

INSPECTION REPORT

CARTERTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Carterton

LEA area: Oxford

Unique reference number: 123236

Headteacher: Mr Alan Klee

Reporting inspector: Mrs Helen Hutchings
7541

Dates of inspection: 7th – 11th October 2002

Inspection number: 250634

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Upavon Way

Carterton

Oxfordshire

Postcode: OX18 1BU

Telephone number: 01993 841611

Fax number: 01993 843710

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Stuart Slator

Date of previous inspection: 8th – 12th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| 7541 | Helen Hutchings | Registered inspector | Educational inclusion, including race equality | What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further? |
| 19653 | Elizabeth Dickson | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 24142 | Sylvia McConville | Team inspector | English and drama | |
| 31279 | Nicholas Ware | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| 3525 | Peter McGregor | Team inspector | Science | |
| 22491 | Lorraine Small | Team inspector | Design and technology Information and communication technology (ICT) | |
| 2501 | Raye Allison-Smith | Team inspector | Art and design | |
| 25073 | Stuart Jordan | Team inspector | Geography History | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils? |
| 15075 | Bryan Stephens | Team inspector | Modern languages English as an additional language | How well is the school led and managed? |
| 11746 | Robin Coulthard | Team inspector | Music | |
| 30563 | Jacqueline Pentlow | Team inspector | Religious education | |
| 30800 | Betty Colley | Team inspector | Physical education Special educational needs (SEN) | |

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e-Qualitas Limited, Langshaw, Pastens Road, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey. RH8 0RE Tel. 01883 723257

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Carterton Community College is a smaller than average comprehensive school, with 728 pupils on roll, 372 boys and 356 girls. The school is situated close to RAF Brize Norton and about a third of the pupils are from Royal Air Force families. This is the main reason why the numbers of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the normal time of entry is high. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is broadly in line with the national average but there are fewer higher attaining pupils and levels of literacy are below average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is low. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is broadly in line with the national average. The school also has an education support base with eight places for pupils identified by the local education authority as requiring special provision for their learning difficulties. About a third of teachers have joined the school within the last two years and the school has not been able to make permanent appointments to all posts.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has a number of strengths which benefit pupils, such as the care and support for pupils' personal development. Pupils raise their achievement as they move through the school and, by the time they leave school, pupils attain standards in GCSE and other courses which are above national averages. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior team are good. Given the quality of teaching and learning, the good attitudes of the pupils, improvements in results in national tests and examinations, but also too little progress in improving pupils' literacy skills in Years 7 to 9, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils attain above average standards in GCSE geography and results in art and design are well above the national average.
- Some very good teaching results in motivated pupils who achieve well.
- Pupils receive good levels of support and have good attitudes to school. Very good procedures to minimise absence result in good attendance levels.
- The very good curriculum is broad, meets pupils' needs well, benefits from effectively planned use of ICT in several subjects and is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Accommodation is very good and provides a bright, inviting environment that encourages learning.
- The educational support base is well managed and effective so that pupils make good progress.

What could be improved

- Insufficient whole-school emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills results in below average standards in English in Year 9. The poor quality and range of books in the library is a contributory factor.
- Some unsatisfactory teaching results in achievement that is not high enough, especially for low attaining pupils.
- The line management of heads of department is insufficiently effective in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and in using performance data.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1997. Improvement since that time has been good. All pupils have access to National Curriculum ICT, with the exception of sufficient opportunities for the computer-aided control element. The school development planning process is secure and there is appropriate consultation to inform school policy. Provision for pupils in the educational support base is now good. Results in the Year 9 tests have improved at a faster rate than nationally. The proportion of good or better teaching has increased. The school has introduced a tutor-based initiative to provide an opportunity for reflection as a means of meeting the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship, but this has not been implemented consistently in every class.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | <i>Key</i> |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|---|
| | all schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2001 | |
| GCSE examinations | B | A | C | D | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |

In 2001, the last year for which there is complete national comparative data, the proportion of pupils who gained five or more higher grades A*-C or GNVQ equivalent was above the national average, as it has been over the previous three years. The average total GCSE points score per pupil was in line with the national average, but was below that of similar schools as designated by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The results overall in 2002 remained at a similar level to those of 2001. The school fell short of its ambitious statutory targets for attainment in GCSE. Results were similar to national averages in English, mathematics and science, French and drama and above average in geography, German, music and physical education. They were well above average in art. Results in 2002 improved significantly in design and technology, history and religious education. During Years 10 and 11, pupils consolidate their learning and achieve satisfactorily overall. Achievement is particularly good in art, geography and music. It is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, German, physical education and religious education, but unsatisfactory in drama. Overall, girls do better than boys but the difference is in line with the difference nationally.

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were in line with the national average, but well below those of similar schools. However, this does not take account of the proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school at times other than the normal time of entry and who have experienced disruption to their learning. Results in English were well below the national average. In mathematics and science, results were in line with national averages. Over the last five years the school's results have improved at a faster rate than nationally. In 2002, the results show a significant improvement in English and remain similar in mathematics and science. Overall, these results represent satisfactory achievement for pupils. By the time pupils reach Year 9, their standards are generally in line with national expectations in other subjects and in art they are higher, though lower in French and drama.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy joining in the variety of activities offered to them and taking part in sporting events arranged by the school. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Behaviour overall is good. In lessons, most pupils behave well and respect the school's rules. A minority of pupils do not behave well and their behaviour affects their own and others' learning. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Most adults provide good role models in the encouraging way they deal with pupils and, in most cases, pupils respond by being co-operative. Pupils generally get on well together. |
| Attendance | Good. Attendance is higher than the national average and unauthorised absence has fallen significantly and is below national levels. |

The fixed term exclusions are well above average because of the school's firm approach to unacceptable behaviour. It has not been necessary to have any permanent exclusions in recent years.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Years 7 – 9 | Years 10 – 11 |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

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

Teaching is good in most subjects, particularly in art, geography, history, German, physical education and religious education. Teaching was very good in a quarter of lessons and good in a further two in five. However, the small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, less than one lesson in twelve, mainly related to a lack of specific subject knowledge or in providing work that was not matched well to pupils' needs. Otherwise teachers have very good relationships with their classes and provide work which challenges and interests pupils so that they learn effectively. Teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science was satisfactory overall, but was better in English and mathematics in Years 10 and 11. There are good approaches to developing literacy and numeracy in some subjects, but opportunities to improve literacy skills, in particular, were not always taken. In some subjects, insufficient opportunities are taken to use ICT as an aid to learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Very good. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, including opportunities for pupils to follow vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. The school has a well-managed programme of support to integrate pupils fully into the school. The education support base is very good. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional | Satisfactory. The school makes good use of external support but has not yet developed its whole-school policy and approach. |

| | |
|----------|--|
| language | |
|----------|--|

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good overall. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good, and for spiritual development it is satisfactory. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school cares for pupils well. A well-organised pastoral system provides pupils with a good level of academic and personal support. |

Few parents have any direct involvement in the school. Where parents are involved, for example as parent governors, their contribution is valued and effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Leadership is of good quality at all levels of management. All share a commitment to maintain a caring environment in which pupils can develop as individuals and achieve their best. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors provide good support and are effectively involved in the strategic formation of policy. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Procedures for monitoring the progress in achieving whole-school and departmental targets are effective. Use of this information is inconsistent. |
| The strategic use of resources | Resources are effectively deployed and targeted towards the improvement of learning. |

There are sufficient teachers to teach all subjects, although there is a lack of expertise in some aspects of science. Changes in staffing in engineering and modern languages, due to illness, have disrupted learning for pupils. Full account is taken of best value principles in planning, by comparing what the school offers with other local institutions, consulting pupils and parents to judge what is needed and setting challenging targets for school improvement. Accommodation is bright and provides a very good environment for pupils to learn well. Resources are generally satisfactory to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and the school, with a few specific areas of shortage, such as the range of books in the library.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best • Pupils like school and achieve well • Good teaching • The school supports pupils to become responsible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better links with parents so that they feel more comfortable about approaching the school with problems • More information about pupils' progress • More extra-curricular activities |

Inspectors' judgements largely support the positive views of parents. The school tries to ensure that pupils work hard and are given opportunities to mature and achieve well. Much teaching is good, although some is unsatisfactory. The school provides good quality written information for parents about their children and the school, but more could be done to canvass their views and encourage parental involvement. Extra-curricular provision is very good and caters for a wide range of interests.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results in the national tests at the age of eleven shows that pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science, when they come to this school, is broadly in line with national averages. Fewer higher attaining pupils come to Carterton than is usually the case in comprehensive schools. Generally pupils have lower than average literacy skills and their attainment in many other subjects is lower than national expectations when they join the school.
2. Full national comparative statistics are only available for 2001. In that year, test results at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average, but when compared with schools where a similar proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, they were well below average. However, this does not take account of the proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school at times other than the normal time of entry and who have experienced disruption to their learning. Results in English were well below the national average and in the bottom five percent of similar schools. In mathematics and science, results were in line with national averages and below average in mathematics and well below average in science for similar schools. However, over the last five years the school trend has been above the national trend and the school's results have improved at a faster rate than nationally. 2002 results indicate a significant improvement in English and are similar in mathematics and science.
3. In most of their other subjects, pupils enter the school with levels of attainment lower than is normally expected at that age. By the time they reach Year 9, the standards observed during the inspection are generally in line with national expectations. In art pupils are working at a higher level. Attainment in English, particularly in writing, French and drama is lower than expected. Overall, these results represent satisfactory achievement for pupils, although gains in literacy skills are lower than they should be.
4. In 2001, the proportion of pupils who gained five or more GCSE grades A*-C or GNVQ equivalent (57.6%) was above the national average (48.4%). This proportion has been rising steadily over the last three years at a rate above the national trend. The average total points score per pupil, while in line with the national average, was below that of similar schools as measured by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The levels of pupil mobility into and out of the school are lower than in the earlier years, allowing pupils to consolidate their learning and achieve at a satisfactory level. The school's improvement trend over the previous five years, as measured by the average point score per pupil, has not been quite as high as the national trend. The results overall in 2002 remained at a similar level to those of 2001, with 56% achieving five or more grades A*-C or GNVQ equivalent. The school fell short of its ambitious statutory targets for attainment in GCSE, both for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C and their average total point score. Validated national statistics for 2002 are not yet available for comparison.
5. GCSE results in 2001 were similar to national averages in most subjects and above average in English, science, geography, German, music and physical education. They were well above average in art. Pupils' achievements have been better in art, English and geography, but not so good in design and technology, French and mathematics than in their other subjects. In 2002 results improved further in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, history and religious education.

6. Pupils in the current Year 11 are working at nationally expected levels in most subjects. In French and drama standards are below expected levels, but in geography, history and physical education they are above expectations and well above in art. The overall achievement is satisfactory and slightly better than in Years 7 to 9.
7. Pupils with special educational needs do well when account is taken of their previous attainment. On entry in Year 7 all pupils with special educational needs are placed in groups on the basis of their prior attainment. Literacy and numeracy are targeted for improvement and progress is recorded and monitored regularly. Their improved scores in tests of reading and spelling at the end of Year 9 show that they make good progress. However, their overall progress across the curriculum is variable; while generally in line with their peers, it is more limited in science. In the educational support base their achievement is good as can be seen clearly in lessons, increasing levels of confidence and in their statement reviews. By the end of Year 11 some students achieve GCSE grades. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Some additional support is provided for the few pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and they make satisfactory progress in developing their language skills and are beginning to achieve in line with their peers.
8. Pupils' standards of reading and writing are below average on entry. There are examples of effective approaches being used in many subjects to improve literacy levels but, without a consistent whole school approach, many pupils' skills remain below average in Years 7 to 9. Numeracy skills are more in line with expectations and adequate for pupils to cope with the demands of other subjects. Generally pupils' ICT skills are satisfactory, but pupils have insufficient planned opportunities to use these in several subjects across the school.
9. The school analyses its results in a variety of ways to identify possible areas of weaknesses or inconsistency. There are a number of differences in the performance of boys and girls; however, there is no consistent pattern. In English, for example, girls do better than boys in the Year 9 tests but the difference is less than the national difference and in mathematics and science performance is broadly similar. In GCSE, girls do better than boys in science, particularly in the higher grades, and in English the difference between the performance of boys and girls is greater than it is nationally, while in mathematics there is little difference. In history, boys did better than girls in GCSE, which is against the national trend. Overall, girls do better than boys but the difference is in line with the difference nationally. Value-added analyses of the performance of pupils against the length of time they have been in the school confirm that pupils who join the school in Year 7 generally do better than those who join the school at a later stage.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. Their response was good or better in two-thirds of the lessons seen during the inspection. This is similar to the situation described at the last inspection. Most pupils, of all abilities, concentrate and work well on any tasks set for them, and behave in a sensible manner. Attitudes to art are particularly positive and pupils are highly motivated. They have a good relationship with their teachers and this contributes to the progress they make. During the inspection there were many other occasions when pupils showed interest in their work and an enthusiasm for learning. Occasionally, some pupils do not settle quickly to their work and become restless when the teaching does not inspire them and hold their interest. This occurred most often in drama, music and science lessons.

11. There is good behaviour in most classrooms with pupils properly engaged in their set activities. Pupils are generally well behaved and attentive, demonstrating a willingness to listen to teachers, follow instructions and contribute to their learning. Pupils are able to work co-operatively in groups and most teachers use this well by adopting a good range of teaching styles and approaches to provide interest for learning. A small minority display challenging behaviour. They call out and speak while others are speaking or refuse to do as asked. In these lessons, productivity falls and learning for all pupils becomes more difficult. Behaviour outside classrooms is mostly good and pupils conduct themselves in a sensible manner. Nevertheless, there are occasional instances of boisterousness or inconsiderate behaviour in narrow corridors and doorways. The school responds quickly and firmly to unacceptable behaviour. Last year there were 138 fixed term exclusions. This rate is much higher than the national average. There have, however, been no permanent exclusions in recent years. Reasons for exclusions are appropriate and included threatening behaviour to other students and rudeness to staff.
12. There is no evidence that bullying or other oppressive behaviour is a particular problem, and pupils report that they would approach a member of staff if they had concerns.
13. Relationships throughout the school are good, as reported at the last inspection. Most adults provide good role models in the encouraging way they deal with pupils and in most cases pupils respond by being co-operative. Pupils generally get on well together and most are sensible when asked to work together in lessons. They respond well to any opportunity to take on responsibilities. The year councils and school council are lively bodies where two elected representatives from each form meet on a regular basis to discuss matters of concern and make suggestions. Pupils support the councils and feel they have a genuine voice in their school. Some Year 11 pupils have received training in counselling to provide support for Year 7 pupils who have academic or pastoral problems. Many pupils throughout the school join in the variety of activities offered to them and take part in sporting events and matches.
14. Pupils show a maturity in their approach to learning about particular issues. In a Year 7 personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson, pupils demonstrated a care and concern for the environment by collecting paper to recycle. Year 11 pupils were keen to learn how to manage their finances and enthusiastically took part in exercises on budgeting.
15. Attendance, at 93.5% for the academic year 2001/02 is above the national average. Unauthorised absence has fallen significantly over the last two years and is now lower than the national average. Most pupils arrive to school on time, though there is some time lost when pupils move from one lesson to another.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and similar to that found at the time of the last inspection. A good proportion of teaching is good and very good, but there is some which is unsatisfactory. It is very good in a quarter of lessons and good in a further two in five. Teaching in science is satisfactory overall, and in English and mathematics it is satisfactory for Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11. It is good in design and technology, geography, history, German, physical education and religious education. It is very good in art and design and in geography and history in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is less than one lesson in twelve, but is unsatisfactory overall in drama.

17. Teachers generally have good knowledge of their subjects. They use this to plan lessons well and bring enthusiasm to their teaching, which benefits pupils' learning by providing topics of interest, relevant to them. They also use their knowledge well to probe and develop pupils' knowledge and skills. For example, in a Year 11 history lesson about the rise of Hitler, the teacher's secure knowledge enabled him to use a good range of historical source materials to encourage pupils to draw the links for themselves about money and power. In other cases, teachers use these skills to explain things well within lessons, such as in a Year 7 physical education lesson on balance and control in gymnastics. Where this subject knowledge is less secure, for example in science and drama, teachers often lack the confidence to whet pupils' appetites for more learning or encourage them to pursue issues beyond the immediate requirements of the scheme of work.
18. Lesson activities and content are well structured so that there is progressive development of pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers identify the lesson objectives clearly, include time scales and set out and explain the learning steps to pupils. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson about environmental campaigns, pupils were clear about what they had to do and were given a set amount of time to research their topic using the internet. Where teaching is good or very good, pupils are given good opportunities for active involvement in their own learning. However, in some lessons pupils are less involved in what they are doing and learning, and are not encouraged to question sufficiently when they do not understand; sometimes girls are less ready to question than boys. More generally there is a good rapport in lessons and teachers have developed good relationships with the teaching groups. These firm but friendly interactions help to promote good levels of mutual respect and a good environment for pupils to offer opinions to help their learning.
19. The vast majority of lessons are managed well. Teachers' management of behaviour is calm and quietly effective and a no-nonsense approach is taken towards a small number of pupils who might otherwise disrupt the learning of others. Generally high standards of attention are achieved by making activities interesting and setting clear expectations of what can be achieved within a specific amount of time. In a Year 9 religious education lesson about the importance of the life of Muhammed, good interest was provided by using the expertise of a student teacher who provided first hand relevance to the topic; the teacher's firm management of the group meant that all remained focused and used their time well throughout the session. Teachers effectively focus pupils on the learning objective of the lesson and give appropriate levels of individual help and support, which gives pupils the incentive to be successful.
20. Most teachers set valuable homework tasks for pupils to consolidate what they have learned. In some cases, homework is used particularly effectively to develop pupils' independent learning skills; for example, by setting appropriate research for pupils to carry out before the next lesson. Marking is regular and generally provides pupils with good commentary of how work could be improved. However, the new assessment and marking system means that some work containing errors remains uncorrected for too long; some teachers have not found a way yet to ensure that misunderstandings are picked up quickly. However, in most lessons teachers assess carefully what has been achieved within the lesson through plenary sessions to help pupils to reflect on what they have been doing and learning.
21. Many teachers plan well for the specific needs of their groups, match tasks to pupils' prior attainment well and set an appropriate level of challenge. For instance, in a Year 9 geography lesson, the teacher's skilful questioning meant that low attaining pupils in the group were able to contribute well to the possible negative consequences of tourism in Kenya. In some lessons, particularly where there is a range of attainment within the group, learning would be improved further by a closer match of tasks to pupils' learning needs; in some instances tasks are too challenging for lower-attaining pupils and the written materials used are too complex for them to

understand without additional support, which is not present in every lesson. The school is developing its practice for gifted and talented pupils although, at this stage, some higher-attaining pupils are just given extra work to complete rather than the additional challenge to pursue their ongoing work in greater depth.

22. Pupils with special educational needs learn satisfactorily in lessons because they are grouped according to their needs and attainment, and teachers are aware of their needs. Teaching assistants help pupils by checking understanding of tasks, reinforcing instructions and maintaining pupils' concentration. When there is good planning and liaison between the subject teacher and the teacher assistant this works well; for example, in a design and technology lesson the task was modified so that this differentiated group was still working to the objective of the whole class. Teachers in the education support base employ good question and answer strategies to draw out pupils' understanding and learning. Different methods are used to maintain interest, overcome barriers and to stimulate learning. For example, in one lesson one pupil led the others in a bingo game where pupils had to practise their numeracy skills to participate. Pupils with English as an additional language are withdrawn from modern foreign languages for additional support from outside agencies and are given some valuable in-class learning support, but this is limited.
23. There is an inconsistent approach to the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Good strategies are used in English to promote speaking and listening and involve all pupils, such as in a Year 10 English lesson when pupils were required to weigh up their reasons for possible motives for killing Lady Macbeth. Some subjects, such as geography, history and religious education, have a planned approach to teaching literacy skills, but opportunities are missed in many lessons to contribute to this element of pupils' development. The teaching of the necessary numerical skills to cope with the demands of other subjects is satisfactory overall. In a number of subjects, learning is impeded by insufficient opportunities to use ICT. However, many teachers use a wide range of new technologies, such as interactive whiteboards, to provide information in an accessible way, which engages pupils well.

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

24. The school has responded positively to the issues raised in the last report and has achieved a good improvement in this area. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11 very good.
25. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced. All National Curriculum subjects are taught with additional drama and a personal, social and health education programme (PSHE). The careers education and guidance course has been extended to include Years 7 and 8 and a lesson in citizenship was introduced in September 2001, ahead of statutory requirements. The lack of time for some subjects identified in the last inspection has been resolved satisfactorily. The school has improved the arrangements for ICT though, as yet, this course does not meet fully the requirements of the programmes of study with regard to computer aided control. The school day has been reorganised since the last inspection and there are none of the long double lessons that were identified as a weakness at that time. All science lessons are now taught in laboratories. The incidence of non-specialist teaching has been reduced and is no longer a problem, except that science teachers have less expertise in physical than biological science. On entry, pupils in Year 7 are allocated to mixed-ability tutor groups that successfully form the teaching classes for the majority of lessons. Each year group is divided into two bands within which there are three sets for

mathematics lessons. Science is taught in sets from Year 8. These arrangements address the needs of different groups satisfactorily.

26. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum has been developed to meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils and achieves very good breadth, balance and relevance. All pupils follow courses in English, mathematics, science, ICT, physical education, religious education, citizenship and PSHE. In addition pupils may opt for GCSE courses in another four subjects to include a modern foreign language and design and technology. Alternatively, pupils can choose a vocational course in combination with either one or two GCSE courses. Certificate of Achievement and work-related courses are available to those pupils for whom the full GCSE course would not be suitable. The total curriculum time, as it is allocated to the majority of subjects, is in line with that recommended nationally. However, not enough time is allocated to science in Years 10 and 11 and this has an adverse impact on standards.
27. The quality of subject planning is of a more consistent standard than at the time of the last inspection. This is due, in part, to the work of the 'Curriculum Planning Group', made up of subject leaders and curriculum managers. All subjects are reviewed at the beginning of the school year. Results are analysed, issues identified and subject leaders are required to plan accordingly and to a set time-scale. Departmental planning is monitored by the deputy head with responsibility for the curriculum and is very effective in history, geography, PSHE and art, and is good in science, religious and modern foreign languages. The group focuses on issues shared by a number of departments; for example, it is currently considering the impact that rising pupil numbers in teaching groups may have on the curriculum. The measures introduced to develop literacy skills have not been successful; the school is aware of the importance of improving literacy if standards are to be raised further. The teaching of numerical skills is satisfactory, but there is no whole-school strategy.
28. The very well planned programme of PSHE for all pupils includes sex education and education in the dangers of substance abuse. The one-hour lesson each fortnight, reflecting the importance the school attaches to this area, is used well by form tutors. The teaching and learning were good in the lessons observed.
29. Aspects of careers education and guidance are taught to all years; the fortnightly lesson alternates with citizenship. The quality has improved significantly since the last inspection with the appointment of a new co-ordinator and the subsequent development of a coherent programme for each year group. Specialist support is available from 'Connexions', which includes the local careers advisory service that also supervises the work-related curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to make use of the library of resources found in the careers room and duplicated in the school library. Under the supervision of the co-ordinator, pupils arrange their own placements for a one-week work experience in the summer term of Year 10. This is woven into the course with careful preparation and follow-up activities using pupils' diaries. The citizenship course is similarly well managed, the school attaching considerable importance to this cross-curricular initiative.
30. The curriculum is enhanced by very good provision for extra-curricular activities that involve pupils with a wide range of talents. Sporting opportunities are particularly strong and a variety of activities are offered, including team games for both boys and girls. The music and drama departments co-operate in putting on productions and there is a range of vocal and instrumental groups. Some pupils on the gifted and talented register take part in a summer school each year and all pupils have access to learning support through subject and homework clubs; for example, the library is open each evening to provide access to computers.

31. The curriculum is also enriched with a number of useful links with the local community. The Royal Air Force supports the science department and the summer school for gifted pupils. A locally based Formula 1 team has sponsored the school's development of a 'green' car and there are links with another 'high-tech' engineering company. A national transport company is sponsoring the school's planned bid for engineering college status. Other links have been developed between local planners and the geography department, citizenship and the local community, as well as international links, for example with Austrian, Romanian and Spanish schools.
32. Constructive links have been established with local primary schools, including hosting a small primary school within the premises while a new primary school is built. The school places a strong emphasis on the importance of induction; the headteacher works closely with colleagues in primary schools and meets all parents of pupils new to the school. There are links with the science, mathematics and English departments; for example, pupils from primary schools come to meetings of the British Association of Young Scientists, held at the school. Productive links with local secondary schools and colleges of further education are in place; these are particularly important as pupils transfer for advanced courses at the end of Year 11.
33. The school has provided very well for equality of opportunity and the inclusion of pupils. However, the teaching of the second modern foreign language in Years 7 to 9 outside normal curriculum time is a weakness in this respect.
34. Curricular opportunities for those with special educational needs are good. Pupils are now more effectively integrated and have full access to all areas of the curriculum, a weakness at the time of the last inspection. Generally pupils are taught in setted groups, frequently supported by teaching assistants, and courses meet their needs. Pupils' individual education plans are reviewed twice yearly and changing needs addressed effectively.
35. The education support base provides a good learning environment. Students are identified by the local education authority for special provision within the unit. All students are supported to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. In Years 7, 8 and 9, heavy focus is placed on literacy and numeracy. Half of the time students work in the unit; the rest of the time is integrated with their peers. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow examination courses but are appropriately disapplied from some subjects and follow an alternative curriculum which gives them work experience in preparation for work outside the school.
36. The school has received few pupils with English as an additional language until recently and there are currently very few pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition. Their needs are identified before arrival and plans made on how to receive them. There is no school policy on English as an additional language and no specific departmental planning; consequently the school has not been proactive in dealing with the situation. However, the school has made good use of support and funding from outside agencies.
37. The school's provision for spiritual development, although satisfactory, is a relatively weak area. As at the last inspection, the school does not comply with the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, as assemblies take place only twice a week for each year group. The school concentrates more on moral and social rather than spiritual issues and, as they currently run, assemblies are not a significant vehicle for spiritual development. On other days a 'Thought for the Day' is provided for form tutors to reflect upon with their pupils, but it is used inconsistently and is often unsatisfactory as a quality experience for pupils. During assemblies, teachers were observed marking their registers and this did not reinforce the idea that assemblies are an important part of the life of the school. Pupils have good opportunities in some subjects to

reflect on feelings and emotions and to appreciate the wonder of the world. For example, in art pupils are encouraged to reflect on artists' work and develop self-awareness in their own endeavours. The religious education curriculum is carefully planned to include a spiritual element. However, this is not planned for on a whole-school basis and this area of the school's work would be considerably strengthened if the good practice seen in some subjects could be extended to other areas.

38. Moral development was good at the time of the last inspection and remains so. All pupils understand that there are clear rules and that these rules are backed by a balanced system of rewards and sanctions. Most teachers are good role models and treat pupils with respect. Regular fundraising for charities is one way in which pupils express their value of caring for others less fortunate than themselves. In the curriculum, ethical issues are covered in a number of subject areas. For example in geography, pupils are given numerous opportunities to observe the impact of their own actions and the actions of others in a variety of environments. History lessons deal with issues such as civil rights and tolerance. In religious education lessons, moral issues are dealt with sensitively and effectively.
39. Social development is also good. The year and school councils allow pupils to take a practical interest in their school community and make suggestions on how to improve it. Year 11 pupils can exercise responsibility as prefects and go through an interview and selection process to be on one of the three prefect teams, who support the school in areas such as pastoral support for Year 7 pupils or public relations. Many lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to work together as they do in physical education, art and modern languages. The popular range of extra-curricular activities and visits contribute greatly to the development of pupils' social skills, as do the developing links with local businesses and organisations.
40. Cultural development is good. The same positive features identified at the last inspection are still in place. Pupils studying art visit art galleries such as the Tate Modern, and the English department organises regular and frequent visits to the theatre, including productions of plays of Shakespeare in Stratford, Oxford and London. Religious education provides valuable opportunities for pupils to study the faiths of the world's major religions, while the geography curriculum includes units on tourism in Europe and eco-tourism in Kenya. Through residential visits to France and Germany organised by the modern languages department, pupils get the chance to experience the cultures of other countries. While the school has many links with other schools around the world, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of the implications of the multi-cultural nature of the United Kingdom and European society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The key person in terms of guidance remains the form tutor who, in conjunction with the head of year, maintains an overview of attendance, behaviour and academic progress. The school's pastoral system is well organised. Form tutors and heads of year respond well to pupils' needs, both inside and outside the classroom. The tutor is responsible for monitoring pupils' academic progress, and identifying areas of underachievement. The high turnover of pupils is well managed and those new to the school are helped to settle in. Continuity of care is enhanced by tutors and heads of year remaining with the same pupils as they move up the school. A number of pupils who were interviewed said they would have confidence in approaching the staff if they had any personal or academic problems. They also felt that appropriate guidance would be given. The good induction and support for Year 7 pupils help make them feel valued. When significant problems

with individuals arise, the school calls on the expertise of the specialist agencies with which it has good links. Overall the pastoral system provides a good level of pastoral and academic support.

42. Should pupils become ill or have an accident they are well cared for. First aid procedures are good. There is an appropriate number of qualified first aid staff and up-to-date records of accidents, injuries and medical needs are maintained. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly and recently a comprehensive health and safety audit has been completed. The issues identified in the last inspection report have been rectified. Risk assessments are carried out in each subject area, but there is currently no system to monitor their implementation. A child protection policy is in place and new teachers are informed of procedures during their induction. There is insufficient supervision at lunchtime when pupils are allowed access to the extensive school site. This is not monitored adequately. The amount and nature of the litter around the sports fields constitutes a health and safety hazard.
43. The monitoring and promoting of appropriate behaviour is good. Procedures are well known to pupils. Most staff follow the school's strategies for encouraging positive behaviour and dealing with poor behaviour. However, techniques for the management of pupils in classrooms are not always applied consistently. Personal support plans are used to help pupils who find it difficult to behave well and parental support is encouraged in this process.
44. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good and have been successful in raising the level of attendance. Individual pupil attendance is monitored effectively using the computerised attendance system. The education welfare officer (EWO) visits weekly and follows up individuals whose attendance causes concern.
45. The level of care for pupils with special educational needs is good. When necessary, external agencies are involved in the preparation of appropriate strategies to ensure that the statements of SEN are met fully. Reviews take place as required by the SEN Code of Practice, although review dates are not made sufficiently clear. There is good liaison with support agencies and primary schools. Staffing is made available by the local education authority to support pupils within the education support base. Positive behaviour rules are followed consistently and this is a key factor in the success of this unit. Records of pupils' progress are kept and monitored regularly. Appropriate adjustments are made to pupils' programmes to ensure that they continue to achieve well.
46. Procedures for assessing pupils' work have been substantially revised from the beginning of this term. It is not yet possible to gauge their full effectiveness. A working group of interested staff was empowered to review and revise procedures during the previous school year. Their ideas have been considered by all staff and adopted in a new policy. The new systems are good and require marking to take place fortnightly to provide pupils with guidance that will help raise their work to the next National Curriculum level. Important features are the constructive comments that teachers are to add to work about pupils' individual achievement and the target which is to be set for the next work that follows. The guidelines for assessment have been adapted to meet the specific requirements for each subject. Pupils are well aware of the purpose of, and procedures for, marking. All subject rooms have information displayed about how pupils' work is to be marked in each subject. This information is also in the front of pupils' exercise books and provides pupils with very good subject-specific guidance. Each half term, teachers grade effort, behaviour, organisation and homework as 'deserving praise', 'acceptable' or 'causing concern'.

47. Specific pieces of work are to be regularly assessed relative to National Curriculum levels. Storing this information on computer will enable trends and progress to be analysed. It is the school's intention that this will provide guidance for staff about planning requirements in each subject.
48. Annual examinations are to be timed to be of maximum benefit to the subsequent progress of year groups, rather than concentrated at the end of a school year. For example, Year 8 examinations will take place towards the end of the autumn term and results will assist purposeful planning of work in preparation for the end-of-key-stage tests in Year 9. 'Grade sweeps' will take place twice a year across the school to check progress. Parents will receive this information about their children's progress, and annually it will form part of a detailed report. Reporting procedures have been developed to allow greater use of computers.
49. At this early stage in the school year, operation of these new systems is inconsistent. Some good practice was observed in English and science, while in others, such as mathematics, teachers have not yet developed the use of constructive comments and targets sufficiently. Some work is unchecked. Overall, these new procedures, with the increased use of comments and targets, have the potential to be more constructive and informative than the previous system. This was inconsistently implemented and mainly reflected pupils' achievement and effort. In addition, the new procedures will lead to a streamlined process for producing informative reports for parents, which will more accurately relate individuals' progress to national expectations. A useful portfolio of examples of marked work has been compiled to give teachers clear guidance on good practice in marking.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Parents have broadly positive views about the school. At the pre-inspection meeting and through the questionnaires they expressed satisfaction with the standards of work and behaviour expected from pupils. They are satisfied with the amount of homework their children receive and feel the school has improved since the last inspection. However, parents were concerned about the way the school communicates with and involves them. Inspectors' views largely coincide with those of parents. They agree that the standards of behaviour are good and that the school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. The inspection team judged that, although parents receive good quality written information about their children, the school could do more to canvass their views and encourage parental involvement.
51. Parents receive a good range of information about the school. The prospectus is attractive and readable. It gives an accurate flavour of what parents can expect. The governors' annual report to parents is also informative. Each subject department produces a useful curriculum handbook and the weekly newsletter keeps parents up to date with school developments and forthcoming events. Pupils' annual reports have given parents a good indication of the progress their child has made over the year. The additional comments from subject teachers varied in quality. All indicated a personal knowledge of pupils but some were more useful than others. Similarly some of the targets indicated were rather general, whereas others gave pupils and parents helpful suggestions on specific work that could be undertaken to help improvement. On a day-to-day basis, pupils' diaries are used effectively for parents and teachers to communicate with one another over any matters of concern or information, and to guide parents in helping their child with homework.
52. Parental involvement in their child's education and in the life of the school is satisfactory. Parents ensure their children attend regularly and support their learning at home by checking that homework is completed and the homework diary signed. Parental involvement in the school is

limited; where it does occur, for example through parent governors or for pupils with special educational needs, it is of high quality. Attendance at parents' evenings is variable throughout the school. Parents are contacted individually when their child is making good progress or when there are concerns.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The headteacher is a good leader who has made significant improvements to the school since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the school, in particular, are very much improved and there is currently much more consultation, staff commitment to, and whole-staff involvement in, policy formation. Since the last inspection there has been a consistent upward trend in results; the appearance and behaviour of pupils are good; the school environment is of good quality; and staff morale is high. This has all contributed to the improved reputation of the school within the local community, which is evidenced by an increasing school roll and parents' positive views of the school.
54. The experienced members of the management team complement each other well and their responsibilities match individual strengths and preferences. They have detailed job descriptions and a precise understanding of their responsibilities. The headteacher has a clear vision linked to a set of guiding principles and aims to create a caring environment in which pupils can develop as individuals and achieve their best. He is respected by governors, staff, pupils, parents and many members of the local community. Members of the senior management team lead by example. They all have some teaching commitments and are visible around the school, especially at times of pupil movement. This helps to maintain a very orderly environment in which pupils behave well.
55. The attractive and informative school brochure and the comprehensive staff handbook, which both contain details of the curriculum, basic school organisation and procedures, are very successful vehicles for communicating with parents and staff.
56. The senior management team meets on a regular basis both formally and informally and has developed a strategic plan with clear priorities for the future development of the school. This has not placed a sufficiently high emphasis on strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills. Heads of department and the pastoral staff have also produced development plans which link into the overall school development plan. Most of the departmental plans, except for English and the arts, have target dates for meeting objectives and criteria to measure success. There is a clear management structure and procedures to monitor progress in achieving whole-school and departmental targets. The detailed communication of this to staff has not been completely successful, however, since some teachers do not fully understand some of these structures and systems, and consequently management intentions are not always realised. By means of the clear strategic development plan, the senior management team is well prepared for possible future changes, such as the acquisition of specialist school status or the introduction of sixth form teaching.
57. The responsibilities of middle management are appropriately delegated and staff have appropriate and up-to-date job descriptions. The heads of year and heads of department regularly hold meetings to deal with administrative, organisational, curricular and pastoral issues. Members of middle management also have planned opportunities to meet with the senior management team and useful informal opportunities through the senior team 'open door' policy to staff. Policy formation is now also developed through a system of specialist working parties. All of the above facilitate a good flow of ideas and suggestions on whole school issues. In general the leadership at departmental level is good.

58. Each department has a line manager from the senior management team, but there is lack of consistency in the way this management structure is implemented and performance data used. There is a whole-school policy for the monitoring of teaching and learning by heads of department as a means of improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards. The senior management team oversees this process and, in general, it is working effectively, but in a few instances the process has failed to identify serious weaknesses in teaching. This has been identified by the school and plans are in place to improve the systems for monitoring and evaluation.
59. The governors are caring and very committed. They work in committees and have clearly designated responsibilities. They work very closely with the school and have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There are regular briefings by staff to the full governing body on the achievements of specific departments or new policy developments. Governors are involved at a strategic level in the formation of policy and regularly visit the school to talk to senior staff and middle managers or to see teaching. They make good use of their local knowledge to support teachers in extra-curricular activities. The governing body has not, however, fulfilled its statutory duties with regard to the daily act of worship and ICT, which does not meet statutory requirements fully. The governors share the headteacher's vision and have been actively involved in identifying priorities for the future of the school.
60. The school's financial planning procedures are good. Senior managers and governors are aware and understand the principles of best value and apply them well. Good use is made of local education authority benchmarking information in setting the budget and comparisons with other schools indicate prudence in many areas. The audit report on the school's financial systems indicates that financial controls are properly in place. The one outstanding recommendation on pecuniary interests of those involved with the school remains unresolved, but is being dealt with by the governing body.
61. Governors are well informed about the school's spending patterns and appropriately involved in setting and monitoring the budget. The school development plan is used as the basis for preparing the annual budget. This year the school has set a budget with a small deficit of £7,000, but current monitoring indicates that efficiency savings should mean that a breakeven position will be reached by the end of the financial year. The local education authority has accepted the school's three-year plan to secure a balanced budget. The school has made considerable efforts to supplement its budget from the local education authority and currently is adding an additional six percent to its basic budget through self-generated income. Other specific grants and funds are used appropriately. Priority has been placed on improving facilities within the school as a prerequisite for effective learning and the school has been very successful in this aim.
62. The education support base provides a good learning environment for its pupils and is led well. Assistants attached to the unit are appropriately trained; they are experienced, know pupils well and effectively support pupils' learning and development. External support staff are involved appropriately when necessary. The school pays due regard to the SEN Code of Practice.
63. The school has enough appropriately qualified and experienced staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum. However, the lack of expertise in physics and chemistry is affecting pupils' learning, especially in Years 10 and 11. Changes in staffing, as a result of illness, have disrupted learning in modern languages and the GNVQ engineering course but more permanent arrangements are now in place. The school has been unable to appoint an appropriately experienced co-ordinator for ICT. The school provides sound training opportunities for teaching

staff; teachers are required to evaluate the training they receive and feed back to their colleagues on courses attended. A system of performance management has been introduced successfully. The scheme has the support of teachers and is working well. The induction of newly qualified teachers provides effective support and the buddy system provides support for other staff new to the school. Work with initial training students is well organised and clearly documented. There are sufficient technical and administrative staff, apart from for ICT and food technology, which have no support. Support staff enthusiastically ensure the smooth running of the school on a daily basis. The school has identified that some teaching assistants would benefit from further training.

64. The accommodation for the school is very good. The bright, inviting environment encourages learning. Most issues raised in the last report have been addressed although the lack of sound proofing in the music department still causes a problem at times. Other areas of refurbishment are planned. The clear eye-catching displays in classrooms and corridors also help to create a stimulating learning environment.
65. Resources are satisfactory overall. Most departments have sufficient resources to meet the needs of the National Curriculum although the music department needs more percussion instruments. Overall, provision of computers is good with an above national ratio of computers per pupil, although access to them is not always convenient for lesson times. The significant area of weakness within the resources is the library. The quality of books in the library is poor; most are old, do not cover the needs of all pupils and the rate of borrowing is low. The annual allowance has been inadequate to purchase enough new books. Many pupils instinctively turn to computers for research even if that is not the most appropriate method and books are used too rarely. Pupils use the library in the lunchtime as a work facility but they either use the computers or provide their own resource books. It is not a learning resource centre and as such does not support the literacy needs of the school adequately.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. To improve and build on the sound quality of education that pupils already receive, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) Improve attainment in English in Years 7 to 9 to at least the level attained in similar schools by:
 - implementing a whole-school approach to the development of literacy skills; and
 - improving the range of books available in the library (paragraphs 8, 23, 56, 65, 67, 78 and 79);
 - (2) Improve the quality of teaching further by ensuring that:
 - the needs of low attaining pupils are met more fully; and
 - all departments, particularly science and drama, have sufficient subject expertise (paragraphs 16, 17, 21, 63, 84 and 104); and
 - (3) Implement the existing plans to ensure that:
 - the line management of heads of department is effective, particularly in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in departments; and
 - using performance data more effectively (paragraphs 56 and 58).

In addition to the key issues, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for

inclusion in the action plan. Each is followed by a reference to the paragraph(s) in which it is discussed.

- (1) Take steps to meet all statutory requirements, particularly to provide a daily act of worship and to cover all areas in National Curriculum ICT (paragraphs 25, 37, 59 and 145); and
- (2) Provide adequate levels of supervision for the areas of the site accessible to pupils at lunchtime (paragraph 42).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 127 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 43 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 3 | 29 | 48 | 38 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Percentage | 2 | 23 | 38 | 30 | 5 | 2 | 0 |

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 |
|---|----------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 728 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 31 |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 |
|---|----------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 21 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 99 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 3 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 38 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 29 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 5.5 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 0.9 |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| National comparative data | 7.6 |
|---------------------------|-----|

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| National comparative data | 1.1 |
|---------------------------|-----|

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

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

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 66 | 65 | 131 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 25 | 47 | 49 |
| | Girls | 37 | 47 | 47 |
| | Total | 62 | 94 | 96 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 48 (87) | 73 (75) | 74 (67) |
| | National | 64 (63) | 66 (65) | 66(59) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 14 (47) | 44 (47) | 33 (35) |
| | National | 31 (28) | 43 (42) | 34 (30) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 44 | 48 | 47 |
| | Girls | 49 | 49 | 49 |
| | Total | 93 | 97 | 96 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 72 (68) | 75 (73) | 74 (74) |
| | National | 65 (64) | 68 (66) | 64 (62) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 31 (30) | 45 (36) | 35 (41) |
| | National | 31 (31) | 42 (39) | 33 (29) |

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

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

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 64 | 61 | 125 |

| GCSE/GNVQ results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 29 | 57 | 60 |
| | Girls | 43 | 55 | 59 |
| | Total | 72 | 112 | 119 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 58 (53) | 90 (96) | 95 (99) |
| | National | 48 (47) | 91 (91) | 96 (96) |

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

| GCSE/GNVQ results | | GCSE point score |
|---------------------|--------|------------------|
| Average point score | School | 39.9 |

| | | |
|-----------|----------|------|
| per pupil | National | 39.0 |
|-----------|----------|------|

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

| Vocational qualifications | | Number | % success rate |
|--|----------|--------|----------------|
| Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | 66 | 72.5 |
| | National | | n/a |

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British | 638 | 137 | 0 |
| White – Irish | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 69 | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|--|--------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 41.7 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 17.7:1 |

Education support staff: Y7– Y11

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total number of education support staff | 11 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 343.5 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 72.2 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 25.3 |
| Key Stage 4 | 22.8 |

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Financial year | 2001/02 |
|----------------|---------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 2,108,483 |
| Total expenditure | 2,113,012 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 3,126 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 32,285 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 27,756 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 10 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 14 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 3.2 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 728 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 242 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 33 | 55 | 8 | 4 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 38 | 48 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 29 | 54 | 9 | 2 | 6 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 18 | 61 | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| The teaching is good. | 26 | 57 | 7 | 1 | 10 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 26 | 44 | 13 | 6 | 9 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 43 | 41 | 8 | 7 | 2 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 49 | 41 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 25 | 44 | 15 | 7 | 8 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 34 | 44 | 6 | 8 | 7 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 30 | 54 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 18 | 47 | 11 | 4 | 20 |

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- A high standard is reached by pupils in speaking and listening skills because teaching promotes good oral work and full pupil participation.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers' good management of pupils and clear expectations leads to an atmosphere of respect and good behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- A significant number of pupils have weaknesses in organisation and writing.
- Some whole-class teaching treats pupils as if they were all at the same level.

67. In 2001, the national test results of pupils aged 14 were well below the national average and very low when compared to schools with a similar intake. Girls' performance was better than boys', as is the case nationally, but the difference was not as great. Test results in 2001 were worse than in maths and science. The results of teacher assessments were higher than the tests. The trend over the last five years shows a gradual improvement, peaking in 2000 but falling again in 2001. Recent results in 2002 indicate a significant improvement, although results remain below the national average.
68. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with attainment that varies slightly each year, but which is below the national average in reading and writing. By Year 9, standards are still below average. Pupils speak with ease in a variety of situations, but their reading and particularly their writing have weak features which impact on the standard of their work.
69. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 for the majority of pupils is less good than it should be, mainly because their literacy skills are not developed and reinforced consistently in other subjects. Whilst higher attaining pupils approach their work with confidence, the middle and lower attaining pupils are slow to catch up. In oral activities, which are carefully structured and given due importance by the teachers, most pupils become articulate, able to sustain a point of view and listen respectfully to each other. Year 8 pupils, creating a poem for National Poetry Day, were all eager to share their ideas with the class. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9, many with special education needs, identified with insight the requirements of a good speaker and a good listener, and this was due to very good focused teaching. Opportunities to read independently start in Year 7 and reading logs provide a good link for parents with reading done at home. In Year 8, pupils read for wider purposes, researching topics in the library and on the internet. In Year 9, they study texts, including more Shakespeare, in greater depth. In this way, pupils improve their reading skills. In writing, however, many require considerable help with organisation. Planning and drafting are sometimes not thorough enough. Pupils rush, make careless errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and fail to learn from their mistakes. This lowers the overall standard of their work and means that finished work is not always the best they can achieve.
70. GCSE results have fluctuated over the last five years. Results in English in 2001 were just above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Girls did better than boys, especially in attaining the highest grades. The gap between boys and girls was greater than the gap nationally. In English literature, for which the top three sets are entered, the results were well above the national average and, for both boys and girls, it was amongst their best subject results.

Recent results in 2002 were not quite as good as the previous year, but show boys outperforming girls in both language and literature. There is no national data available for 2002 to enable comparisons to be made.

71. The standard attained by pupils in Year 11 is average overall in English and above average in English literature. The standard of oral work is high and the majority of pupils are confident in formal and informal speaking situations. Higher attaining pupils read well and, with good teacher guidance, show a mature grasp of some difficult texts studied for GCSE. For example, allocating a weight to individual lines in 'Macbeth' enabled pupils to grasp the subtle nuances of the spoken words. Pupils make a good effort to understand plot and motive, but many of their essays indicate a difficulty with the specific structure and style of literature analysis, essential for the highest grades. Average and lower attaining pupils rely quite heavily on teacher help in their English language work and, even in Year 11, when left to write unaided, show weak organisational and literacy skills.
72. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils make good progress in reading, interpreting media extracts and analysing advertisements. Higher attaining pupils read widely. The emphasis in the teaching on developing good language skills helps pupils to be more accurate in the vocabulary they use. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when given the extra support they need. Pupils' regular use of ICT at home and school has improved since the last inspection. Information and communication technology supports research and, when used by pupils in drafting and redrafting, their writing is more accurate and neatly presented.
73. Most pupils' behaviour is good in English. Pupils do as they are asked willingly and quickly because this is what their English teachers expect. They work very well together in pairs and groups and are supportive of pupils with learning difficulties. Some younger pupils and lower attaining older pupils find the hour long lessons a test of their concentration. They are pleased when their work is part of the very good displays evident in all English rooms and they respond well to praise. They generally look after books and treat their own and others' work with respect.
74. Teaching is all at least satisfactory. It is mainly good and very good in Years 10 and 11 when there is a strong focus on GCSE criteria. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to advantage in stretching the learning of higher attaining pupils. Lessons have clear objectives, start promptly and retain a fast pace so that pupils concentrate and know what they are learning. Teachers seek imaginative strategies to ensure that all pupils play a full part in the lesson. Drama and music feature in some lessons and pupils enjoy and respond well to the variation in style and activity. However, teachers sometimes overlook that pupils learn at different speeds and in different ways and their planning does not always reflect the wide range of ability present in some classes. In Years 7 and 8 in particular, the challenge is not always appropriate for the higher or lower attainers. The work of classroom assistants lacks detailed enough planning, particularly for supporting pupils with special educational needs. Recent changes in whole school marking and assessment procedures provide good advice to pupils and, when used well, help teachers and pupils to keep track of progress and set targets to improve. Good practice in marking within the department has yet to be shared and a consistent approach and standard adopted. Teachers sometimes give effusive praise when the pupils' work does not deserve it. Pupils appreciate teachers identifying what is good about their work and giving them a specific short-term target to improve.
75. Pupils use the library well in English lessons, especially in Year 7 and the librarian offers positive encouragement. However, the library is seriously under-stocked with fiction and non-fiction books

and this needs addressing if independent learning and wider reading are to be a stronger part of the school culture.

76. The department is managed well. The handbook is an excellent document. It makes clear the priorities and direction of the department and includes essential information, thorough examination evaluation and departmental plans. Staff are very conscientious and work well as a team, though if support staff were all included in lesson planning, their efforts would be more effective. Theatre visits, poetry and writing competitions, lunchtime reading and book reviewing clubs, are some of the high quality activities organised by the department. They offer good social and cultural experiences by their enrichment of the curriculum.
77. Since the last inspection, strengths have been maintained, new initiatives introduced and improvement has been good.

Literacy

78. The provision for literacy is unsatisfactory because there is not yet a co-ordinated school approach to pupils' language development. Pupils' standards of reading and writing are below average on entry. It takes many pupils too long to catch up and some never do.
79. Pockets of good practice include history and geography lessons where teachers give pupils guidance in structuring their work. In mathematics, teachers use writing frames. Key words for some subjects are on display. There are good opportunities for high quality reading and writing in art. There are some good strategies in religious education and expectations of accurate spelling and punctuation. At the last inspection, the school had a writing policy, but one that was not particularly effective. The statutory requirement now for planned teaching of literacy in each subject is at an early stage of development. The new appointment of an enthusiastic literacy co-ordinator and staff awareness training at the beginning of term provide a good start, but are too recent to measure their impact.

Drama

80. GCSE results in 2001 were in line with national averages. They were at their highest since the last inspection. Though all pupils gained a grade, most did not do as well in drama as in their other subjects. The trend in results shows considerable fluctuation over the last five years and in 2002 they fell significantly for the numbers achieving the higher grades.
81. All pupils from Year 7 to Year 9 have two drama lessons a fortnight. By Year 9, the standard seen was below average and the achievement of pupils was not as good as it should be. Pupils are articulate in discussion but choose stereotypical situations and characters when planning short improvisations. They are unable to make choices on appropriate styles to use in their scenes, because they do not have a firm understanding of basic dramatic terms, such as 'monologue, freeze-frame, tableaux and mime'. They keep no record of any evaluation of their own or others' work and time is not always made for this to take place orally at the end of lessons.
82. In Years 10 and 11, pupils can choose drama as a GCSE option. Standards seen in Year 11 are also below average. A minority of higher attaining pupils show imagination in their work and are confident enough to take risks. The majority of pupils make slow progress and overall achievement is unsatisfactory. This represents a decline in standards since 2001, but a picture similar to that seen at the last inspection. Drama is a popular subject at GCSE with both boys and girls, who enjoy, in particular, its practical aspect. Pupils' ability to work together is good. They are supportive of each other and negotiate well. However, even higher attaining pupils rely on a

narrow range of drama skills when staging scenes because they do not have the necessary basic knowledge of different dramatic styles and genres. A lack of key vocabulary and an insecure grasp of drama concepts affect the standard they reach in planning and evaluating their work. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 11 class showed the capacity to use movement and accents to represent characters from different social backgrounds in a short play about the suffragettes. They gave serious thought to staging with lighting and sound effects and showed competence in the technical aspects of performance. However, other pupils found the subtle differences in the human relationships in the play beyond their understanding and had little idea about how the concepts could be conveyed to an audience. Pupils with special educational needs found reading the script difficult but were helped by other pupils in the class.

83. Pupils' behaviour is generally good and their attitudes satisfactory. They are polite and treat others with respect. Relationships are good at a personal level. However, not all pupils participate fully or with enthusiasm and many rely on others to do the work or are overly dependent on the teacher. In groups, they work well collaboratively, listening to others and watching each other's performances quietly.
84. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Some aspects of teaching identified as unsatisfactory at the last inspection have not been addressed. Schemes of work describe the theme of lessons but still lack detail of the drama skills to be taught. This results in weak lesson planning and little progression in pupils' learning. Instructions are not given clearly so pupils are unsure what they should be doing. Too much teacher talk results in insufficient time for the task itself. When the lesson objectives are not clearly defined pupils do not know what they are learning. In some lessons, pupils decide on their own groups, some of which are too large for effective work. When teachers do not pace activities or allocate time, pupils take too long to begin work, lack focus and, as at the last inspection, do not finish the task. In lessons judged satisfactory, some of these weaknesses remained, but more successful strategies were used to pace the lesson and involve all pupils.
85. There are few links with other subjects within the creative arts area, so opportunities are missed to widen the scope of performance and theatre. However, drama is used well in the teaching of other subjects. Lessons seen in English and French made very effective use of drama techniques. Pupils use drama in assemblies. Extra-curricular activities include regular lunchtime drama clubs for different years and rehearsals after school for performances. The purpose built drama studio provides a good teaching and learning environment, though lessons taught in the dining hall are restricted by noise from the school kitchens and a dusty floor.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is helping to raise GCSE standards.
- Pupils' interest and understanding in mathematics is enhanced because of the good level of pace and challenge in lessons and the variety of teaching and learning styles.
- A positive ethos in the department is built on good relationships between staff and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Develop learning and teaching strategies within carefully structured lessons which incorporate best practice in developing investigative work and when using ICT equipment.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the assessment policy for consistency within the department and that it informs lesson planning, particularly for matching work to pupils' abilities.

86. Pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 7 is generally in line with national averages. However, the number of pupils who attained lower than expected levels in their primary schools doubled for the Year 7 intake in 2002. Attainment in the Year 9 national tests in 2001 was in line with the national average, with girls attaining slightly better than boys. This was the same as science but well above English. When compared with similar schools results were below average, but above those of English and science. The results in 2002 showed a slight reduction in the percentage of pupils achieving both levels 5 and 6 compared to the previous year, but remain close to the national average overall.
87. The standard attained by pupils currently in Year 9 is as expected at this stage in the academic year. Pupils engage well in question and answer sessions, with the teacher taking the opportunity to reflect on past work. This was typified by a lesson on loci where pupils were expected to use the correct mathematical terms to explain the path of a point, such as perpendicular bisector. Teachers made good use of mental arithmetic in lessons. In a Year 9 lesson lower attaining pupils confidently answered mental arithmetic questions and then completed a speed test, where individual times and scores were recorded. The standard of work within pupils' books in using and applying mathematics is lower than the expected standard by the end of Year 9. There are examples of investigative work, but it is not yet satisfactorily embedded enough for pupils to develop the necessary skills.
88. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7. Progress in some lessons is good, typified by a variety of activities and the appropriate use of resources. A middle Year 8 set made good progress when learning about experimental probability because the teacher used a combination of pupil activity supported by the effective use of an interactive whiteboard. All pupils in a lower attaining set achieved well in a lesson to develop their understanding of place value. The use of ICT was good but this was also supported well by pupil role play. However, in a top set Year 9 lesson on foci and circles, the excessive use of a whiteboard meant that pupils were not engaged in the lesson and were unable to assimilate a relatively large number of new concepts successfully.
89. In 2001, the proportion gaining grades A*-C in GCSE was just below the national average, but was above the national average for grades A*-G. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Attainment has shown a steady improvement for the last three years, especially with the number of pupils achieving the higher grades. Attainment for 2002 shows a notable improvement in the number of pupils achieving grades A*-C, with all pupils entered achieving a GCSE pass grade. Results are similar to science but below that of English. National data is not available for 2002 to make comparisons with other schools.
90. The standards of pupils currently in Year 11 are as expected and improving. Pupils in the middle to top sets are working at levels in line with national expectations. The achievement of pupils in all groups is at least satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment and has been good over time. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work in an environment where their knowledge and understanding of mathematics is challenged. Pupils are familiar with mathematical terms and definitions and use them with confidence. The pace of lessons is good and pupils concentrate well, so that they achieve well. For example, a Year 11 set made good progress during a lesson in solving simultaneous equations using graphical methods. Pupils are numerate and able to question the reliability of a calculator answer.
91. Teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in GCSE courses. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. This enables teachers to challenge pupils' understanding through effective question and answer sessions. Lessons are planned and organised

well and have a clear structure where pupils and the teacher can reflect on what has been learned. In a small number of lessons in Years 7 to 9, higher attaining pupils completed the lesson early and were allowed to do their homework, instead of being given extension material to further their understanding of the subject. By contrast, a well planned and organised lesson in Year 11 enabled a lower attaining group to work on an individualised programme, updated at the end of each lesson. Where teachers were using the interactive whiteboards, installed at the beginning of the term, those lessons were challenging, kept pupils on task and had a clear structure. For example, a low attaining Year 8 group was asked to combine a set of four numbers to make a total of 24 using the four main operators; all pupils were fully involved in the lesson.

92. The style of teaching and positive pupil management has helped to create good relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers work with pupils well, explaining what needs to be done and the reasons why. When a pupil misbehaves, the teacher rarely raises a voice but, in a calm and controlled way, establishes good classroom order. When appropriate, a pupil is kept back at the end of the lesson and a positive discussion takes place about why the behaviour was inappropriate and what would happen if it was repeated. In one lesson, the teacher settled the class down by engaging the pupils in mental arithmetic. Sometimes pupils do not sufficiently challenge what they are being taught, are reactive and do not ask questions of the teacher when they have not understood new topics fully. Teachers are trying to mark according to the new school policy, but there are inconsistencies in interpretation of how the policy should be applied. For example, the marking does not give a clear indication of how well the pupil has achieved. Comments provide praise where appropriate, but little in the way of informative comments or targets to improve learning.
93. Teachers are aware of those pupils on the special educational needs and the gifted and talented registers. However, very few teachers have information recorded about prior attainment or details of pupils' special educational needs and there is little evidence of the effective use of individual education plans or the setting of work to challenge the gifted and talented in Years 7 to 9. The recognition of those groups in Years 10 and 11 is better, leading to more effective teaching and learning. For example, pupils in a Year 11 low attaining set, with a wide range of ability, are organised on an individualised work programme which makes good use of their prior attainment.
94. The leadership and management of the department are good. Progress since the last inspection is good and most of the issues identified in the last report have been addressed. The department is now fully staffed with specialist and enthusiastic teachers. There is now a new head of department in post with a recently appointed second in department, who is also responsible for the development of numeracy both within the department and the school as a whole. Departmental documentation is in place with an improvement plan supporting the overall school improvement plan. Schemes of work are thorough and appropriately incorporate the use of ICT. The suite of mathematics rooms is good and good examples of pupils' work on display help to create an identity for the subject. Two rooms have recently had interactive whiteboards installed and teachers are already starting to make good use of this new resource. There is a foundation of good practice in place to enable the department to make further improvements. The leadership and management of the department contribute well to the standards achieved.

Numeracy

95. The overall provision for developing numeracy in the school is satisfactory. The school has established a steering group to support all aspects of the Key Stage 3 national strategy. The recently appointed co-ordinator for numeracy has not been trained, but there has been a whole school numeracy training day. The teaching of numeracy is now well developed within the

teaching of mathematics. For example, a Year 9 lesson started with the first number of a sequence and the class was asked for the next number. Pupils were then asked for other numbers in the sequence, but not necessarily in order. The pupils enjoyed the challenge and were very successful. For lower attaining pupils, the school is making good use of a national programme of work to enable all students to achieve National Curriculum level 4. This is helping to improve the standard of numeracy in mathematics.

96. Plans to audit teachers' understanding of the skills required for teaching numeracy in other areas of the curriculum are being prepared so as to identify further training needs. There is a commitment to the necessary training. Numeracy is being used effectively in some subjects other than mathematics. In geography, employment statistics are analysed and, in design and technology, surveys are undertaken with the corresponding analysis of the data. In modern foreign languages, time is spent calculating ages from dates of birth, working out the cost of tickets and, with a low attaining group, there was a good focus on time.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Some good well-planned and carefully structured lessons resulting in effective learning.
- Good planning for and use of ICT in science experiments and for research.
- Good unit tests in Years 7, 8 and 9 which enable pupils to know what level they are working at and what needs to be understood better to achieve higher standards.

Areas for improvement

- Weaknesses in the quality of teaching that result in unsatisfactory learning in some classes, particularly for low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Insufficient knowledge in the science staff team of some aspects of chemistry and physics.
- Insufficient curriculum time for science in Years 10 and 11, and lost time in all years because of late starts to lessons.

97. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 was similar to the national average in 2001 and in 2002. Science results have been higher than those in English, but similar to those in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, results are well below average and below those in mathematics, but similar to those in English. Pupils' achievements over Years 7, 8 and 9 have been satisfactory overall, considering the standards they attained at age eleven in national tests. Results indicate that middle and low attainers do rather better than high attainers when comparisons are made with national data. Over the past five years, standards have remained at broadly the same level whereas national standards in science have been improving. Boys' and girls' results have been broadly similar. Current standards in Year 9 at this early stage in the school year are as expected in both knowledge and understanding of science and in investigative and experimental tasks.

98. GCSE dual award science results in 2001, with 66 percent attaining A*-C grades, were above the national average of 50 percent. Girls outperformed boys quite substantially. Pupils' achievements in Years 10 and 11 were good. When compared with other subjects taken in the school, pupils' results in science were broadly average. For 2002, no national data is available to enable comparisons to be made. Science results fell substantially, to 49 percent attaining A*-C grades, whereas the results of the school as a whole remained at a similar level to those of 2001. Ten to twelve percent of the lowest attainers in the year, in both 2001 and 2002, took a science certificate course rather than GCSE examinations, unlike English and mathematics where all pupils were entered for GCSE. Current standards are broadly as expected and achievement is just

satisfactory. Standards are higher in biological aspects of the subject than in chemistry and physics.

99. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons were satisfactory in both key stages. Most pupils were well-behaved in the upper sets and in mixed ability classes. Pupils were often rather quiet, asking few questions, and content to be passive rather than active learners. A few pupils' conduct in lower sets was silly and unacceptable, disrupting learning.
100. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory across Years 7 to 11, but with some strengths and weaknesses. Teachers' good subject knowledge of biology resulted in detailed and interesting explanations. Good use of ICT in experiments enabled pupils to see the value of computers in sensing, recording and displaying data, as well as to research information on the internet. When lessons were well-structured, with a balance of practical activity, worksheet and textbook work and discussion, a good pace of learning resulted.
101. A lesson that exemplified several good characteristics involved pupils in Year 9, learning about heat loss from different surfaces. The learning objectives were clearly written on the board and carefully explained. Pupils were involved in a demonstration experiment before the class watched an experiment involving sensors and a computer display of the results; temperatures around three different surfaces were measured using the sensors, to show how heat loss varied. Results were not as expected, but this was used as an opportunity to discuss possible weaknesses in the experimental arrangements. Problems were set that tested pupils' understanding and the lesson ended with a good review of learning. In a similarly effective lesson for a low attaining Year 11 group, as well as using text books and the teacher's good knowledge of the issues involved, the class used the internet to find information on environmental pressure groups. Complex or technical language was carefully explained and pupils made good progress. In both these lessons, relationships between the staff and pupils were good, the work was challenging and interesting and teachers had high expectations of pupils.
102. In a number of lessons, areas for improvement were apparent. In a few lessons, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory, but even in some satisfactory lessons, weaknesses resulted in learning not being as good as it could be. Most lessons started about ten minutes late because it took time for pupils to reach and line up outside laboratories, which caused both teaching and learning problems. The three part lesson, promoted by the national Key Stage 3 strategy, which has been found to be a successful structure for sessions, has not been taken on board by all staff. Although learning objectives were nearly always stated at the beginnings of lessons, in several, teachers did not then explain them to the pupils. Some lessons ended without any summarising and so teachers were not fully aware of what pupils did and did not understand. Teachers did not always question the pupils sufficiently and pupils, often girls, were not as involved in lessons as they should be. In a few lessons, because teachers were unaware of the extent of pupils' understanding, work was not sufficiently matched to their level, sometimes for high attainers, but more often for low attainers and pupils with special educational needs. Low attainers' work in their books was sometimes unfinished and showed a lack of understanding.
103. The curriculum is well planned with good schemes of work incorporating ICT opportunities. Some units are being rewritten currently to tie work into the new examination syllabus. Science is taught for four and a half hours each week in Key Stage 4, rather than the recommended five. This, together with time lost through late starts to lessons, does not allow sufficient time to teach the course well. The use of a certificate course for very low attaining pupils is very helpful, enabling teachers to plan to meet their needs rather than follow GCSE syllabus requirements. Good assessment systems are in place. Formal assessments are recorded on a central database,

and include National Curriculum levels. Very useful 'before and after' topic tests are a valuable part of the procedures, enabling pupils to know what they have to learn and the strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge at the end. Mark books are carefully kept with all staff following the new marking system. Pupils' work shows a range of marking practice, however, with cursory ticks and very few comments in some books and detailed, helpful constructive criticism in others. The quality of presentation in several books is unsatisfactory. Greater consistency of good marking practice is needed.

104. The department is well led with a clear emphasis on trying to improve standards. The department handbook is a useful, thorough document including very helpful guidance on teaching and learning. A Key Stage 3 audit has been carried out as part of the national strategy, and points for development in the department development plan indicate future priorities. Management is satisfactory, with strengths but also inconsistent practice that needs to be resolved. Some monitoring of teaching and learning takes place but the support provided following this is insufficiently effective in bringing about improvements. Teaching staff have good knowledge of biology, but insufficient understanding of some aspects of chemistry and physics. The school has been unsuccessful in its search to appoint physical scientists, in a context of national shortage. Staff work hard to overcome the shortfall in their expertise but the problem remains. The department is very well supported by well-qualified and knowledgeable technicians. Resources are good, with modern good textbooks, and science accommodation is good.

105. The department has made good progress in incorporating ICT into teaching and learning since the last inspection, in improving schemes of work, and improving the standard of investigative work in Years 7 to 9. Whilst remaining above national averages, standards have fallen slightly in the past three years, however, and teaching is weaker, principally because of staffing difficulties. Overall, unsatisfactory progress has been made since 1997.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- High quality teaching and learning that leads to very good examination results.
- The use of computers as part of the very rich curriculum.
- The contribution of the subject to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Using assessment information to set appropriate tasks for higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9.

106. Teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 are consistently above those reported nationally. This is very good achievement because a scrutiny of work available shows that when pupils come to the school the standard of their artwork is generally below the expected level for their age. Positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning, combined with the strong teaching, contributes very positively to pupils' progress in lessons and across the key stage.

107. Attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is also above expectations. The curriculum is very rich and provides a wide range of activities. Pupils work with clay, use computers and work in two and three dimensions. There are good opportunities to develop literacy skills as pupils produce annotated work in their sketchbooks and are occasionally asked to write at length. A Year 7 class was observed illustrating a story they had written for homework. The story was based on Aboriginal dreamtime paintings and encouraged pupils to be imaginative and to gain an insight into the way that marks and symbols, as well as words, could be used to tell a story. Although many

pupils had weak drawing skills they were learning quickly and making very good progress. By the time pupils reach Year 9 they have worked with a range of different materials and have a good repertoire of skills. A Year 9 class, in the early stages of their preparatory work, made drawings of natural forms of berries, fruits and flowers, learning to use chalks and pastels in ways that showed their understanding of form and structure, with attention to composition and colour. The work showed several pupils working at higher levels. All could recognise and blend colours to match the blue or violet tones they could see and they worked confidently on a large scale. They were able to use their knowledge of artists' work to help them create the effect they wanted.

108. The school offers pupils the option of taking either the intermediate vocational course in art and design or the GCSE course. In both courses the results are high compared with results nationally and better than pupils' performance in their other subjects. All the pupils entered for the GNVQ in 2002 passed, over half gained either a pass or a merit and half of these gained distinction. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the 2001 GCSE examinations was well above the national average. However, in contrast to the national picture a smaller percentage of pupils gained the highest A* grade. In the most recent 2002 results, as yet unconfirmed, the results were even higher. The overall trend has remained consistently strong and well above the national average. Too few boys take the GCSE course to compare their results with the national results but the girls perform very well.
109. From the evidence of the pupils' work and in the lessons seen, standards in Years 10 and 11 were well above the nationally expected level. The work of pupils on the vocational course provides clear evidence of their developing literacy and computer skills and pupils achieve very well from their various starting points. In a Year 10 lesson they loaded software, saved their work to appropriate files as they worked and finally closed down the features when the work was completed. Using unfamiliar software, pupils carefully followed the instructions that enabled them to import their own digital photographs and manipulate the images. Considerable gains were made in the lesson including the ways in which computers can be used as a 'tool' for producing artwork. The language and basic elements of the subject, for example crop, enlarge, colour and composition, were understood and applied.
110. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well. In Years 7 to 9 no significant differences were seen between the attainment of boys and girls. The recently introduced changes to the marking and assessment system appear to be working effectively and pupils are building up a picture of their achievement of National Curriculum levels and teachers have very clear information on which to plan work for all groups, particularly the higher attaining pupils those standards may not have not been fully extended and recognised. The marking policy is enabling pupils to be aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to attain a higher level.
111. In Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve very well because the teaching is reflective and responds to the work and the pace at which pupils are progressing. For example, progress was very good in a Year 11 lesson where the teacher had reflected on the work rate and learning of the previous lesson and set an activity that required pupils to work on a larger scale and to use drawing materials that required a bolder approach. The work successfully introduced pupils to new and less familiar ways of working. As the work in portfolios demonstrates, by the end of the course pupils have acquired a wide repertoire of skills that can be used independently and in combination.
112. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and pupils respect and value the skills they demonstrate and pass on. Teachers have very high expectations and their commitment and enthusiasm for the subject in turn stimulates and fosters very high levels

of interest and creativity from the pupils. Pupils are hard working and enjoy the lessons and many take part in extra-curricular classes. Teachers manage students' behaviour very well so that, as students move up the school, their very good attitudes to learning become more focused and their concentration and ability to work independently improves. Since the last inspection computers are in regular use and often combined with other more traditional media. Their use adds to what is now a very rich curriculum that offers a wide range of experiences. The subject makes a significant contribution to the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the visits to local and national galleries and on the many opportunities created for reflecting, comparing, contrasting and talking about their own and others' work.

113. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. High standards and success in examinations have been maintained. Areas for development have been appropriately identified and fitting steps taken to address them. There is now an appropriate focus on standards of work in Years 7 to 9. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have been raised and staff training has enabled teachers to recognise where computers can be used to enhance learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards have improved and are now in line with the national average.
- Good individual support for pupils enables all pupils to make progress in lessons.
- Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and provide good specialist teaching.
- Good relationships between pupils and teachers create a good learning atmosphere in the department.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to analyse commercially produced products to enable them to broaden their design ideas.
- Extend the use of ICT to provide increased opportunities for pupils to experience work in computer control technology and computer aided manufacture.

114. The standards of work seen in design and technology at the age of 14 are in line with national expectations. This does not match the above average teacher assessment of pupils' work in 2002. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory when account is taken of the broadly average level of their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7.

115. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 develop a good range of skills through a number of activities including making and designing products in resistant materials, textiles, graphics, food and electronics. Teachers prepare a good range of resources to guide pupils in their work and pupils use this effectively through each aspect of their tasks; as a result their learning is well structured. They are beginning to develop a wide range of drawing skills, show good use of colour, texture and use of thick and fine line to emphasise the features of their work. They are using these skills well in all areas of the subject. Their use of ICT is developing well, although the lack of resources limits the opportunities for pupils to gain sufficient experience in computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. There are limited opportunities also for pupils to analyse existing products to evaluate the range of materials, features and processes that are used in commercially produced products, before they design their own. This limits their range of ideas. In the lessons seen, pupils were keen and showed enthusiasm for the subject.

116. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average, but there was a significant increase in the results in 2002, with 50 percent achieving grades A*-C compared with 42 percent the previous year. Standards in Year 11 show similar improvement and pupils are achieving well. Girls performed better than boys. Pupils achieved better results in textiles than they did in other specialist materials areas in design and technology. Improving standards in the GCSE courses show that pupils develop a good variety of research skills both in designing and making. Their current standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils produce good quality products. Their design work is well presented and pupils follow each stage of the design process well, showing how their products have developed. There is less emphasis, however, on analysing existing products and using the ideas to show how they have used the information to make their own designs better. Pupils develop a good range of graphic and presentation skills, which they use effectively to present their final design coursework for the GCSE examination. This is particularly good in the work of Year 11 students following the graphics and engineering courses. However, these skills are less well developed by the pupils taking the food technology course where they have insufficient access to computers in the food room to enable them to raise the quality and presentation of their work. Achievement is consistent among all pupils; higher attaining pupils have accurate and well-developed plans and the work of middle and lower-attaining pupils meets the requirements of the courses to a satisfactory level. Pupils are well supported by the

teachers and this enables them to improve the quality of their work in progress. Pupils taking the engineering course are attaining standards in line with national expectations.

117. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have given priority to raising standards in the subject from below average in previous years to standards now matching the national average. In the best lessons, teachers structured the lessons well and provided a good range of resources to enable pupils to manage the tasks in smaller chunks. As a result, pupils' work was well-paced and teachers checked their progress rigorously at each stage. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject, and pupils work well to follow the guidance they are given. Where teaching was good, teachers provided pupils with a good level of basic knowledge and skills, which enabled pupils to produce successful products. This was seen in a Year 11 electronics lesson, where pupils were designing circuits using light sensors to make products such as a nightlight for a child's bedroom. Some of the pupils modified the circuit to design a jewellery box with a light when the lid was opened. Pupils gained a good level of knowledge about electronic components and circuits to design a good range of products.

118. Lower-attaining pupils receive good individual support from teachers, and as a result, they are able to achieve levels in line with other pupils in the group. Teachers work hard to include all pupils in learning activities. They use a good variety of strategies to enable pupils to develop skills in literacy, including the development of technical vocabulary associated with the subject. They prepare good resources, which enable pupils to structure their writing effectively. This has a positive effect on the pupils' competence in literacy. Teachers also provide good opportunities for pupils to develop skills in numeracy. In all specialist technology subjects, pupils are encouraged to be accurate in measuring and marking out materials. They plan and interpret the results of surveys they have carried out and use this well to plan their designs. Teachers in food technology use effective methods to encourage pupils to use numbers to rate the products they make and test. Pupils also use specialist computer software to calculate the nutritional value of the food products they develop. The good relationships between pupils and teachers create good conditions for learning.

119. Year 10 and 11 pupils are taught to use ICT to support their work when processing and presenting data. They use this mainly when conducting surveys about the products they design, and presenting the results in the form of charts and graphs. Pupils use spreadsheets effectively to process and present the data.

120. The head of department co-ordinates the work of the department well and has initiated a number of changes to improve management. Good working relationships operate within the department and the design and technology staff work hard to maintain high levels of efficiency. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly, but teachers have insufficient opportunities to observe others teaching and to share the variety of strategies used in the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is good. GCSE standards have begun to improve from below average level seen at the previous inspection. The department has worked hard to develop the engineering opportunities for pupils in the department and the recent appointment of a specialist teacher means that the school is now in a good position to increase this specialism within the wider development of the school. Good links with industry have extended the experience of pupils beyond the work they do in school. Resources have been improved, although there are insufficient resources for pupils to gain sufficient experience of computer-aided control and computer-aided manufacture. A good level of technician support makes a positive contribution to the organisation of the department.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching overall and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to good GCSE results.
- Good behaviour and attitudes of pupils.
- The leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Under-use of National Curriculum levels in assessment and the resulting inaccuracy of judgements at the end of Year 9.
- Limited access to ICT facilities restricts opportunities for pupils to research issues for themselves.

121. In 2002, the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed pupils' attainment to be above national expectations, with four in five pupils reaching the required standard. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was also high. The attainment of boys and girls was very similar. The work of pupils seen and the evidence of lessons indicate that teacher assessments tended to over-estimate the levels achieved.

122. The standard attained by pupils in Year 9 is in line with national expectations. In the work completed last year there were many opportunities for them to improve subject skills in their study of places and themes, and this enabled them to make good progress. In lessons, pupils were able to recall factual knowledge in response to questioning and used technical language appropriately. For example, in a Year 9 lesson all pupils were aware of characteristics of more and less economically developed countries and could provide examples. Year 8 pupils also showed good knowledge, when they utilised their mapping skills in studying features of a local river. The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 9 is good as they join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below average in terms of their geography skills.

123. GCSE results have improved consistently and significantly since the time of the last inspection. In 2001, the proportion of pupils who attained grades A*-C was above the national average. Girls outperformed boys by a much narrower margin than that recorded nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving grades in the range A*-G was in line with the national figure, with all girls achieving at least a pass grade. Pupils did significantly better in geography than in almost all other subjects. Results in 2002 fell slightly. Overall, pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11, relative to their starting point is very good.

124. In Years 10 and 11 pupils who have chosen to study geography make very good progress. The standard of work of pupils in Year 11 is above national expectations. In written and oral work pupils make appropriate and accurate use of terms. They respond well to the challenge of decision-making tasks, being capable of taking responsibility for their learning and showing initiative. In an excellent lesson on Leicester, Year 10 pupils mapped socio-economic measures and were able to explain resulting patterns. The previously completed work shows that pupils had frequent opportunities to work independently.

125. The teaching observed was good; in Years 10 and 11 it was very good. A particular strength of the teaching and learning is the acquisition and application of subject skills in all years and the use of geography terms, as seen when Year 8 pupils revised their work on rivers. This is because specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and a good understanding of National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. In every lesson it was clear that teachers hold high expectations for their pupils. Lessons and topics are very well planned; this together with skilful questioning at the beginning and end of lessons ensures continuity in learning. Much of the

teaching requires pupils to ask questions and to explain how and why change takes place. In this way Year 11 pupils were encouraged to sequence their investigation into local planning issues and developed further the skills necessary for independence. Pupils develop a good understanding of how human and natural processes interrelate, as when Year 10 pupils study the impact of industrialisation on the natural environment in Brazil. The marking of work is thorough and regular. The recently revised assessment policy should achieve a greater sharing of information with pupils so that they know what they should do to improve. The monitoring of pupils' progress is improving and the use of data to establish base-line assessments and set targets is being extended. A relative weakness is that there are too few opportunities for pupils to collect and interpret data through firsthand investigation and fieldwork.

126. In all lessons, teachers demonstrated very good classroom and pupil management skills. Relationships are very positive and pupils respond with interest to the enthusiastic teaching. The contribution made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a further strength as pupils view the world from a geographical perspective and gain understanding of world concerns. Homework supports the learning that takes place in the classroom and is set regularly. In all lessons, tasks and resources met the needs of pupils who, as a result, were able to sustain their concentration and complete a considerable amount of work.
127. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Teachers receive very good information and are able to give effective support. However, the previously completed work of Years 7 to 9 showed that the tasks and resources are not always matched to pupils' needs. As a result, progress can be constrained and such pupils not fully included in the learning experiences. Very few learning assistants are deployed in this subject.
128. A strong emphasis is placed upon the development of pupils' literacy skills and this benefits pupils at all stages. Some very good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and apply their numerical skills. Pupils are encouraged to make use of their ICT skills, as seen when Year 9 pupils used web-sites to research the impact of tourism in Kenya. However, such opportunities are limited because of the difficulty in gaining access to computer facilities.
129. Pupils respond to the good teaching with interest and, at times, enthusiasm. They enjoy the subject. Their behaviour in all classes has been at least satisfactory, most often good. Relationships between pupils and with the teachers are very positive. Pupils are invariably courteous. They feel supported by the teachers and are therefore willing to make their contribution in lessons. In only one lesson was the behaviour and attitude to learning unsatisfactory; these Year 7 pupils were not yet fully aware of the high standards expected of them.
130. The head of department provides very good leadership and manages the department most effectively. Overall, the resources and accommodation provided are good. The response of the department to the areas for development included in the previous report was not wholly effective, especially with regard to the use of ICT in teaching and learning and the application of National Curriculum levels. However, overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good and enthusiastic teaching overall and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Improving attainment at GCSE.
- The good contribution made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Work and resources do not always meet the needs of the lower attaining pupils.

131. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is below average in terms of their knowledge, skills and understanding in history. Further, the literacy skills of a large proportion are below the expected level. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were broadly in line with national expectations, but with fewer pupils achieving the higher levels. When standards on entry to the school are taken into account, the achievement of pupils at the end of Year 9 is good.

132. The evidence of lessons observed and pupils' work confirmed these teacher assessments. The work in their books shows that they quickly acquire knowledge and understanding of different periods and the relative importance of events and individuals, while making good progress in developing their subject skills. This was seen clearly in the ability of Year 9 pupils to interrogate sources and make judgements regarding their usefulness and reliability as they studied slavery in North America. Similarly, Year 7 pupils were enthusiastic as they applied their newly learned skills by placing sources in different categories.

133. GCSE results for 2001 were in line with national averages, a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection. Boys did better than girls whereas nationally girls outperformed the boys. All pupils achieved grades in the range A*-G. Attainment in history matched the school average for all subjects. Overall, pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11, relative to their starting point, was good. Results in 2002 were much higher than the previous year, with almost three-quarters of pupils entered achieving a grade A*-C and some of the best results in the school.

134. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to achieve well and the overall standard of work is above that expected at this stage. All have developed respect for evidence and recognise that events and actions may be interpreted in different ways. While reviewing the rise to power of Hitler, Year 11 pupils were quick to identify links between power and money and the ways different factions sought to use and were used by others. Higher attaining pupils demonstrated very good recall of prior learning and used this as evidence to support argument most effectively. In studying "Why the League of Nations failed", Year 10 pupils were able to relate events between periods and ask, as well as answer, historical questions. In another lesson, pupils made useful notes setting out causes and consequences of events in Germany during the 1930s.

135. Overall, the teaching and learning of history are good, and very good in Years 10 and 11, resulting in the raised achievement in the recent GCSE examinations. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. This means that they are able to relate one period or event to another and provide details about important figures; this enriches their explanation and encourages pupils' interest in the subject. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, and make these very clear. Very good pupil and classroom management skills, supported by school policies, ensure good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils demonstrate their understanding of technical terms in their written work and oral responses.

136. The methods teachers use and the work set usually meet the needs of all pupils, as when a Year 8 class, that included some very talented pupils as well as a number with learning difficulties, made good progress in understanding bias and propaganda as they studied portraits and caricatures. Very good planning allows pupils to develop their skills as they move through the school. In a Year 8 lesson on the Renaissance, activities had been planned carefully to ensure the progress of all pupils in their knowledge and understanding of the period, while providing opportunities for them to practise and develop their subject skills. In a Year 11 class, studying the rise of Hitler, pupils demonstrated very good skills as they interrogated and evaluated a range of contemporary sources. Teachers encourage their pupils to deal sensitively and objectively with controversial issues; this, in the context of the value-laden topics studied, ensures that the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
137. Pupils' work is marked regularly and to a high standard. They are aware of their level of attainment and are able to check this against information around the classroom so they know what they should do to improve. Homework is set well before the end of lessons and so all pupils understand what is required of them.
138. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because teachers are given useful information that they use in planning lessons. For example, giving pupils key words and prompts encouraged improved written and oral work, as Year 7 pupils teased out the evidence provided by sources relating to social conditions in 19th century Manchester. However, in one Year 9 lesson the work was pitched too high for lower attaining pupils who, as a result, were unable to make the progress expected.
139. Learning in history is heavily dependent upon literacy, and consequently the department places a strong emphasis upon the development of these skills. Pupils are encouraged to listen carefully; they have frequent opportunities to practise their reading and, amongst other methods, writing frames are used in most lessons to foster effective writing. Too few opportunities exist whereby pupils can practise their numerical skills in this subject, for example in analysing statistics. In a Year 7 lesson, the teaching made a significant contribution to the development of study skills that would be most useful in other lessons. Pupils are encouraged to make use of their ICT skills, where possible, in researching topics.
140. The head of department, who has been in post for two years, provides very good leadership and manages the department effectively. Much has been achieved in this time to develop a curriculum that is now very good. Teaching is of such a high quality because of the expertise of the team of teachers. Overall, the resources and accommodation provided are good. The response of the department to the areas for development included in the last report was positive; existing strengths have been maintained and progress made in areas identified as weaker. The department has the commitment and capacity necessary to achieve further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Attainment has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils create good conditions for learning.
- The school has made funding available to provide increased computer resources and this has had a good impact on learning.

Areas for improvement

- The planning of work to meet the needs of individual pupils with special educational needs.
- Assessment and target-setting are not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels.

141. Teacher assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2002 and the standards of work seen during the inspection show that pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory when compared to the standards achieved by pupils when they join the school in Year 7. By the end of Year 9, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, master a good range of basic ICT skills in desktop publishing, using the internet, simple spreadsheets, databases and a range of electronic resources such as scanners and digital cameras. Specialist teachers have good knowledge of the subject and generally provide a good structure to lessons. Pupils at this stage follow a structured scheme, and this helps pupils to develop the main skills. However, they have few opportunities to move away from this structure in order to apply their skills to more individual projects and to work more independently. Lower attaining pupils cover a good range of basic skills with good support from teachers in lessons. However, work does not always match the specific needs of individual pupils with special educational needs.

142. In 2001, the GNVQ results were broadly in line with the national average. Results improved further in 2002. As a result, achievement is satisfactory at this stage. Coursework folders contain evidence of a range of ICT skills. Pupils use electronic resources to create their own web pages and use the internet to gather information and present this as part of their coursework. In class, students explain their work well and the processes they use and accurately use a good range of technical vocabulary.

143. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Some good lessons were seen during the inspection. Where the teaching is good, teachers plan and prepare work well, set clear learning goals and provide a good structure to lessons. This gives pupils the opportunity to analyse what they have to do, and enables them to work through each stage of the task. Although pupils generally follow a commercially prepared scheme, teachers are now beginning to include tasks where pupils can use their own initiative and begin to work more independently. For these tasks, teachers use worksheets well to guide pupils and help them to focus on the various stages of the task. For example, in a Year 9 lesson pupils were given a worksheet on a range of important points they needed to consider when preparing a multi-media presentation about using computers safely. With this guidance and the individual support of the teacher, pupils produced a variety of interesting and informative presentations as well as mastering the basic skills of using the specialist software. Similar support was provided for Year 11 pupils during a lesson where they were creating their own web pages.

144. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and this enables them to support pupils well on an individual basis as well as providing direction for the whole class. Pupils use correct technical vocabulary when talking about their work and teachers use a satisfactory range of methods to ensure pupils use specialist terms and words correctly. This helps students with below-average reading skills to secure a wide and relevant vocabulary. Pupils gain good practice in reading from a

range of sources such as the internet, textbooks and prepared worksheets. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and include them all effectively in learning activities. Pupils show good attitudes and behaviour and respond well to the relationships they form with other pupils and adults. In some GCSE groups, pupils are given insufficient individual guidance about the examination mark scheme.

145. The use of ICT in other subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. However, this remains an area for development in modern foreign languages where statutory requirements are not met and in design and technology where pupils have insufficient experience in computer aided control and computer aided manufacture. Very good use of ICT was seen in art where pupils captured images using the digital camera and then manipulated them using specialist software to produce their own interpretations and development of the original images. Good use was also seen in science, where pupils used temperature sensors to record data, desktop publishing to present work for displays and used the internet to research information. In mathematics, pupils use spreadsheets and develop skills in using specialist software to produce geometric shapes. Pupils word process their final pieces of work effectively in English. In design and technology, pupil use the internet to research information, use desktop publishing and some use spreadsheets to process and present data they use in designing. In religious education, the work planned shows that pupils are given good opportunities to use specialist presentation software, use desktop publishing to present their work and use the internet to research work on world religions.

146. Although the school has been unable to appoint a head of department for ICT, the day-to-day management of the subject is satisfactory. However, the management of ICT across the whole school does not currently provide a clear overview of pupils' ICT experiences. Standards overall have improved since the last inspection and are now in line with expectations. In Years 7 to 9, the work seen during the inspection showed some repetition and lack of continuity. Teachers are modifying the course to prevent this happening in the future. The use of ICT in other subjects across the curriculum has also improved as a result of training and teachers' planning to include the use of ICT to raise standards in their subjects. There is no dedicated technician support to maximise the use of available resources across the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good or better teaching in over half the classes, resulting from teachers' good subject knowledge and skills.
- Good programme of trips abroad.
- Above average GCSE results in German.
- The very good programme of French offered to pupils in the education support base.

Areas for improvement

- Raise the achievement of the proportion of pupils who are not reaching their potential in French in Years 10 and 11.
- Ensure that pupils' work is marked more consistently so that they know what they have to do to improve and that higher attaining pupils are challenged.
- Make greater use of ICT to enhance learning.
- Implement plans to re-introduce German in Year 8, as staffing allows.

147. Most pupils have little or no knowledge of French when they join the school and are, therefore taught as beginners. In 2002 the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that standards are in line with the national average. Girls achieved much better than the boys. These results

indicate that over Years 7 to 9 achievement is satisfactory overall. It is not possible to comment on the standards in German in Years 8 and 9 since the course was discontinued due to staffing problems. The standards in French in Years 7 to 9 as observed in lessons and from a scrutiny of pupils' books are just below national expectations. Higher attaining pupils write dialogues, short letters and compositions containing a range of tenses and simple structures at level 5.

148. The school enters nearly the whole cohort for French GCSE, whereas nationally just over half of all pupils take the subject. Therefore, direct comparison with national standards does not provide an accurate picture of pupils' achievements. GCSE results in French in 2001 were just below the national average for the proportion of grades A*-C gained, but the average point score was in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement for this group of pupils. Girls performed significantly better than boys and were in line with national expectations. The results in French in 2002 fell significantly from the previous year for the proportion gaining grades A*-C. GCSE results in German in 2001 were above average and girls performed better than boys. German results in 2002 were slightly lower than the previous year.
149. The work of pupils currently in the school, as seen in their books and in lessons, was of a similar standard to previous GCSE French results and overall below national expectations. Higher and average attaining pupils in Year 10 have written on a wide range of topics including holidays, daily routine, school, part-time jobs and family relationships. Many pupils use a range of basic tenses and simple structures. In the top set in Year 10 pronunciation is satisfactory but there are many gaps in basic vocabulary and adjective agreement is weak and not all pupils are achieving as well as they could in French. Standards in German classes are above average expectations. Most pupils in the Year 11 class speak with good pronunciation about eating and drinking, read with confidence and understanding and understand recorded dialogues about healthy eating. The written work in German in Year 11 is in line with national expectations. Achievement in German is good.
150. Teaching and learning in French is generally sound, but with much teaching which is good or very good. In some lessons French is used with enthusiasm and excitement by both teachers and pupils of a wide range of ability for all classroom communication. Many pupils participate well in lessons and settle down quickly to do written or reading tasks. They listen carefully to listening texts to pick out details. In a few French lessons, however, the same hands shoot up all the time and some pupils do not make an oral contribution. Occasionally some pupils are slow to start a task and do not work at a sufficiently fast rate. Sometimes the pace drops in the last fifteen minutes of the lesson and tasks are not sufficiently challenging for the higher attaining pupils, so that pupils do not make sufficient progress within the lesson and over time. The teaching and learning of German are good. In German, pupils are generally attentive and apply themselves well to their learning. Teachers speak both languages well and have a good understanding of the National Curriculum and GCSE requirements. They generally expect pupils to work well and behave appropriately. Lessons are very well planned and teachers always state lesson aims to ensure that pupils understand what is to be covered and what has to be learned. Most lessons practise the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a well-planned progressive sequence.
151. Modern foreign languages make a good contribution to general literacy skills by stressing language patterns, accurate spelling and similar sounds. In some French lessons lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs were supported very well to develop their reading skills. The French programme in the unit for progress and inclusion is very good. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but approaches to marking in the sample of work from last year were inconsistent, ranging from just ticks to very detailed comments and target setting. There are no graded portfolios of pupils' work to inform teachers' understanding of agreed levels of work.

Homework generally consolidates learning effectively. Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' learning and there are no modern foreign language materials on the school network.

152. The department has suffered difficulties in the recent past and the head of department is currently on long-term sick leave. This has resulted in some lack of continuity in pupils' learning. The modern language teachers are working well together as a team, however, and the interim arrangements ensure the effective day-to-day running of the department. Departmental documentation has been updated and schemes of work are being reviewed. Accommodation and resources are generally good but the blackboards in some rooms are unsatisfactory. There are currently insufficient books in the library for it to be a satisfactory resource, but some new materials have recently been ordered. The trips abroad are of great benefit to those pupils who take part. In-class support from the French 'assistante' is motivating pupils and helping to improve oral fluency.

153. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has been maintained but standards in French remain below national expectations and the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. German is not currently taught in Years 8 and 9.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching of GCSE groups.
- Carefully planned topics ensure thorough coverage of the curriculum, including good opportunities to use computers.
- Resources are carefully organised and enhance the efficiency of lessons.
- Clear ground rules for behaviour ensure that pupils' conduct is good.

Areas for improvement

- The allocation of time for group work to ensure that pupils learn efficiently.
- Some individual lessons within topics do not have content that enthuses pupils.
- Resources, particularly of computers and reference materials.

154. Pupils enter the school with attainment in music that is below average. By the end of Year 9, their overall attainment, as indicated by teacher assessment, is average when compared to the national profile. The work of the current Year 9 classes is in line with national expectations. The current range of attainment in Year 9 is greater, but slightly lower overall than the previous year, as indicated by the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Numbers taking GCSE are small and comparisons with national statistics are not reliable. However, results are good and include regular passes at the higher grades, A* to C9999 Students achieve well on the GCSE course. There are no minimum entry requirements and the work of students currently in Year 11 is overall average and reflects a wide range of individual accomplishment.

155. Planning is very thorough throughout the subject and good opportunities are built into each topic for using computers. GCSE teaching is very good. The small groups enable very carefully targeted and effective individual help to be given to pupils so that they learn very well. Pupils are enabled to develop their own musical strengths and interests as performers and composers. They make very good use of computers for composing. Written work is carefully organised and provides pupils with helpful notes for revision, although mis-spellings are not routinely corrected which limits the precision of some pupils' knowledge.

156. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is satisfactory overall, but ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Behaviour is managed well and resources are well organised, which enhances the efficiency of lessons. In Year 8, in a very good lesson on ‘blues’, the teacher’s very careful explanations and help for individuals, enabled pupils to make very good progress in reading and performing from notation. Higher attaining pupils played the tune and accompanying chords rhythmically and confidently. Lower attaining pupils mostly managed one or the other accurately. Pupils’ knowledge of relevant technical terms, such as triad and riff, was good. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, the task failed to interest the class and too much time was allocated to group work. As a result, pupils worked inefficiently, which resulted in insufficient learning and achievement.
157. The scheme of work for GCSE is very good, with a well-balanced programme that reflects well the course requirements. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and comprises topics, each lasting half a term that are closely based on National Curriculum requirements. These topics include substantial work on a variety of examples of world music, which permit good development of pupils’ multi-cultural understanding. However, some individual lessons within a topic do not contain objectives that enthuse pupils and the hour-long lessons lack variety. The amount of time spent for group work is sometimes too long for the pupils to sustain effort and interest. The lack of variety within some lessons, with time spent on singing or listening activities unconnected with the topic, means that pupils do not develop a wide enough range of skills and knowledge systematically. Some of the written work is too hard for lower attaining pupils, who do not always understand what they write.
158. Music is very well organised on a day-to-day basis. However, monitoring of teaching has not been regular and some aspects of teaching have not developed sufficiently. Overall, therefore, management of music is satisfactory.
159. The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities. These groups and the numbers taking instrumental lessons have grown since the last inspection. They provide good opportunities for the social development of pupils who participate.
160. Resources were insufficient at the last inspection; there are still only limited supplies of reference books and percussion instruments. The computers are unreliable. They were out of action during the inspection. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve consistently well, with examination results being above average.
- Very good facilities.
- Very good extra-curricular activities enhance learning opportunities.
- The department is led and managed well.

Areas for improvement

- Greater challenge to pupils to achieve higher results, particularly in GCSE theory work.
- Opportunities for pupils in Year 9 to target and improve learning by being more aware of their attainment.
- A consistent contribution towards literacy and numeracy to improve and understand key vocabulary.

161. Pupils enter the school with skills and understanding which are below average in physical education. The work seen during the inspection shows that the standards attained by pupils in

Year 7 are below average. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson, pupils were unable to change direction effectively and some lower attaining pupils were not able to maintain a wide based balance.

162. In 2002 teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were broadly average compared with schools nationally. The results show that boys and girls achieve equally at level 5 and above. These assessments are reflected in the attainment of pupils currently in Year 9, which is in line with national expectations. Pupils achieve well in comparison with their standard on entry into the school. They gradually acquire the skills and understanding to improve their performance so that, by the end of Year 9, most pupils work to expected levels. For example, in a Year 9 badminton lesson, pupils were able to suggest suitable exercises for the warm up of different groups of muscles. High attaining pupils had a good understanding of the rules and a rally was maintained. Low attaining pupils' passes were poorly directed because of weak body position and lack of follow-through action.
163. In 2001, GCSE results were above average for grades A* to C, but just below average for grades A* to G when compared with national results. Results in 2002 are lower but still better than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils did as well in physical education as they did in most of their other subjects. Boys and girls did equally well but more boys than girls entered the physical education course. Practical results were good when compared with theory results.
164. The standard attained by pupils in the lessons seen in the Year 11 GCSE course is above average overall, with pupils achieving well when compared with results at the end of Year 9. For example, in a Year 11 core curriculum football lesson, boys effected strong, well-directed passes, were aware of space and had good dribbling skills; passes had good follow through. They confidently executed their own warm up and coaching sessions. Pupils have the opportunity to lead others. Some core curriculum pupils were equally as effective; other low attaining pupils displayed more limited footwork skills. Overall, standards in the physical education lessons for all pupils are high and this represents good achievement. In theory lessons, GCSE pupils are assisted to improve their standards and extend their knowledge but work is not sufficiently challenging and targets are not clear or high enough. Opportunities to link theory and practice are not always taken. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily because of the individual attention and the encouragement they receive. Teachers are clear in their explanations and conduct demonstrations for good understanding; this is useful for all pupils but particularly benefits low attaining pupils or those with special educational needs. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified, but strategies are not yet in place for addressing these pupils' needs adequately within the department.
165. Overall the standard of teaching and learning is good. Teaching and learning is particularly effective in Year 7 where teachers have a clear focus on raising standards and widening the experience of pupils new to the school. In a gymnastics lesson, the teacher linked the work of muscles with the warm up and demonstrated different balances so that pupils recognised for themselves that a wide based balance was easier to maintain than a narrow based balance. The work was progressively more challenging, with most pupils achieving three balances at three different levels. Good learning resulted from good planning and organisation. Teaching and learning is not as effective when pupils are not given all the necessary teaching points for success so that low attaining pupils, in particular, lack the correct body position to direct a shot, move effectively or execute a stroke. In one lesson, insufficient challenge was given so that opportunities to improve numeracy were lost and this adversely affected the learning.
166. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Teachers insist on good behaviour and good relationships existed in most lessons seen. Opportunities for learning are enhanced by the wide

range of extra-curricular activities, including team matches. Teachers check the balance of teams and include all pupils by ensuring that everyone has equal chances within activities. For example, teachers suggest ways in which tasks may be completed or draw out understanding through good questioning to ensure the participation of all pupils. Pupils recognise the special needs of some their peers and encourage them along with the teacher. Non-participants often contributed well and helped others to succeed by giving feedback and critically analysing performance. However, some non-participants were not engaged sufficiently in the lesson; they talked and were not fully involved in group learning.

167. The department is well led and managed. Provision of practical resources is good. Access to the Internet, via the library provision, enhances research possibilities for GCSE students. Books for independent learning and differentiation are not available for examination courses in the library, which limits the improvement of independent learning and theory standards. Accommodation is very good and includes a sports hall and gymnasium. Extensive playing fields and outdoor courts include an Astro turf pitch. A theory base has not been established for teaching theory lessons. Teachers make the best use of the facilities available. They work well together as a team and learn from one another. They provide good role models, share expertise and work to their strengths. Good organisation, planning and procedures are in place, including health and safety. Objectives concerned with basic skills are not in place so there is a lack of consistency in the practical delivery of literacy and numeracy affecting the thorough learning of some pupils. Access to ICT facilities is limited.

168. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Many of the positive features in the previous report are mirrored in this report. Changes to the timetable and in the organisation of courses in Year 9 allow full access to the National Curriculum. All courses are now taught by specialist teachers. Examination results have improved and achievement is good. Extension work is available for examination classes. Assessment processes monitor pupils' achievements in Year 9 but pupils still need assistance in being more aware of their achievement and attainment to set targets for themselves and improve. Teachers are addressing non-participation but non-participants still need to be more involved in the learning. Most teachers evaluate performance and learning at the end of lessons, but opportunities to see and learn from the achievements of others are sometimes lost when time is not given to groups to display and analyse the work of others. This was mentioned in the previous report. The department has a high profile because of its popularity, its extra-curricular provision and its involvement in team matches and competition.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The steady rise in examination results.
- The good progress made by pupils, especially in learning from religion, giving their own views and applying issues.
- Aspects of good and very good teaching that enable good learning to take place.
- The good attitudes of the pupils to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The use of more constructive comments on work in order to help pupils raise their attainment levels even further.
- Provide a greater range of work to support pupils with weaker literacy skills and to extend high attaining pupils.
- Develop formal procedures for monitoring teaching and learning in the subject.

169. Pupils join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding which are below the expectations of the Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education that the school uses, particularly in their understanding of different world religions. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9, as measured by teacher assessments, is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. This is the first year that assessments have been undertaken using National Curriculum levels and so a valid comparison cannot be made on whether these results are an improvement over previous years.
170. The work of pupils currently in Year 9 shows that they use a wide range of technical terminology; they have a basic knowledge of world religions and discuss a range of topics and issues sensitively. This was seen in a Year 9 class studying Islam, when they used the opportunity to share their knowledge of the subject with a visiting student-teacher and formulate a number of questions concerning belief and practice. Pupils are always expected to give a reason for their answer and are able to give examples to show their understanding of issues. The evidence from the inspection shows that the current Year 8 are in line to exceed the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 9, with interpretative answers being given to questions in a spontaneous way. Achievement is good across Years 7 to 9.
171. By the end of Year 11 the attainment of pupils following the core course is also in line with the Agreed Syllabus expectations. The attainment of pupils following GCSE examination courses is more variable. In 2001 results of pupils following the full GCSE examinations were below the national average but the results improved in 2002 and are expected to be close to the national average, as are those for the few who chose to enter the short GCSE course. The school has changed the policy on entry for religious education over the last few years and so a reliable comparison cannot be made, although indications are that results are rising and pupils achieve well considering their prior attainment.
172. The pupils following the GCSE course study the topics at a suitable depth and by the age of 16 have an understanding of religious teaching and how it can be applied to a range of ethical issues, including euthanasia, abortion, care for the environment, war and peace; they study these issues from a range of religious perspectives. This was seen in a Year 10 lesson, when pupils were considering the vows made during a wedding service and in the Year 11 GCSE groups studying the teaching of Jesus on compassion, whilst developing their examination technique. There is an attitude of inclusion for all and from years 7 to 11 all groups of pupils make good progress. Good behaviour and the positive attitudes to religious education by the pupils also contribute to pupils making good progress. They work efficiently, are happy to contribute to lessons, show respect for each other's views and take a pride in the presentation of their work.
173. Teaching is good and is consistent across all year groups. Good learning takes place because of the very good knowledge and understanding of teachers. This is used to stimulate and maintain interest in the lessons by devising a variety of ways of approaching the topics. Good teacher-pupil relationships ensure that pupils feel confident in expressing personal views. In the best lessons, work challenges all the pupils. All these strengths ensure that good learning is taking place. Weaker aspects in teaching that inhibit learning by some pupils are in lessons when pupils are passive rather than actively involved and lessons that do not challenge all the pupils and at the same time support those with particular needs, such as literacy development.
174. The curriculum provided for religious education is good; it covers the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus and provides suitable accredited examination courses for all pupils. Visits have taken place to a Hindu temple and others are planned; the subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The departmental policy on this makes

the approach clear and the threads run through all the work. This emphasis is also seen in the classroom displays such as a cross, made from newspaper cuttings.

175. The marking of the pupils' books gives positive encouragement, but the use of constructive comments so that pupils know what to do to raise their attainment level is inconsistent. Timelines are used so that numerical concepts of time are understood, although other numerical skills such as graphs and pie charts are rarely used in lessons. The use of ICT is still developing with clear plans for use by different year groups.
176. The leadership and management of the department are good, with a number of very good aspects. The head of department has been in post for just over a year and during that time has revised the schemes of work, introduced new examination courses, introduced more subject linked visits and generally raised the profile of the subject. Currently no formal procedures are in place to monitor the work of the department.
177. The accommodation is good; the two adjacent rooms enable resources to be shared easily. Good quality wall displays in the rooms and the connecting corridor stimulate interest in the subject. A number of new resources have recently been purchased but the books in the library are old and uninviting so that it is not an effective source for research work; this was seen in a lesson when pupils had to make notes from sections of the textbook because there were no suitable resources in the library.
178. Since the last report provision for religious education in the school has fluctuated. The loss of staff and reduction in time allocation led to examination courses being abandoned. The Agreed Syllabus was not being covered and there was a general loss of interest in the subject. With the appointment of a new head of department, all the positive aspects mentioned in the last report have now been re-established, making improvement since the last inspection good and improvement in the last year very good. The department has a very good base from which to progress further.