots quickly. The teacher could then assess their understanding quickly and adjust his questions to help students who were struggling or who needed extra challenge. Higher-attaining students learn to work independently and to confer with each other to resolve challenging problems. However, there are too few opportunities across the department for students to develop these skills and to take more responsibility for their own learning. Students with difficulties in mathematics are effectively taught in smaller groups, with the support of a learning support teacher or assistant. Work is marked thoroughly, but marking does not offer enough guidance on improvement.
53. Teachers promote students' speaking and listening skills well by encouraging them to explain how they have solved problems. Teachers' courteous and kindly manner helps students to learn and behave well and there is a strong sense of mutual respect between teachers and students. Mathematical investigations are a feature of the schemes of work for each year group and range from carrying out surveys of favourite pop groups to testing theories about numbers and the properties of shapes. There are some good examples of the use of ICT in classes and in the computer suite.
54. Leadership and management are good. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in Years 7 to 9 and there is a good range of GCSE courses. The subject improvement plan is thorough and well focused on raising standards, although the analysis of data could be carried through more often into the planning of work in lessons. Across the school, students have less teaching time in mathematics than in most schools and this limits achievement.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teachers are experienced and know the subject well.
- Students make steady and consistent progress.
- There is a good range of practical work.
- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to science.

Areas for improvement

- Learning could be improved if lessons were planned in more detail.
- ICT, particularly sensors and data logging, could be used more.
- Some written work is left incomplete.

55. Students make good progress across the school and standards are rising. Results in 2002 Year 9 national tests were within the average band and were above-average for comparable schools. By Year 11, standards are below average, but are also improving and GCSE results improved between 2001 and 2002. Boys often reach higher standards than girls, but this reflects the generally higher standards of boys joining the school. Overall, standards and results in science represent good achievement. When additional support teachers are available, students with special educational needs make very good progress; at other times, the teachers' additional support ensures satisfactory learning. Since the last inspection, standards continue to be amongst the best in the school and GCSE results have risen. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during this inspection. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

56. Lessons in Years 7 to 9 are based on extensive practical work. Students respond well to this, working co-operatively and sensibly and handling equipment confidently and safely. They enjoy practical work and can make suggestions to explain results, for example, when considering the neutralising of acids and reasons for heat transfer. In Years 7 to 9, students are acquiring essential practical skills and the ability to observe and to discuss the meaning of results, although some do not fully understand the importance of fair tests. Students' books are well presented, with comprehensive notes and appropriately marked homework exercises. Higher-attaining students understand chemical equations, but lower-attaining students find density calculations difficult. There are some opportunities for free and extended writing, including the Ashton Island energy project, and making acids from natural fruit juices. These enhance learning and encourage students to think.
57. In Years 10 and 11, students can design and perform experiments with minimal help. For example, in an investigation involving heat losses from containers, students of all abilities could analyse results and give reasons for false values. In the top, set students' notes are detailed and neatly presented. They show competence in such areas as atomic structure and chemical bonding. The work of lower-attaining students is less detailed and at times incomplete. Again there are opportunities for extended free writing, for example on population pyramids with the top set and on greenhouse effects by the lowest set.
58. Teaching and learning are good overall, although they are better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers exercise firm control and support students well in their work. Where the teaching is good, planning is detailed, there is a good range of activities and strategies and learning aims are clear. In these lessons, students are encouraged to ask and answer questions and to produce their own ideas. The pace of lessons helps students feel secure in absorbing new knowledge, and they learn to apply it to new situations. This was a particular strength of work on diffraction of radio waves with a top set in Year 11 and on the study of the effects of exercise on pulse rate and on the heart with a lower set in Year 10.
59. The science curriculum and schemes of work include some topics that can contribute to students' wider education, although this aspect of the work could be developed further. Students are encouraged to word process coursework and can use computers in laboratories for drawing graphs and for use as a spell checker, as an alternative to using dictionaries. Spelling mistakes are brought to students' attention for correction. Students are also encouraged to use the library for aspects of science relating to citizenship.
60. Management is satisfactory, with good features. Grouping students according to their learning needs after Year 7 contributes to effective learning. Students' progress is monitored and their work is regularly marked, although marking does not always give guidance on improvement. Accommodation is adequate, but the laboratories show their age, and the learning environment could be made more stimulating by better use of posters and displays. The time available to manage the department is limited by the head of department's extensive duties as head of Year 9 and the department has yet to use some national initiatives, including the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. Two highly qualified laboratory technicians contribute greatly to the efficiency of the department.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Higher-attaining students do well at GCSE.
- Target setting in Year 10 is very effective.

Areas for improvement

- Progress from Year 9 to Year 11 needs to be tracked more closely.
- Girls do not do as well as boys at GCSE.

61. GCSE results are broadly average overall, but higher-attaining students do well, and a good proportion of students gain A and A* grades. Standards during the inspection were above average in Year 11 and broadly average at the end of Year 9. Boys achieved higher levels than girls at the end of Year 9 and are continuing to do better at GCSE. This goes against the national trend and the department does not yet analyse progress closely enough to know how this pattern comes about.
62. Students with learning difficulties are identified and given suitable tasks to help them develop their skills. A group of lower-attaining students in Year 8, for example, extended their cubist project through collage using shapes prepared by the teacher. This gave them a sense of achievement and extended their knowledge and understanding of cubism. Gifted and talented students have the opportunity to attend a residential art course at Kilve Court with students from other schools. The department is involved in Apex courses at the school for able students during the summer holidays. Students achieve very well in relation to the standards with which they join the school and build a good range of new skills during Years 7 to 9. Students who continue to GCSE produce some very sophisticated work. There has been good progress since the last inspection. The introduction of target setting at Year 10 has helped to focus the students and improve results. Schemes of work have been rewritten with more focus on intended learning outcomes. Irregular access to the library has been overcome by building up a comprehensive art library in the classroom.
63. Students make good progress, and by the end of Year 9 are able to work creatively using a good variety of materials. At the beginning of Year 7, students are introduced to line, shape, texture and colour. They regularly refer to the work of other artists and improvement is made in mixing colours, using paint, observational skills and handling clay. Year 8 students study seed pods, producing some lively, large scale, tonal pastel drawings and building creative coil pots and bowls in clay. Students in Year 9 use tone and shading in portrait studies which are incorporated into paintings based on studies of Leger. All students use sketchbooks in class and for homework to record research and to support and extend project work. Sketchbooks are regularly marked with attainment grades, although these tend to reflect effort rather than the standard of work. Most students have a positive attitude to art, although some poor behaviour in Years 8 and 9 impedes learning.
64. Students are making very good progress by Year 11, consolidating and extending their skills. They carry out thorough research into the work of artists such as Renoir and Cassatt, and art movements such as Expressionism. Students then use this research to produce their own work using combinations of paint, pastel and charcoal. Much of this is of high quality. All students have a project booklet with a series of tasks which encourages them to work independently.
65. The quality of teaching is good, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well structured and interesting and all students are given encouragement and individual guidance. In a Year 10 lesson students were shown examples of a professional illustrator's work and lively discussion on the use of different media followed. The teacher used her skills to assess students' understanding through questioning, involving the whole class, drawing on their previous experience and inspiring them to experiment creatively with a wide range of media.
66. Key words and specialist language are used in all lessons and students are encouraged to describe work they see and to evaluate each project. ICT is used for the presentation of written work and research and a new ICT suite is being built in the art area which will include computers, scanner, printer and digital cameras.
67. The department is very well managed. The art room provides inspiration for students and resources are well organised. Departmental policies are helping to raise standards, although assessment is not used closely enough for this purpose - for example, to improve the work of students at the borderline of grades C and D at GCSE. There are very good displays of the school's art in the classroom, in the main school and in a shop window in Bath.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in graphics are consistently good.
- There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in most lessons.
- Management is systematic and thoughtful.
- The environment is well cared for.

Areas for improvement

- Literacy skills need to be developed more systematically.
- Skills in using resistant materials need to be improved.
- Students need more opportunities to use computers for manufacturing.

68. Standards are below average in Year 9, but broadly average by Year 11. GCSE results in food technology and resistant materials are better than those in comparable schools. There is no marked difference in the performance of boys and girls at any age. Most students with special educational needs participate fully in design and technology lessons. Special equipment, such as extra large scissors, is purchased to help those with physical disabilities. Classroom assistants play a significant role in helping those facing other challenges to take part fully. Overall, standards represent good achievement across the school and satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
69. By Year 9, most students can identify alternative designs for a clock project and record their ideas using a variety of drawing techniques. They can measure, cut and assemble the material needed to make housing for the mechanism, but only a few students carry this work out to a good standard. In Year 11 those studying food technology are able to understand the nature of a design specification and make extensive use of independent research to meet a design brief. The Internet is regularly used as source of information about food from other countries. In graphics, students readily move from using a computer to create a DVD cover to cutting and pasting their work on to model cases. Teachers recognise the potential of all students and provide them with suitable challenges. Most students enjoy the work, behave well and respect their working environment. This is the result of the professionalism of all the adults, including the technician and classroom assistants, and of the careful match of teaching styles to students' needs.
70. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to good; it is good overall in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers draw on their specialized skills to give good practical guidance to students. For example, drilling jigs are used in Year 10 to make the production of multiple dowelled joints more efficient and accurate. Students' literacy skills are developed by encouraging them to explain, as well as draw or model their ideas, whenever the opportunity presents itself. Teachers frequently use and clarify the meaning of appropriate technical terms. However, more opportunities to understand key words could be introduced into the lesson format. Accurate measuring, marking out or mixing of the correct proportions contribute to the development of numeracy. ICT equipment, donated by a local company, is used well in graphics, but students do not use ICT in making.
71. The department is well led and managed. The curriculum is systematically planned and taught, and documents are kept up to date, with national recommendations modified to meet the needs of the students. Risk assessment is carried out on each project and all members of the team are briefed to make them aware of key safety issues. Great care is taken of the working environment. The graphics and realisation rooms contain displays and models of high quality.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students develop satisfactory awareness of the cultures of countries they study.
- By Year 9, students develop sound understanding of physical processes.
- By Year 11, students have satisfactory understanding of the impact of man on the environment.

Areas for improvement

- Most work is pitched at too low a level.
- Students' skills in learning and investigation are underdeveloped.
- The quality of written work is poor and there is too little use of ICT.
- There is at present no head of department.

72. By the end of Years 9 and 11, the standards in geography are well below those expected nationally. Although GCSE results in the subject have been improving over recent years, standards have remained below average. There is no significant difference between the standards reached by boys and girls. The achievement of students with special educational needs is unsatisfactory, as their particular needs are often not taken into account in the planning of work. Similarly, gifted, talented and more able students achieve too little, as they are not challenged enough. The few students from minority ethnic groups are achieving well. Overall, students' achievement is unsatisfactory and the quality of provision has deteriorated since the last inspection.
73. By the end of Year 9, students have a satisfactory awareness of other countries such as India and China. They understand the different cultures of these countries and they have a good grasp of some of the social and moral issues, such as child labour in India and family limitation in China. They have a sound understanding of physical processes, such as volcanoes and earthquakes, and their impact on people. However, students have less knowledge about the location and distributions of these features. Their ability to select and use a range of sources and information is very limited and they have difficulty in reaching conclusions about the issues they are studying. Students have had little opportunity for collating, or investigating data graphically, or using ICT, so their skills in these areas are underdeveloped.
74. By the end of Year 11, students have a satisfactory understanding of both physical and human processes. For example, they have a sound knowledge of river basins, types of weathering and erosion and different types of farming. They also understand the interrelationship between physical and human activities and the impact on the environment, such as desertification. They can give examples and explain the location of such features. However, they have insufficient understanding of geographical patterns and distributions. Although students have insight into managing environments, they have little appreciation of different values and attitudes and their impact on people and places. Their skills in using questions to explore distributions, locations and patterns are under-developed as are their skills in using a range of source material, including direct observation through fieldwork. Throughout the school students' ability to use maps and photographs is very limited.
75. The quality of teaching throughout the school is unsatisfactory. Although learning is satisfactory for middle ability students, the most and least able students do not learn well enough. The range of work undertaken is too narrow and gives students too little experience of the skills required in the National Curriculum. Often the purpose of the lesson is unclear and too little is expected of the students. Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to numeracy, but little to ICT, and students do not always complete their written work.
76. There is at present no head of department and management and leadership are not effective. Assessment is not used to plan lessons, or to guide students on ways of improving their work. There are too few resources for learning and the library has too few geography books.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards, teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' work and progress are assessed and tracked well.
- Much of the teaching makes a good contribution to literacy.

Areas for improvement

- There could be greater range and variety in teaching methods in Years 7 to 9.

77. The standard of work seen in Year 9 is broadly average, but represents good progress from the below average standards of students joining the school. The standard of work in Year 11 is good and reflects recent improvements in GCSE results; two-thirds of students gained A*-C grade passes in 2002, compared with just over one-third in 2000. Boys have tended to perform better than girls and the GCSE option has been attractive to able boys. By Year 11, gifted and talented students do well in history, although some could achieve more in Years 7 to 9. All classes, including GCSE sets, contain a higher than average proportion of students with special educational needs, including behavioural difficulties. These students achieve well particularly in Years 10 and 11. Overall, achievement is good and the school has made good improvements in its provision since the last inspection.
78. By the end of Year 9, most students can assess the importance of historical source material. For example, they can discuss the reliability of photographs of Suffragette demonstrators, the more able by reference to a wider social or political context. Students can also trace changes in public attitudes to the First World War by first inferring evidence from propaganda posters and other material from 1914 and 1916, and then comparing and cross-referencing the evidence to draw conclusions. They use evidence from primary sources to evoke contemporary feelings and attitudes in well-constructed 'letters from the front'. Nevertheless, the achievement of lower-attaining students is held back by weaknesses in literacy and in their general knowledge of events surrounding those they are studying.
79. Progress is more rapid in Years 10 and 11. Students in Year 10, for example, can produce well-structured extended accounts of the westward expansion and settlement of the United States. They show good understanding of the cultural and economic conflicts between Native Americans and white settlers. In examining the fate of one particular family of settlers, they begin to understand how and why accounts of the past may differ. By the end of Year 11, all students know the topics they are studying well and use their knowledge to interpret and evaluate written and photographic sources, for example in relation to 'Bloody Sunday'. In doing this, they show impressive understanding of historical method. For example, they can explain why unreliable sources, such as Belfast murals, can still be useful to a historian - "It depends what you want to use it for". They also understand that supportive evidence from a potentially hostile source - for example, a Sunday Times report criticising the actions of British troops on 'Bloody Sunday' - can be particularly reliable.
80. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. The teaching programme for Years 7 to 9 is well planned, but uses a restricted range and variety of methods, with too much reliance on worksheets and textbook exercises. These are simplified effectively for the least able students, but do not challenge higher-attaining students enough. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is characterised by skilful, challenging questioning and lively responses from students. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their students, who enjoy their work.
81. Literacy is particularly well developed across the school. It is planned in detail and includes good use of writing frames and of key words in context. Weekly literacy sheets, containing practical ideas developed by the English Department, are used well. Numeracy is less explicitly planned, but includes good opportunities for students to interrogate databases, produce pie charts and interpret statistical data. There is some use of ICT, mainly for pupil research but also

on occasion for interrogating databases and taking part in problem-solving simulations, such as "The Oregon Trail".

82. Provision for history is managed well and this results in a consistent approach to school initiatives. Assessment and targets are particularly well used to raise standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Very effective leadership and management provide vision for the subject.
- The school is building up good resources for all teachers and students.
- Teaching and learning in ICT are good and standards are rising.
- Students are interested in the subject and enjoy their work.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not yet fully used in all subjects.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored.
- Students in some year groups do not receive enough specific teaching.

83. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in using and applying ICT across the curriculum. Better progress has been made in terms of equipment, organisation and access to machines than in the integration of computers in lessons. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are broadly average, with no major differences between boys and girls. Students with special and additional needs are working well and making sound progress and there are satisfactory opportunities for those with particular aptitude for the subject. Achievement overall is good.

84. Students in Years 7 to 9 use the Internet and the school's good software with increasing confidence, quickly taking up the options that the programs offer. Text is manipulated, search engines used well and students copy and paste images and clip art into their own presentations. Students researching Internet sites on Bath chose appropriately considered images and video clips to build their own front page on Microsoft PowerPoint. After Year 7, students do not have specific ICT lessons and opportunities for learning vary too much across the school. There is very good use of ICT for composition and presentation in music and in some other subjects such as mathematics (data manipulation and presentation) and English (coursework presentation). Other subjects are developing their provision, but sometimes too slowly.

85. Students in Years 10 and 11 are reaching average to above average standards in the GCSE course. All students have a good grasp of the necessary computer skills to be able to produce effective presentations. Some discussion and co-operative help was seen at times, when students worked together to solve particular problems and share ideas. Students who are not taking the GCSE course only have access to ICT for their coursework. There are several good examples on display of extended writing and research using Internet resources in history, religious education and design and technology. In a study of Martin Luther King, the Internet was used well to gather supporting material from an appropriate web site.

86. Teaching and learning are good in ICT lessons and satisfactory overall in other subjects. ICT lessons are thoroughly prepared and clear. Teachers make very good use of the school's technology. In other lessons, they use relevant material such as spreadsheets for data collation and graphs in mathematics and good web sites to help design CD covers in design and technology. Good practice in ICT lessons is filtering across the school. For example, teachers of mathematics and modern foreign languages use computers well to prepare and present lessons. There is also a wide range of suitable software, providing variety and choice in learning options. The pace of lessons is good and ICT teachers have high expectations. Attitudes and behaviour are good and teachers ensure that only appropriate web sites are used. A vibrant computer club at lunchtimes is over subscribed and computers in the library are much in demand.

87. The department is managed very well and much innovation and initiative have been needed to bring the school to its current position. There are clear plans for the development of the subject, and good use is made of external resources. The school has excellent support from a specialist technician and a network manager. However, teaching is not yet monitored and new equipment across the school is not yet fully used. The school is very well placed to improve its work further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good teaching has led to improved GCSE results.
- Effective target-setting for students in Years 7 to 9 is building a foundation for higher standards.
- Systematic use of the foreign language has raised teachers' expectations.
- Boys and girls reach similar standards.

Areas for improvement

- Learning in many classes is hampered by timetabling problems.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers' assessment of standards at the end of Year 9 should be sharpened.

88. Standards at the end of Year 9 are broadly average in both French and German. 2002 GCSE results were only slightly below average in French, a significant improvement from the well below average results in previous years. The number of students taking German at GCSE is small, but standards are good. Unlike the picture nationally, boys achieve as well as girls. The learning and achievement of those with special educational needs are good, because the work is adjusted to their needs and abilities. Some challenge is provided for gifted and talented students and the department is well placed to build further on this work: their learning and achievement are satisfactory and, at times, good. Overall achievement throughout the school is good. Since the last inspection developments in teaching methods and rationalisation of curriculum provision have led to good improvement overall.
89. By Year 9, students have learned a good range of basic vocabulary and grammatical structures. They repeat orally after the teacher with a good accent. They understand short phrases spoken aloud and respond with short phrases. They issue invitations to go swimming or surfing. They work in small groups and create conversations based on a model they have studied. When they decide whether an answer is false, higher-attaining students enjoy extending the statement by explaining how it is false and what the correct answer should be. They write basic phrases correctly and many enjoy learning spelling rules, such as 'ie' or 'ei' and the associated pronunciation. They are becoming familiar with grammatical terminology, such as first, second and third person. Higher attaining students use past, present and future tenses separately, but are less confident when they are mixed.
90. By Year 11, students in both languages can explain their daily routine, write about eating and drinking and about good health. They create short paragraphs of writing and some longer pieces, such as good tourist brochures about Bath. Most take their GCSE coursework seriously and make steady progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing. On the other hand, weaknesses in vocabulary, and in students' handling of grammatical structures, result in standards in both languages remaining below average.
91. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is very good in a fifth of lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers have very good command of the languages they teach, of the National Curriculum and of GCSE requirements. Their continual use of the foreign language creates a good atmosphere in the classroom. They plan a good variety of activities for lessons, fostering a good spirit and motivation on the part of most students. They use a good range of resources and teaching techniques effectively. Their expectations are high and they use time well, largely maintaining students' concentration throughout long, and sometimes very long, lessons. These positive aspects to teaching ensure that students' learning is reinforced and they make good progress in their skills. Teachers expect comparable

performance, involvement and commitment from boys and girls. Boys respond well to the teachers and their learning is as good as that of the girls. However, some students in Years 8 and 9 do not behave as they should, even in response to good teaching. They challenge the teacher's authority unreasonably with the result that their learning is much inferior to that of those students who behave well. In some cases, students with significant behavioural difficulties do not receive enough support to give them a reasonable chance of learning effectively.

92. Work in modern languages makes a good contribution to literacy skills in all classes. Much work in French and German is taught through the medium of grammar and this helps students to understand how language is made up. Some work makes a small contribution to numeracy skills, for example in dates and number work. During the inspection, teachers used a computer and data projector well, but students only used ICT for some GCSE coursework. The library contains too few suitable books, but there are plans to address this.
93. Leadership and management are good. Teachers co-operate well together as a cohesive unit and the department has built up good collections of resources. Displays of students' work and commercial materials help establish a French and German environment in the classrooms. Target-setting, with regular reviews, enables teachers to track learning and achievement effectively. However, the normal one hour lessons are too long for most students and some double lessons in German are too long in Years 10 and 11, particularly where students have no other lesson in the week. In Years 7 and 8, French and German lessons are sometimes timetabled consecutively. Such arrangements interfere with learning and limit the benefits to students of the department's many strengths. Many students enjoy visits to France and Germany and some take part in the Bristol-Bordeaux exchange.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Students make very good progress and reach high standards.
- Students enjoy music and numbers on the GCSE course are rising.
- The subject leader has excellent professional and management skills.
- Students undertake a broad range of vocal and instrumental work.
- There are very good resources for learning, including computers.

Areas for improvement

- Some work in Years 7 to 9 does not fully meet all students' needs.
- Standards in listening and appraising music could be improved.
- Arrangements to set targets and monitor progress could be extended.

94. Standards in Year 9 are above average. They are often well above average in composing and performing, but are sometimes below average in listening and responding to music. Teachers' assessments for Year 9 in 2002 were well above average and are reflected in the high standard of work in Year 10. Standards in the GCSE course are very high and students often do better in music than in other subjects. Results have been improving rapidly since 2000 and in 2002 four-fifths of GCSE candidates gained grades A* to C. The number of students taking GCSE music is growing. As students begin with below average standards, overall achievement in the subject is very good. The range and quality of provision for music have shown very good improvement since the last inspection and the outstanding features of the work provide an excellent platform for further development.
95. Students throughout the school learn very well in response to well-planned teaching. In Year 7, students manipulate rhythms with some precision and by Year 8 many students can play keyboards using both hands independently. In Year 9 students can use microphones, amplifiers and sequencing software for performance and composition. The quality of listening to music and appraising what students hear is, on the other hand, held back by weaknesses in their literacy skills and vocabulary and is generally lower than their practical work.

96. Standards in Year 11 are well above average in composing, often above average in performing, but below average in appraising music, where achievement is limited by students' weak grasp of technical vocabulary and limited writing skills. Computers are well used in Years 10 and 11 for performances linked to composition. Students have many opportunities to develop their own interests and support composition work with their own instrumental skills. This leads to very good progress.
97. Teaching is based on very good knowledge and understanding combined with strong practical skills and professional experience. It is good or better in all lessons and the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with strengths in vocal work, ICT and practical music making. Work is well matched to students' interests, although it is not always reviewed and consolidated at the end of lessons. The balance in work is good and pace is well maintained with a variety of activities. Assessment and record keeping are effective, although more could be done to involve students in setting their own short-term targets. The progress made by students with special educational needs is good, particularly when they have additional support. However, some work in Years 7 to 9 is not designed to meet the needs of the highest and lowest-attaining students and their learning in these lessons is satisfactory rather than good. Students' attitudes in music lessons are very good. They are interested and cooperative, work enthusiastically in group practical work and respect others' contributions.
98. Visiting instrumental teachers make a very worthwhile contribution and their work is well managed and integrated into the work of the department. Five teachers visit and the range of instruments offered is very good. The number of students taking instrumental lessons is above average. Instrumental teaching is of a very good quality, including arrangements for assessment and reporting. A rock school provides further opportunities for many students to learn in a group context. Other instrumental tuition is well supported by opportunities for appropriate ensemble playing in very good extended curricular activities. Homework is also used appropriately.
99. The high quality of leadership and management is a key factor in raising standards and developing music as a strength of the school. Resources and the learning environment are very good and the scheme of work very well thought out. Students have opportunities to explore music from a range of cultures, for example, in salsa in Year 7 and rap and reggae in Year 9. The use of live and recorded music in assemblies contributes positively to students' spiritual and moral development. Opportunities for learning outside lessons are open to all and students' music making is celebrated in many school and community events. Such opportunities benefit students tremendously in their cultural and social development and foster important links with parents and the community.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good in GCSE courses.
- Standards are high in dance at GCSE.
- There is a supportive and caring approach.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 9 and 11 are below average.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning need to be monitored more closely.
- Activities are limited by a lack of accommodation and resources.

100. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are below average and GCSE results were well below average in 2002. However, most students start with well below average standards in the subject and overall achievement is satisfactory. Results for the GCSE dance course are well above average and achievement on this course is very good. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and there are no significant variations in the standards reached by boys and girls. However, the successful dance course attracts more girls, and girls in Years 7 and 8

showed good gymnastics skills and were more likely to make pertinent comments about each other's performances. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

101. In Year 9, students playing netball and soccer have difficulty passing with control and accuracy. The small proportion of higher attaining students use good movement skills in netball to move into space to receive a pass. However, in soccer, students lack a sound understanding of tactics. In badminton, just a small proportion of students could control the racquet and hit the shuttlecock with consistency. Most students do not understand how and why to warm up before exercise. Most students following GCSE courses work well in practical lessons and show good co-ordination. However, they have limited understanding of the principles underpinning the work and do not use technical language effectively in their writing and when speaking. Students taking dance have good control and interpret music sensitively. They develop good theoretical understanding alongside technical skills and evaluate performance sensitively.
102. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from good to unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. Relationships are good and teachers give good support to all students. In the good lessons, students benefit from well-paced activities and challenging tasks that keep them interested and involved. Shared learning goals, allied to questions that probe understanding and knowledge, ensure consistent learning and good progress. However, warm-up techniques are not used well enough in most lessons and students have too few opportunities to evaluate work and refine their skills. In a significant minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, teaching is not planned to match students' stages of learning. Learning in Years 8 and 9 also suffers from the restless and disruptive behaviour of a small but significant proportion of students.
103. Opportunities are not taken consistently to develop literacy and numeracy skills in lessons, although literacy is developed as key words form part of the good displays in and around the physical education areas. There is little use of ICT in the subject.
104. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Examination results are analysed and assessment procedures have been introduced as a pilot project in Year 9. Both of these aspects need further development and teaching is not yet monitored by management. Accommodation is limited and hinders the breadth of activities, although the curriculum meets requirements. The department has been accepted for the sports co-ordinator programme and this will provide links with primary schools. Physical education has the capacity to make a significant improvement.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Students in Years 9 and 11 understand what it means to be a good citizen.
- The introduction of citizenship as a subject has been planned well.
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good.
- There is an excellent practical dimension to the school's provision for citizenship.

Areas for development

- Students do not take enough responsibility within the school council.

105. Students in Years 9 and 11 have above average knowledge about becoming informed citizens and in developing skills of enquiry and communication. They are enthusiastic and take an interest in what is presented to them by their teachers in the citizenship-related aspects of lessons. They are ready to use skills such as their first aid from the St Johns Ambulance training for the benefit of the community when they are needed.
106. In Year 11 higher-attaining students are well informed on current issues. For example, they understand the way in which the play *The Crucible* illustrates the attitudes to communism that led to persecution in the USA in the 1950s. In discussions with inspectors, Year 11 students understood the principles of taxation and government spending, and had clear ideas about

ethical responsibilities, for example in safeguarding the environment. Students in Year 9 showed unusual maturity in discussing a range of issues and higher-attaining students showed an impressive level of knowledge. Most students with special educational needs achieve well in citizenship in response to the good support they receive, but a minority of students with behavioural difficulties do not consider the social consequences of their actions.

107. Students have an awareness of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society because of the school's emphasis on care, equality and participation in a Christian context. Their Student Charter has very clear messages and introduces them to their rights and duties in the wider world. Students contribute to a very wide range of charities and assemblies reinforce the message that we cannot take our liberty for granted. Students in Year 9 have visited Westminster to find out how parliament works. Individuals have met the Prime Minister to show how money raised by the school has improved conditions in African schools. They were able to develop their language skills in communicating with a French speaking area of Africa. The school council has been consulted on significant issues, such as food at lunch and breaktimes, but meetings do not always give students enough time to discuss issues in depth.
108. Teaching is good. Citizenship is taught across all subjects and through specific well planned personal, social and health education lessons. Very good use is made of experts on specific issues, such as the police. Many subject teachers have good knowledge, manage students well and encourage lively debates.
109. The citizenship curriculum is well developed throughout the school and it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Through good leadership, the school has developed a well-planned citizenship programme that is making a real contribution to raising standards in all aspects of school life.