

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTH BROMSGROVE HIGH SCHOOL

Bromsgrove

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116928

Headteacher: Mr C Pemberton

Reporting inspector: Mr D Driscoll
11933

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th January 2003

Inspection number: 250919

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: 13 – 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: School Drive
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Bromsgrove

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A Finn

Date of previous inspection: 28th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11933	D Driscoll	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements.</p> <p>How well are the pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9086	R Watkins	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?</p>
22411	A Axon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
19596	B Treacy	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
30825	K Hayton	Team inspector	Science	
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design	
10297	D Cox	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
15462	C Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography Business education	
15832	J Vanstone	Team inspector	History	
20124	J Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

15208	A Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
12985	S Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
30427	F Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	
11720	P Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
17278	B Abrams	Team inspector	Chemistry	
30973	G Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology	
30072	J Skivington	Team inspector	Psychology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

North Bromsgrove High School is an average sized comprehensive school for pupils between the ages of 14 and 18. There are 1039 pupils at the school, 536 boys and 503 girls. The school draws its pupils mainly from the areas to the north of Bromsgrove. Overall, the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are average. The great majority of pupils are white, with a very few from each of several different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who come from homes where English is an additional language is low and almost all are completely fluent in English.

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average, although there are variations between the subjects. Standards are above average in mathematics, for example, but below average in physical education. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. Most pupils on the higher stages of the special needs register have emotional and behavioural difficulties, although several have severe learning difficulties or are autistic. There are also a few pupils with a range of other needs. The school had an acting headteacher for the autumn term and a new headteacher started in January 2003; most of the other senior managers at the school are also new.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a very poor standard of education. Pupils' standards by the time they leave Year 11 are well below the level they should be in the light of their standards when they were in Year 9. Teaching is poor and has worsened because the school has been so badly managed over recent years. The school receives average funding, but very poor financial planning has led to the school providing very poor value for money.

What the school does well

- The newly appointed headteacher, senior managers and head of sixth form are continuing the clear signs of improvement evident under the leadership of the acting headteacher.
- The school has a staff who are committed to providing the best for pupils and students.
- The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when in the learning support department.

What could be improved

- Teaching is poor in the main school and unsatisfactory in the sixth form so that pupils and students are underachieving.
- Standards are falling because the school has been poorly led since the previous inspection.
- The school's finances are in a mess because of very poor financial planning.
- The curriculum is poor in many respects and contributes to pupils' and students' underachievement.
- Teachers, pupils, students and parents do not have a clear idea about how pupils and students are progressing because the assessment systems are poor.
- Behaviour is unsatisfactory because teachers have not had training in how to deal with it.

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

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspection Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997, when it was found to be a good school where pupils achieved well. Progress since 1997 has been poor. GCSE results, which were above average, are now average. In particular the results of the middle and lower attainers have fallen to below the national averages for such pupils, although the results of higher attainers remain above average. Results at A level have fallen from average to below. The record of exclusions is now one of the worst in the country, the quality of teaching is much worse and the school has gone from a situation where it had a small financial surplus to one where it has a deficit of unknown size. Most of the key issues from the previous inspection remain as significant weaknesses in the school's provision. The reasons for this decline are the poor leadership and very poor management that the school has experienced since the time of the previous inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A level/AS level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	D
A levels/AS levels	N/A	D	*	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* National comparisons for 2002 are not yet available

Results in Year 9 in 2002 were well above average in English, mathematics and science and pupils achieved very well, given their test results when they were in Year 6. However, some of this progress has been made in the middle schools in Years 7 and 8. Results have improved at a similar rate to the national average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average in mathematics, science and music but below average in citizenship, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education; standards are poor in information and communication technology. Pupils do well in science and music, but are underachieving in English, citizenship, French and religious education; achievement is poor in information and communication technology.

Results at GCSE were average in 2002 and pupils gained results that were well below average given their standards at the end of Year 9. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C was above average, but the proportion gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to G was below average. The proportion leaving with no GCSE passes at all was above average. Results have risen at a much slower rate than the national average since the last inspection and pupils are now underachieving. Standards are now above average in science, history and Spanish but below average in citizenship, French, German and religious education; standards are well below average in information and communication technology. Pupils achieve well in history, physical education and Spanish, but underachieve in mathematics, citizenship, French, German and religious education; achievement is poor in information and communication technology.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are average throughout the school.

Results at A level in 2001 were below average and students underachieved; results were even worse in 2002. The gap between what students should be achieving and the results that they end up with has been getting worse for some years.

The school's targets have not been recorded properly so it is not possible to judge the progress made against any data, other than the proportion who should have left with at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, which the school failed to meet.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Unsatisfactory in the main school where levels of interest in lessons are not maintained. Satisfactory in the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory around the school, but unsatisfactory in lessons. The school has one of the worst records of exclusions in the country. There are few problems with any form of oppressive behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Pupils understand the impact of their actions, but show little respect for the feelings of temporary teachers in particular.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is average, as is the rate of unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Poor	Poor	Unsatisfactory

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 poor in the main school because there is too much inconsistency in the teaching, leading to a high proportion of teaching that fails to reach a satisfactory standard. In general, too little is demanded of pupils so they become bored, lose interest in the work and start to misbehave; some teachers do not have the skills to control such behaviour. Many pupils are not being made to work hard and so are not learning enough. Teaching is unsatisfactory in English and mathematics and satisfactory in science. Teaching in physical education is good, but teaching is unsatisfactory in French and German; teaching is poor in information and communication technology.

The teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils. There are now different groups of pupils who are underachieving as a result of the particular class they are in and the teachers who teach them. Insufficient attention is paid to teaching the basic skills of numeracy and literacy because there is no whole school approach to these aspects.

Teaching in the sixth form is unsatisfactory because the teaching of mathematics is unsatisfactory and there is not enough teaching that is of a good or better standard. Students are not really being pushed to do as well as they possibly can, so that they are not making the gains in knowledge and understanding that would be made in other schools.

Throughout the school, the marking and assessment of pupils' and students' work are not good enough to ensure that they have an understanding of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
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The quality and range of the curriculum	Poor. The curriculum is poorly planned. The amount of time spent teaching is well below average and there are many split classes. Many sixth form students were unable to study the subjects they chose and did not find out until September.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Pupils are taught well in the learning support centre and progress well. In the main school, however, little attention is paid to their particular needs.
Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils receive extra support from the English department and make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Unsatisfactory. The provision for moral and cultural development is satisfactory, but that for spiritual and social development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and for improving their attendance. The educational support they receive is unsatisfactory because of poor systems for assessing their progress and unsatisfactory procedures for improving their behaviour.

Pupils do not receive their entitlement to information and communication technology, citizenship or religious education in the main school and religious education in the sixth form. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and the community makes a good contribution to the curriculum. Careers education is satisfactory, but the provision for personal and social education is unsatisfactory. Students in the sixth form have received poor advice about their futures. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Poor. The school has gone downhill as a result of failures at senior management level; too much has been kept from staff and parents alike. There are signs of improvement under the new management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very poor. Governors have been aware of deficiencies but have done little or nothing to halt the slide. Several statutory requirements have not been fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Poor. Little use is made of data to analyse the school's performance in detail; the only records of any observation of teaching are from the autumn term of 2002.
The strategic use of resources	Poor. The school is spending far too much money without knowing how much it has overspent or evaluating whether or not its spending is producing worthwhile results.

There are not enough full time, permanent qualified teachers in the school or enough books in the library. The accommodation for physical education is limiting pupils' achievement. The school's current management team is unable to get a clear picture of the school's performance either because the information is not available or it was never collected in the first place. The school cannot provide the best

value possible because senior management and governors have not challenged the school's performance sufficiently or consulted with parents.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The expectations teachers have of pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework.• The information they receive on progress.• The way the school works with parents.

Although the school's expectations of pupils were the most positive aspect of parents' responses, it was still less so than is usually seen. Generally, expectations are not high enough and homework is not good enough. The information on progress is the same as in most schools in terms of reports, but the marking of work is poor so pupils and parents are not getting a good enough idea of the progress being made. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

NORTH BROMSGROVE HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is the same size as most other sixth forms; there are currently 98 female and 87 male students. The students come from a range of backgrounds that are very similar to those of the main school and study courses at AS and A level. Attainment on entry is generally average as students require five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C to start courses, although the prospectus says four or more.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a poor education for its students and fails to meet their needs. Students are underachieving because the teaching is not good enough and results are now below average. Achievement has been getting progressively worse as senior managers have not taken action to address weaknesses. The sixth form is subsidised by the main school and its cost effectiveness is poor.

Strengths

- Teaching is good in chemistry, computer studies, physical education and psychology so that students are doing well.
- The new head of sixth form is receiving the support of the other senior managers and has a very clear idea of what needs to be done to improve the sixth form.

What could be improved

- There is not enough good teaching in the school so students do not make as much progress as students do in other schools.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in mathematics so students are underachieving.
- Students receive poor advice and guidance.
- The poor curriculum means that many students do not study the subjects they chose initially.
- The very poor financial planning means that the sixth form costs more to run than its income.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory. Results were below average in 2001 and fell in 2002. Students underachieve because teaching is unsatisfactory.
Chemistry	Good. Results were average in 2001 but declined in 2002. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.

Design and technology	Satisfactory. Results were below average in 2001 but improved in 2002. Students' achievement is satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Results were very low in 2001 because students were studying for two A levels in the time allocated to one. Students' achievement is now satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching.
Computer studies	Good. Results were below average but fell in 2002; many students were badly advised and should not have started the course. Students are now achieving well because the teaching is good.
Physical education	Good. Results were average in 2001 and improved in 2002. Teaching is now good and students are achieving well.
Music	Satisfactory. Results in 2001 were above average and were similar in 2002. Students are doing as well as expected as a result of satisfactory teaching.
Psychology	Good. Too few candidates entered for the examination in 2001 to make reliable comparisons with national statistics. Results in 2002 were very disappointing because the students spent long periods without a teacher. This situation has now been rectified; teaching is good and students are making good progress.
English	Satisfactory. Results were average in 2001 but fell in 2002. Students' achievement is satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Poor. Advice about which courses were most suitable for students was inadequate last year and they are not receiving sufficient academic support because the systems for gathering information about their progress are not good enough.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Poor. The sixth form has suffered from the same inadequacies as the main school so standards have fallen. The new head of sixth form now has the support of the senior management team and is already improving the quality of education provided.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way that teachers are always there to help them. The extra-curricular activities available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are not consulted enough about changes. They do not get good enough information on how well they are doing. They do not receive good enough advice.

Inspectors agree with all the views expressed by students, although there were good reasons to make changes to their common room and study facilities that had to be made very quickly.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLS

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form school reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are broadly average and by the time they leave Year 11 their standards are average. Nevertheless, there are now significant pockets of underachievement in the school that mean that pupils are not achieving standards that are high enough in all years.
2. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above average in English, mathematics and science and pupils made very good progress given their results when they were in Year 6. Overall, results were above average and have been improving at a rate that is similar to the national trend. However, pupils only join the school at the beginning of Year 9 so some of this progress has been made in middle schools. Standards in science are average on joining the school and by the end of Year 9 are above average; pupils are achieving well as a result of good teaching. Standards in mathematics are above average on entry and at the end of Year 9, so pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In English, standards are average on entry and at the end of Year 9, but there are now significant differences between the progress made by pupils in the different classes that are leading to significant underachievement. These differences are brought about by the great variation in the quality of teaching that different classes receive.
3. In most other subjects standards by the end of Year 9 are average and pupils are doing as well as expected. In music, achievement is good because pupils are taught well so standards are above average. Teaching is also good in physical education, but standards remain below average, as they are on entry to the school, because there are not enough lessons and the accommodation is unsatisfactory. The amount of time is also a problem in religious education and citizenship where standards are below average and pupils are underachieving. Standards are also below average in French, but here the underachievement is down to unsatisfactory teaching that does not demand enough of pupils. Standards are below average in German and Spanish, but pupils have only just started the languages and their achievement is satisfactory. The worst cases of underachievement are in information and communication technology where pupils receive very little teaching because there are no separate lessons or planned course that can be delivered through other subjects.
4. GCSE results were average in 2002 and, given their standards at the end of Year 9, these pupils underachieved by a long way. The proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C was above average, but even so, these higher attaining pupils should have done better given their results in Year 9. The situation was much worse for lower and middle attaining pupils whose results were below average and who made poor progress since Year 9. In part, this level of underachievement is a result of being entered for courses that were unsuitable and that did not lead to a GCSE qualification, but there are also problems caused by poor teaching and the amount of time that was lost through pupils being excluded.
5. While the proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C has been improving at the same rate as the national average, the proportion gaining five or more passes at grades A* to G has been falling for several years. For the last two years more pupils have left the school with no GCSE qualifications whatsoever than is the case in most other schools. The overall effect of these changes has meant that

the average performance of a pupil at GCSE has stood still, while the national average has been improving, so in real terms the results have fallen from above average to average. Of particular concern is the trend in the performance of boys, whose performance has been dropping for years while the performance of boys nationally has been improving. The performance of girls has been improving, but at a slightly lower rate than the national average. Boys generally are much quicker to lose concentration in lessons they find boring and have been much more likely to lose time through being excluded.

6. Results were average in most subjects in 2002 although they were above average in history and physical education, well above average in Spanish and religious education and well below average in French and German. Results in information and communication technology were very low. Standards are now average in most subjects, but are above average in science and history. In science, achievement is satisfactory but standards are rising as a result of the initiatives to improve teaching put into place by the head of department. Achievement is good in history because pupils are taught well. Achievement is also good in physical education for the same reason so that pupils' standards are raised from below average to average. The opposite is true in mathematics where standards fall from above average to average; pupils underachieve because of unsatisfactory teaching. Unsatisfactory teaching also leads to underachievement in French and German where standards are below average, but teaching in Spanish is good so pupils do well and standards are above average.
7. As in Year 9, there is not enough time to teach citizenship and religious education, so pupils do not do as well as they should and their standards are below average. Nevertheless, a group of higher attainers are taught GCSE religious education in just one lesson per fortnight and gain well above average results because the teaching is so good. The opposite is true in information and communication technology where poor teaching leads to widespread underachievement and well below average standards.
8. Throughout the school there are significant differences in the performance of different groups of pupils, not particularly by gender or background, but because of the class they are in. Some classes in history, for example, are taught well and the pupils make good progress, but in others several different teachers teach the class and their progress is slower. In other cases, classes are being, or have been, taught by temporary or unqualified teachers for long periods and these pupils do not make as much progress as others do.
9. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall, because of significant weaknesses in the teaching of these pupils in too many classes. In the learning support base achievement is satisfactory, and improving rapidly. Pupils learn to read and spell more accurately and to organise their written work more efficiently. The well-organised support helps pupils meet the targets set in their individual education plans and gives them more confidence in speaking. Many do well in the Certificate of Achievement examinations, but fewer are entered for the GCSE examination than is the case nationally and this restricts what they can achieve. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language receive extra support from the English department and make satisfactory progress in this aspect of their education.
10. Pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy are average, but the school is not doing enough to help pupils develop these skills.

11. Progress since the previous inspection has been poor. Above average results in Year 9 have been maintained, but GCSE results are now average and there are areas of significant underachievement throughout the school.

Sixth form

12. There is no national data for 2002 AS and A level results available as yet. Results in 2001 were below average and students did not achieve as well as they should have. Results were worse in 2002 and only three students gained the sort of results that would be expected in other schools from similar GCSE results. This gap between what students should achieve and what they actually achieve has been growing for at least three years. The results at AS level were particularly poor; almost one in four entries failed to achieve a grade and in some subjects the figure was one in two. Male students gained average results in 2001, but those of females were below average.
13. Results at A level in 2001, where there were enough candidates to provide an accurate comparison, were above average in music, average in chemistry, English literature, general studies, geography, history and physical education. Results were below average in all other subjects except communication studies, where they were well below average, and business studies where they were very low. Students gained their best results in computer studies, general studies and physical education; their worst were in business studies, communication studies and mathematics. When compared to 2001, results in 2002 improved in biology, English literature, design and technology and geography, but were worse in chemistry, computer studies and mathematics.
14. The standards in the nine subjects inspected in detail are generally average, but above average in physical education and below average in mathematics. Students are doing well in chemistry, computer studies, physical education and psychology; their achievement is satisfactory in English literature, design and technology, music and business studies but they are underachieving in mathematics. For some subjects the results vary because of the standards of students starting the course but there have been notable exceptions to this rule. Results in business studies were so poor because the school was trying to teach two A levels in the same time as is usually devoted to one. Some students who studied for computer studies did not have good enough qualifications for the course and were not given good enough advice about what it entailed.
15. The level of underachievement in mathematics is very significant and makes a major contribution to the overall level of underachievement in the sixth form. In 2001, for example, more students (more than one in three) studied for mathematics than any other subject. Another major reason for underachievement is poor results in other subjects, such as sociology. However, it is very difficult to obtain a detailed picture of students' achievements as the results held by the school do not match those that are published in other sources and nobody is quite sure where the differences lie. One reason why students do not do as well as those in other schools is because they receive teaching that is of an inferior quality.
16. Progress since the last inspection has been poor. Standards have fallen and students are now underachieving.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils arrive at school willing to learn, but in lessons their levels of interest and behaviour are unsatisfactory. Their attitudes and behaviour have deteriorated markedly since the previous inspection, when they were seen as a strength of the school. Pupils' relationships with each other and with staff are mostly amicable, although in unsuccessful lessons their declining interest leads them at times to show little consideration for their teachers' feelings. As at the previous inspection, few problems with bullying or other harassment arise. Attendance is satisfactory, as previously. Other aspects of pupils' personal development were previously good and are now satisfactory. As before, parents are mostly content with standards of behaviour but the proportion who are really happy with it is lower than is usually seen.
18. Pupils' response is unsatisfactory in around one in ten lessons in Year 9 and one in five in Years 10 and 11. Lack of interest is evident at times before a lesson starts, with pupils quite often drifting in late, resulting in a ragged start despite the movement time allowed. In some instances this is because a previous lesson overruns, but at other times teachers' lack of focus on punctuality is a factor. During lessons, pupils of all ages and abilities nearly always show at least satisfactory involvement in their work so long as tasks are matched to their needs and suitable strategies are used to focus their attention on learning. Quite often they develop good levels of interest but this varies between teachers and between subjects. In physical education for instance it is the norm for pupils to arrive complete with the necessary kit and to take part enthusiastically. Where a good learning atmosphere is created, relationships between the teacher and pupils are often also good so that pupils are confident to contribute in discussion. At times pupils are remarkably tolerant of boring or poorly managed lessons, showing loyalty to their teacher by behaving well even though there is little to increase their knowledge or understanding. For instance Year 9 students were pleasant and willing to co-operate, though not surprisingly slightly restless, when their teacher gave them an over-easy spreadsheet task that repeated work all had covered previously.
19. Frequently, though, if work is inappropriate many pupils show little sense of personal responsibility in their behaviour. They linger over tasks and waste time on unrelated social chatter, so that they make little progress. When strategies to maintain order are weak, a few tend to become rowdy and rude, ignoring their teacher's efforts to move the lesson on. At such times better motivated pupils present resent the delay caused by others being silly and distracting. Disinterest in work and deteriorating behaviour tend to be seen most often in lower ability groups, with both boys and girls involved, but are not confined to these groups. Lack of self-discipline is also evident at times in lack of effort with homework. The special XL group, who follow a different curriculum, was not in school during the week of inspection and many of these pupils have behavioural difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs in targeted individual and small group sessions are usually very well behaved, with a clear commitment to improve.
20. Exclusions, both short term and permanent, were very high in the year up to July 2002, with around one in every 12 pupils excluded at least once and a large minority of these excluded on two or more occasions. The equivalent of a whole year was lost to exclusions last year. Boys were twice as likely to be excluded as girls were. The record of permanent exclusions placed the school in the worst two per cent in the country. However, exclusions reduced considerably during the term leading up to the inspection, to less than half the number seen during the same months in the preceding year and with no permanent exclusions. This is very different from the situation at the previous inspection, when exclusions were high and still rising. Exclusions are currently used appropriately in response to serious breaches of

discipline that involve a small minority of pupils. The decrease in exclusions reflects the use of a new, well-structured range of sanctions for other unacceptable behaviour.

21. Around the school behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils are for the most part pleasant and friendly. Pride in their personal appearance is sometimes lacking, though they present themselves tidily when reminded. The few from different ethnic communities are accepted and well integrated. Most pupils regret the actions of the small minority who defy rules, for instance by smoking in the toilets. Few concerns arise about bullying because the school makes it clear that any form of oppressive behaviour is unacceptable and teachers respond effectively to the few incidents that occur.
22. Other aspects of pupils' personal development are for the most part satisfactory. They reflect on the social and moral themes explored in assembly and also respond thoughtfully to the related issues touched on in the 'Thought for the Day', provided that their tutor creates a receptive atmosphere for this. They understand that respect is due to others' different cultures and religious beliefs, though their grasp of what these involve is often fragile. They respond well when they are helped to recognise the needs of others; for instance, they support a range of charities through the house system. Good numbers support extra-curricular activities, taking part with confidence and enjoyment.
23. Attendance is satisfactory, as at the previous inspection. It dipped two years ago but is now improving in response to good efforts made by the school. Attendance was over 91 per cent in each year group during the term preceding the inspection. Levels of unauthorised absence are similar to those in most other schools. Most pupils maintain their attendance levels well, never staying away without due reason. However, a minority of around one in ten causes concern by more frequent absence. There are instances where poor attendance detracts from pupils' progress in their studies. Quite often low attendance is due to individual circumstances such as serious medical conditions, but the school finds that in some cases it links to a lack of enthusiasm for education rather than any acceptable reason, even though parents supply excuses. Good efforts made by pastoral staff in liaison with the education welfare officer are having some impact on this problem.

Sixth form

24. Sixth form students have satisfactory attitudes to learning. They are unhappy about several aspects of the sixth form provision, but do not use this as an excuse to neglect their work. They relate positively to their teachers and to each other and this aids their progress. When opportunity offers, individuals can show mature confidence in their approach, but overall their organisation of their own learning and use of initiative are satisfactory.
25. In around one in three lessons students show good levels of interest and involvement. For instance in a lesson about urban development, students came well prepared and readily joined in a question and answer session to consolidate previous work, and then made good progress in groups, because they were ready to listen to each other and share ideas. In a few lessons, usually ones that demand less of them, students are mostly more passive but still tackle the work conscientiously. Drifting attention is rarely a problem. More able individuals on occasion show great determination to make progress. They seize opportunities to express ideas and are pro-active in asking for further information even when a lesson is rather mundane. Prompted by the head of sixth form, they mostly make responsible use of private study time. Nevertheless,

records show that a relatively high proportion needs pushing to complete homework or to really put the hours in at home.

26. Other aspects of students' personal development are satisfactory. They contribute to the life of the school when they are presented with opportunities. For instance, several help to run the year group councils and others have voluntarily trained as peer listeners and make themselves available at breaks to support others in the school. When their studies or interests lead to involvement in the wider community they talk confidently of their activities. For instance, those in sixth form music groups are enthusiastic about their contribution to the successful music activity days regularly organised for pupils from feeder middle schools. Students play a full part in whole school charity fund-raising efforts and those who have recently visited their partner school in The Gambia talk eagerly about the ongoing project to support the students there. Students readily pursue discussion of moral concepts when these are relevant to their own interests. For instance, in a business education lesson they examined the ethics of exploiting peoples' emotions in advertisements for designer clothes. However, they admit that their knowledge of world religions is thin and they tend to see little relevance in religious concepts to their own lives.
27. Sixth form attendance is satisfactory, at similar levels to those seen in the main school. Students mostly show a good sense of responsibility for their own regular attendance. The few who find it hard to live up to the school's expectations are identified and supported. In the case of those eligible for education maintenance allowance, this proves an added incentive to regular attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. Overall, teaching in Years 9 to 11 is poor. Around one lesson in five fails to reach a satisfactory standard in Year 9 and this figure falls to more than one in four in Years 10 and 11. There is very little teaching that is of a really good standard. In Year 9, teaching is good in music, physical education and science. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects except English and French where it is unsatisfactory. There is too little teaching of information and communication technology to be able to reach a judgement on its quality. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good in history and physical education. Teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects except mathematics, French and German, where it is unsatisfactory, and information and communication technology where teaching is poor. A relatively low proportion of parents feel that teaching is good.
29. Much of the unsatisfactory teaching results from teachers trying to teach material that is too easy for the pupils concerned. This, in turn, leads them to become bored and start to misbehave. This misbehaviour usually takes the form of pupils simply not doing as they are told; they do not disrupt others but will not follow the teacher's instructions. In the past, teachers have been able to send pupils to senior staff quickly and many would have been excluded. However, the emphasis in the school is now placing responsibility for ensuring that pupils behave in the classroom back in the hands of the teachers. Teachers are not used to this and have not had sufficient training in how to handle such behaviour. In really poor lessons, the behaviour can get out of hand and the lesson is disrupted for all by, for example, pupils playing a mock game of basketball with rolled up paper and a dustbin balanced on top of shelves, in a lesson taken by a temporary teacher.
30. Part of the problem that teachers have in setting suitably challenging work stems from the poor systems that the school has for assessing pupils' standards. Teachers are

not made aware of the capabilities of their pupils and so cannot set work that is of a suitable level of difficulty, instead choosing tasks such as colouring in or cutting out pieces of paper and sticking them in books.

31. With the exception of the above problems, which are fairly widespread, the other weakness is inconsistency. Marking is good in science, but unsatisfactory in mathematics for example. Homework is used well in history, but is unsatisfactory in art; some teachers use computers well while others do not use them at all. There is no school policy on improving literacy and numeracy skills so what happens in lessons is down to luck rather than a co-ordinated approach. In fact, for almost all aspects of teaching there are examples of both good and unsatisfactory practice in the school. Even within subjects there are great inconsistencies. In religious education for example, the top set in Year 11 are taught very well and so do well at GCSE, despite being taught for only one lesson per fortnight. Other classes are not taught by subject specialists and so are not pushed to the same degree. Only in physical education is the teaching consistently good. Here the head of department has analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the department and set about using the strengths to eliminate the weaknesses. The same approach has not been used in most other subjects because the school's senior managers have not put systems in place that would allow such development to take place.
32. Another reason for inconsistency is the relatively large number of temporary or unqualified teachers in the school. These teachers are not being supported well enough in some cases. Some, for example, receive their lesson plan from the head of department at the start of the lesson while others are given inappropriate tasks for their pupils to carry out.
33. Teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs is good in the learning support area. Teaching assistants, working with small groups or individuals, have a good knowledge of pupils' needs and high expectations of what they can achieve. As a result, pupils learn rapidly and gain in confidence. Their attitudes to work and their behaviour are very good. For example, in a Year 9 literacy lesson, seven teaching assistants worked with pupils on reading and spelling. Relationships were very good, so pupils responded very well and worked hard for an hour. The varied resources, including computers, took into account different styles of learning and captured pupils' interest, so that they felt learning was fun. In-class support complements the work in withdrawal sessions and is the chief means through which pupils with special educational needs learn. In good lessons, teaching assistants liaise in advance with subject teachers, so that they can plan materials and take an active role in the lesson. In a Year 9 science lesson, for example, the assistant's support enabled practical work to proceed smoothly and pupils received much-needed help with written work. In this lesson, pupils learned well. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the girls in the group would not have done as well as they did without the tactful and well-focused support from two teaching assistants, working closely with the subject teacher. In unsatisfactory and poor lessons in the main school, teachers do not take into account pupils' prior attainment and manage behaviour poorly. As a result, pupils do not learn as they should.
34. The quality of teaching has declined since the previous inspection, when it was good.

Sixth form

35. Teaching in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. While the majority of lessons observed were good, the proportion was still much lower than in most other schools and no very good teaching was seen, which is very unusual.
36. Teaching in the nine subjects inspected in detail is generally satisfactory, but good in chemistry, computer studies, physical education and psychology; teaching is unsatisfactory in mathematics because lessons are not planned well enough. Teachers spend too long practising the application of a method at the expense of learning new work. Work is rarely marked properly.
37. This weakness in marking is seen in other subjects where files are not checked to ensure that notes are accurate and targets are not set for students to improve their work. More than one in three students feels that their work is not being assessed well. The biggest weakness, however, comes from the same poor assessment as in Years 9 to 11. Teachers just do not have the information of their students' standards to plan lessons that really challenge them and make them think.
38. Teaching in the sixth form was some of the best in the school at the time of the previous inspection. Now it is still of a better quality, but has declined to the same extent as the main school.

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

39. The curriculum is unsatisfactory in Year 9 because statutory requirements for information and communication technology are not met; pupils have only occasional lessons and their experiences are not co-ordinated, which leads to them underachieving. There is not enough time provided for citizenship, physical education or religious education and this limits pupils' achievements.
40. The curriculum is poor in Years 10 and 11. There is not enough time for the locally agreed syllabus in religious education to be taught, or for the National Curriculum in citizenship, so pupils are underachieving. Not all pupils study information and communication technology so do not have their full statutory entitlement. GCSE subjects dominate the curriculum with only a few vocationally oriented subjects. One group of pupils follows an alternative curriculum, called the XL course, which includes a considerable amount of time studying outside of school. These pupils follow a mixture of courses leading to GCSEs or the Certificate of Achievement. Whilst the course is suitable for a small number of pupils, the implementation and management of it are poor and many of these pupils would benefit more from school-based courses. Some pupils are placed on this course because they have behavioural problems and are not necessarily low attainers. A very small number of pupils follow a completely different curriculum in partnership with the local college of further education; these pupils follow a much more vocationally based curriculum such as hairdressing. Overall, far too much use is made of non-GCSE courses with pupils studying for certification that is of a standard that they reached in the middle school.
41. Pupils spend much less time in lessons than is recommended by the government. Two lessons, which are for tutorial time and literacy, add to the curriculum time. However, this time is not always used well, with pupils sitting around chatting and being non-productive. In some subjects, such as English and foreign languages, some classes are taught by as many as four different teachers, so there is little continuity between lessons and pupils in these classes underachieve as a result. The arrangements for teaching personal, social and health education are unsatisfactory.

The work that is planned includes all the required aspects of health education, sex education and drugs awareness. However, the delivery of the programme is unsatisfactory because of the significant variation in the quality of teaching and the disruption due to a succession of temporary staff. Provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory because the content does not meet the national requirements; the high proportion of temporary staff also disrupts the delivery of the content.

42. A satisfactory programme of careers education is in place. Year 9 pupils are introduced to the careers library and are helped to think about career aspirations when they are choosing their GCSE options. Suitable coverage of careers' topics is achieved in Years 10 and 11 within the rather limited time available. An unusual and effective feature is the way pupils have two separate weeks of work experience, one in Year 10 and another in Year 11, giving them valuable and varied experience of the world of work. Pupils are given suitable encouragement to consider the range of post-16 options available, including enrolment in the sixth form. However, there is a lack of provision for offering extra advice to any pupils who need it at the point when their GCSE results are released.
43. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall, but good in the learning support department. The curriculum is not structured well enough to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Although the content of the XL course is good for a small number of pupils, groups are too large, so that they are hard to manage and there is no proper accommodation. The school is aware of this and plans to correct it. Too many pupils are not given the opportunity to take GCSEs because expectations of what they might achieve are too low. In the learning support department, the curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from small group or one-to-one support from a group of highly committed and well-trained teaching assistants, who give generously of their time. For example, each lunchtime the social skills club provides well for pupils who need academic or personal support. Pupils interact very well with the teaching assistants and appreciate the opportunity to use computers and receive help with their schoolwork.
44. The school's strategy for teaching literacy is unsatisfactory. However, because much of what is taught depends upon individual departments, or individual teachers, there are some pockets of effective practice. In English and history, for example, pupils are required to produce pieces of extended writing. There is a satisfactory level of attention devoted to developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary, as was seen, for example, in lessons in English, science, art, design and technology and citizenship. Nevertheless, there are a number of weaknesses in the way the school teaches literacy skills. The school has introduced other measures designed to promote literacy but in practice these are not effective. A significant amount of tutor time is allocated to silent reading. However, in some such sessions pupils did not bring books to read, they were provided with books that they were disinclined to read, some did their homework, but mostly they chatted to each other. In one class pupils shared the earphones of a radio. The 'fortnightly themes' in literacy are not covered in lessons. Additionally, some of the themes (for example, grammatical cohesion, with covering reference, identification, ellipsis and conjunctions) appeared to be at a level above what was needed to teach basic literacy and to create a requirement for training for teachers who were not English specialists.
45. The strategy for improving numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. Although pupils' standards of numeracy are broadly average, there is no whole school policy that would provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate and enhance their mathematical skills in other subjects. Teachers in these subjects have had insufficient training to

acquire understanding of the needs of the National Numeracy Strategy. Some departments provide good opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills, for example science, but others do very little.

46. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory. Gifted and talented pupils are identified using a wide range of data such as their performance in national tests or teacher nomination. However, there has been no whole-school in-service training on how to provide for these pupils and departments are left to their own devices. There are no specific schemes or courses to meet the needs of these pupils other than in music and sport.
47. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The physical education department organises an extensive range of clubs to encourage all pupils to develop new skills in a fun environment and to allow the top performers to excel. Similarly in music there are many opportunities for pupils of all levels of attainment to take part and enjoy themselves. There are fund-raising events where the monies raised are sent to many local charities.
48. Links with the community to enhance the curriculum and add to the breadth of pupils' experience are good. Sports teams compete in a wide range of local, regional and national competitions. Strong links are in place for music and pupils' artwork is regularly displayed at local venues. Liaison with feeder middle schools ensures that pupils can transfer happily to Year 9, but there is room to improve the use of transferred assessment data.
49. The school has satisfactory links with partner institutions. It has good pastoral links with the local middle schools. Curricular links are developing through the pyramid arrangements between middle schools and North Bromsgrove, although this is not the case in all subjects. There are satisfactory links with post-16 institutions and training organisations that provide information when pupils are making choices about their future.
50. The curriculum is of a worse standard than that noted in the previous inspection. Concerns related to information and communication technology have not been addressed. The provision for religious education is now unsatisfactory and the timetable organisation is poor. Progress has been poor.
51. Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory. There is no clear policy for developing an awareness of these aspects within subject areas.
52. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. There is some good provision within religious education with regard to Christian teachings and practices and some links with the local church. However, there is not enough time devoted to religious education in the main school and no provision in the sixth form. There is little work done on the major world religions. There is therefore inadequate provision for spiritual development even within religious education. There is some provision for spiritual awareness in English, science, geography and psychology. The 'Thought for the Day' provides some good areas for reflection. However, it is not given enough attention by all tutors. The twice-weekly assemblies provide good information and salutary reminders for reflection, but the school does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

53. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. Pupils are given an awareness of right and wrong, particularly in citizenship, personal and social education, science and religious education. Pupils raise money for charities, particularly for a school in The Gambia. Physical education makes a good contribution by promoting personal awareness, fair play and honest competition, and psychology students consider the ethical implications of psychological experiments.
54. Provision for social development is unsatisfactory because too little time is devoted to this aspect in personal, social and health education lessons and teachers do not do enough to challenge unacceptable behaviour. As a result a significant proportion of pupils display poor social skills. Their behaviour and attitudes to personal responsibility are unsatisfactory; they do not show adequate respect for supply teachers for example. There is some promotion of social awareness in drama. In most lessons, pupils have opportunities to work in pairs and small groups and learn to share; this is particularly good in physical education. Students have opportunities to undertake leadership roles but the pressure of work for AS levels limits the time they can devote to this.
55. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. The expressive arts programme makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. It involves art, dance, poetry and music. Music enjoys a high profile and contributes well to the spiritual, social and cultural provision. There is a major production every year and several Arts Evenings at intervals throughout the year. The lack of time for religious education means that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to explore Eastern cultures. There are good links with a school in The Gambia. Increasing numbers of pupils travel there and pupils from The Gambia are helped to visit this school. These links are being developed by teachers, pupils, ex-teachers and members of the community. A website is being developed so that lessons can be exchanged between the schools. Pupils are also made aware of their own culture in history and by visits to museums, art galleries and other places of cultural interest.

Sixth form

56. A wide range of AS and A level courses is offered; there are no vocational courses. Most students follow two-year courses to advanced level. Those students who have not attained a grade A * to C at GCSE can also retake subjects. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements because not all students follow a course in religious education.
57. The programme of courses does not meet the needs of the students and is unsatisfactory because of the timetabling problems last September. Many students in Year 12 returned to school in September to find that the combinations of subjects they had chosen to study were not now all available; the timetable had been changed and there were clashes all over the place. Many sixth form students are still not happy with the situation and some are taking subjects they did not choose in the first place. Some students suffer from the way that they are unable to attend all the lessons in a subject because of timetabling clashes. The curriculum does not fully take account of the subjects available at post-16 institutions in the area. For example, three students were told that they could take a course at the local college of further education, which is right next door to the school, when in reality they would have needed to catch a bus and travel 10 miles or more to attend the course. In the event, these students chose to do other subjects. Students are generally given sound advice about which courses to study in the sixth form although students last year were not informed of the demands of computer studies and many failed to gain a grade at AS level.

58. Satisfactory careers guidance is provided. A systematic approach to let students more readily access the careers' service when they feel in need of guidance has recently been negotiated by the head of sixth form. Visits organised to various universities, for instance for day conferences on history topics, help raise pupils' aspirations for their routes when they leave the school. Suitable links are maintained with the local further education college to add to the curriculum choices available to students. Good links with the community contribute especially to studies in art, music, and physical education.
59. Provision for enrichment activities is good. Students involve themselves in various school and community-based projects. The curriculum is also successful in offering a variety of other opportunities ranging from sport through to music. For example, in physical education, students participate in the Community Sports Leader award. Students reach out into the community through involvement in charity and community ventures, work experience and events. Students give up their free time to work as Millennium Volunteers who help the local community. A new sixth form council was instigated in September 2002, of which students speak highly.
60. The curriculum has undergone significant changes since the previous inspection. The introduction of the new system of AS and A levels has been managed satisfactorily. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

61. Good attention is given to pupils' welfare. Their personal needs are met well because they are known and cared for as individuals. Most parents feel their children are happy in school. As at the previous inspection, good care is taken over monitoring their attendance. Despite these good points, care for pupils is weaker than at the previous inspection. Although the policy for managing behaviour is now good, it is not followed consistently in lessons. In addition considerable weaknesses are now apparent in the tracking and support of pupils' academic progress.
62. Good pastoral links are maintained with middle schools within the local pyramid and these help pupils cope happily with the transfer to Year 9. The provision of a sanctuary area at breaks, for the sole use of new Year 9 pupils, helps them cope more confidently during their early weeks in the school. Senior pastoral staff are actively seeking to improve systems for pupils' care and guidance. For instance a new year-team system has been put in place to better meet the range of pupils' educational and personal needs. Good routines are in place to ensure that tutors know of any concerns that arise about an individual pupil's behaviour or attention in lessons and can give them support. Pupils know they can find a member of staff, or perhaps one of the trained peer listeners, to turn to with any problems.
63. Good attention is given to health and safety arrangements across the range of school activities. Good first aid routines are in place and relevant support is extended to those with long-term medical needs. A good policy and good routines, including links with outside agencies, are in place with regard to child protection procedures. Steps taken to liaise with outside agencies also contribute to effective care for other pupils with particular individual needs, such as looked after children.
64. Good attention is given to monitoring and promoting attendance. Efforts have improved over the past year, with the school buying in extra time from the education welfare service. Analysis of attendance data was criticised at the previous inspection

but pastoral staff, together with the education welfare officer, now use the computerised registration system well, to identify any who are frequently absent or late. Individuals are then targeted with well-considered follow-up and support. Staff look for emerging trends, for instance they recognise a growing number of absences on family holidays, and respond to them suitably. They also understand circumstances such as unfavourable home backgrounds that in some instances underlie individual patterns of absence, and seek to use the most effective course of action in each case. Teachers are aware that occasionally pupils register at the start of the morning or afternoon but then miss lessons without due reason. They are generally alert to follow up such instances but the fact that registers for teaching groups are often out of date makes checks unduly complicated.

65. Other aspects of care are less successful. Management of behaviour is unsatisfactory. A good 'care and control' policy has recently been developed. This includes good procedures and guidance for promoting good behaviour and also a well-structured system of sanctions for responding to breakdowns in behaviour. Such guidance for teachers was previously lacking. There is little evidence that sufficient thought was given to structures for managing behaviour prior to the development of this new policy. As yet this policy is not having enough impact because insufficient has been done to build teachers' grasp of how to apply it to promote good behaviour in lessons. Examples of effective behaviour management occur but too often efforts to tackle poor behaviour are unsuccessful. Previously, governors and parents perceived discipline as being strong but there was over-reliance on exclusion as a sanction. Records indicate that as well as being used for serious breakdowns in behaviour, exclusion was used in response to other breaches of discipline such as hiding a tin of cigarettes which, while unacceptable, would in most other schools have been dealt with effectively by alternative means. Exclusion is now used less frequently and only in response to serious incidents, in line with current government guidance. Absences from school due to exclusions have now reduced considerably. Appropriate support is organised for those with particular behavioural difficulties; for instance, provision is made for advice on anger management.
66. Educational guidance is unsatisfactory. Pupils appreciate the way teachers are willing to give them extra help and explanations, after a lesson or at lunchtime, if they do not understand any part of their work. Tutors generally promote suitable attitudes to learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are supported to an extent by information about their projected GCSE grades, although there is a lack of precision in the way this information is produced and used. A few Year 11 pupils are entered on a mentoring programme but this is limited in its scope. At present there is no system for tutors or anyone else to regularly monitor detailed information about the progress of every individual pupil and build an accurate, up-to-date picture of how each one is doing in all the subjects studied. Consequently there is no routine for regularly reviewing details of progress with individuals and identifying with them steps for their further learning.
67. The special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants are sensitive to students' needs and readily available to give advice and support. Because relationships are so good, students feel comfortable when talking to the staff, and see the learning support area as a friendly place where their views will be respected.
68. The assessment of pupils' performance and progress is poor. There is now a wealth of data available centrally but it is not being used by departments or tutors to identify areas of strength or weakness.

69. The school uses the information available about pupils when they enter the school to place pupils in the appropriate groups but few departments have established effective enough links with the middle schools to allow them to know their individual strengths or weaknesses. In departments such as geography, for example, the information is not reliable enough to use to help determine what level pupils are aiming at. There have been some recent developments which have allowed a few departments time to share the planning of the Key Stage 3 course with the other schools and this is leading to a more appropriate course for the pupils in Year 9 in subjects such as foreign languages.
70. During their time at the school, pupils' achievements are recorded by individual teachers but some departments, such as mathematics, do not record these results in a central system using a common marking system. It is therefore difficult to identify when a pupil, or group of pupils, is not doing as well as they should and comparisons across the year group are not easily made. Information comparing how a pupil is performing in one subject compared with another is also poorly used. Central monitoring is possible, as the information is collected, but until very recently there has been nobody responsible for ensuring that those students in need of help were given adequate support. Only a few students in Year 11 were given advice about how to improve their grades in special mentoring sessions, although all students met with their tutors to discuss the grades they were likely to achieve. As a result, pupils end up being entered for the wrong type of examination or the incorrect tier, which severely limits their achievement. The new heads of year are much more involved in meeting this need and will be able to pass the information on to tutors but this system is too new to have had any effect as yet.
71. The assessment of students with special educational needs is good in the learning support base. The co-ordinator uses data from middle schools and the standardised tests taken in Year 9 to set targets to help students to improve. The individual education plans are good and in line with the recommendations in the new Code of Practice. Achievement criteria are precise, so it is easy to measure progress. A procedure to record this is being developed. Annual reviews for students with statements are very well planned. During the inspection, an excellent review was observed in which the co-ordinator's expert chairing of the meeting led to a good response from those present.

Sixth form

Assessment

72. The school's procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress in the sixth form are unsatisfactory. The data on students' attainment, which is available when students enter the sixth form, is used inconsistently by heads of department and tutors to assess actual performance against predicted performance. At subject level, teachers keep records of pupils' performance and in physical education, students are involved in reviewing their own progress. In others, such as mathematics, students are not as clear about how they are progressing, as the systems are inconsistent.
73. Students themselves are most unhappy with the way they are assessed and the quality of information they receive on their progress.

Advice, support and guidance

74. Sixth form students benefit from the same good systems as seen in the main school with regard to health and safety and their personal welfare. Pastoral support and guidance for them is satisfactory, with good monitoring of their attendance, but educational guidance is poor.
75. Support for the present Year 12 students as they made the transition to the sixth form was unsatisfactory. They are happy with the sixth form provision in terms of the benefits of continuing in a known environment, with staff who understand them and care about them. Suitable advance information was available to them during Year 11, for instance via an informative sixth form prospectus and an open evening. However an important part of the transition process was flawed. Students were consulted while they were in Year 11 about their preferred options for AS courses, but in September 2002 they returned to school to find that the options blocks from which they had selected their courses had changed. Consequently their previously chosen combinations of subjects were not necessarily available. Too many of them had to reconsider their choices at short notice, rather than follow courses they had carefully selected earlier in the year. Year 13 students also have some concerns about ongoing guidance, in their case over support in completing university applications during the autumn term. They see this as a result of recent instability during staff changes, rather than as a problem likely to recur from year to year.
76. The new head of sixth form is pro-active in encouraging students to follow good routines, for instance to spend a sufficient number of free periods usefully on private study. She has made sure suitable systems are in place to identify any students who neglect their work or need extra support in organising themselves. Checks on attendance and punctuality are also good. Parents are told about any serious problems and systems have recently been introduced to tell them when there is particular cause for praise.
77. Students value their teachers' willingness to give time outside lessons if they need extra help with their work. However, the ready support and advice extended by individual teachers are not backed up by sufficient structures for students' longer-term educational guidance and support. Formal systems for gathering detailed information about students' progress, and using this as a basis for advice and guidance, are lacking. Because of this students' understanding of their own capabilities and progress is limited and opportunities to inform and motivate their efforts are lost.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

78. The school makes satisfactory efforts to build partnerships with parents. Parents are on the whole satisfied with the school though the proportion who show real enthusiasm for it through the questionnaires returned to inspectors is relatively low. Their views are less positive than at the previous inspection. A worrying number of those expressing a view now feel the school does not work closely enough with them and does not give them enough information about how their child is doing. They are also unhappy about aspects of homework and about the leadership of the school.
79. Links between the special educational needs co-ordinator and parents are good. Parents receive copies of the individual education plans and can discuss these over the telephone or at review meetings. Parents give good support to the annual reviews and take an interest in their children's achievements. This motivates students to improve their standards of work.

80. The flow of information to parents is satisfactory. Annual reports have improved somewhat since the previous inspection and now give a satisfactory range of information. The most helpful subject sections give good detail of what the pupil has learnt and some indication of the next steps in learning. Occasionally, however, comments are rather vague and there is not always an indication of how the pupil's performance compares with national expectations. Parents receive additional information during the year, for instance in Years 10 and 11, about pupils' estimated GCSE grades. However, information shared with parents about progress and targets for future achievements is less secure than it might be, because of weaknesses in procedures for tracking progress.
81. A satisfactory sequence of consultation meetings is offered, with at least one a year. The first is early in Year 9, so that parents can find how their children are coping with work at their new school. Parents' take-up of these opportunities is rather disappointing, with parents of only around three in every five pupils attending in the main school and rather more coming to the sixth form consultations. Teachers generally try to contact those parents who do not come, especially when they have any concerns about how a pupil is doing. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully informed and good attention is given to consulting their views, including involving them in the annual review if the pupil has a statement. This is a very definite improvement from the previous inspection when routines for this aspect of parental involvement were poor.
82. The general flow of information to parents has recently been improved by a well-written newsletter about school organisation and events. The governors' annual report is inadequate. It gives a very enthusiastic account of selected highlights of the previous year, but omits important information that parents should be given, such as details of the school's progress in following the action plan adopted after the previous inspection and an evaluation of the school's success in implementing its special needs policy. The prospectus is generally helpful but it too needs revising so that it contains the full range of required information, such as a comparison of the school's results with the national picture.
83. Parents give good support to activities involving their sons and daughters. For instance they come in good numbers to musical and dramatic performances. Ongoing links between other subject areas and parents are rather underdeveloped. However, the physical education department has found a really notable way of building partnership with parents. Last year the teachers introduced a parent and pupil workshop as part of the GCSE revision programme. Parents were introduced to revision texts and techniques and to aids including useful websites. This initiative was well supported by parents and proved really successful, as it helped to raise GCSE results in the subject to above average levels in 2002.
84. The views expressed by students indicate that on balance their experience of the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Nevertheless they are happy about being able to continue their studies in a familiar environment where they know teachers care about their needs. Those involved in extra-curricular opportunities such as sports, music and drama speak enthusiastically about them. However, a large minority show a worrying level of discontent with aspects of the provision made for them, for instance the quality of information about their own progress and the advice they get about their future options. They feel that the school does not take account of their views and they are not treated as being responsible young adults. This probably links to factors such as the dismay many Year 12 students felt in September 2002 when they arrived in school and found that the combinations of courses available had changed from those

described to them earlier. Some would have liked more advance discussion and explanation before the sixth form study and common room facilities were re-organised, even though they are now beginning to understand the reasons and benefits. There is also a lack of understanding of the rationale for introducing a general studies course, because this was not part of the package they accepted when they chose to join the sixth form.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

85. The leadership of the school has been poor since the last inspection and its management has been very poor. Standards have fallen in important areas and little or nothing has been done to halt the school's decline. The quality of leadership and management is much worse than at the time of the previous inspection and many of the main weaknesses identified are still apparent in the school's work now.
86. However, things are improving. The acting headteacher, appointed in September, joined a new senior management team, most of whom had only been in post for a very short time. He immediately realised that some drastic actions were required. In particular, he introduced ways of reducing the number of exclusions and last term there were no permanent exclusions at all. Instead of supporting this move, governors felt that it was the wrong way to go and criticised the initiative. The new headteacher, who has been in post only since January 2003, has a very clear idea of the difficulties that face him and his team. They have a clear determination to improve the school and a committed staff with which to work. They are continuing the good work started by the acting headteacher.
87. Until the appointment of the acting headteacher in September 2002, senior managers at the school, including governors, had ignored data that did not paint a positive picture of the school's performance, such as the declining GCSE results of the boys and the falling proportion leaving with at least five GCSEs. Instead they concentrated too much on stressing the positives, such as improvements in the proportion leaving with five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. Even the exceptionally poor exclusions record has been seen as a positive because governors feel that it indicates that behaviour of those still in school is good. No records have been kept of the school's targets for examination performance in 2002, other than the target for five or more passes at grades A* to C in the minutes of a governing body meeting. Other data that is held on computer is not accurate, such as the examination results themselves. Governors have not fulfilled their role of monitoring what the school is doing and taking actions where they are found to be needed.
88. These positive messages have been passed on to heads of department and teachers alike. As a result, they have felt that they were doing well and morale was high. One head of department for example genuinely thought that the department's results were among the best in the country because the pass rate in the school was 100 per cent. Nobody had ever questioned the results, or looked in detail at the actual grades being awarded so it came as a great shock when the inspector pointed out that the results were only average. The headteacher and senior management have not provided heads of department with the tools that would enable them to do their job properly, such as national data on the performance of subjects and how their pupils performed in relation to the other subjects they studied. When new heads of department, who were used to using such data in previous schools, asked for it they were refused. Nobody has been held accountable for the standards achieved by pupils in the school. Heads of department are rightly upset about this as they feel that they are taking the blame for others' poor performance.

89. This lack of accountability extends to other areas. There are no records of any lesson observations carried out before September 2002 and the only systematic monitoring before that time was left to the devices of heads of department. Some took the situation into their own hands. The head of physical education, for example, is a very good leader and manager. He analysed the examination results in detail and drew up strategies to change D grades into Cs. The whole department has put these strategies into action and results are now among the best in the school, despite problems with timetabling and accommodation. Elsewhere, the autonomy departments have been given has led to stagnation. Nobody has a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, so the strengths have not been used to develop other teachers while the weaknesses have continued unchecked.
90. While the leadership of special educational needs in the school is unsatisfactory, the management of the learning support department is good. In the main school, teachers do not give sufficient attention in their planning to the targets of pupils' individual education plans. They do not provide different work to help the lower attaining pupils learn. There has been insufficient training in teaching pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, but the school has plans to rectify this. The co-ordinator for special educational needs manages the learning support department well. She has worked very hard to implement the Code of Practice and to forge a good team spirit within the department. However, she has not received the support necessary to spread this good practice across the school.
91. The failure to use data properly means that the school's senior managers have not been able to draw up adequate plans for its development. There is no record of any development planning between 1997 and 2001. The plan for 2001/2 makes few references to raising standards and of the 57 proposed developments only 18 were carried out. Many were for major developments that other schools have had in place for some time, such as lesson observations and implementing the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy.
92. The school's financial management is equally as poor as other areas. The only certainty is that the school has a financial deficit. The size of the deficit ranges from the £50,000 to £60,000 suggested by the chair of the finance committee, through the £95,000 suggested by the invoices clerk and £180,000 suggested by the acting headteacher to the £250,000 suggested by the auditors. Nobody has tried to match the auditor's figures against the others so nobody knows where the differences lie. The school's management were warned in the previous inspection report that financial reserves could not be continued to be used up at the current rate, and an audit in 1999 found that there was a lack of long-term planning and that finances might not be sufficient to meet the school's commitments. Nevertheless, no school development plan has been costed and there are no financial plans in existence to reduce the deficit. The school's problems have arisen because nobody has worked out how much it will cost to staff and run the curriculum. Staffing costs are high and, in particular, the school spends far too much on temporary teachers. While some are clearly necessary, to cover staff absences due to illness or the exceptional circumstances of not appointing permanent staff until the new headteacher arrived, at other times their use in the past has been totally unwarranted, such as providing time for teachers to moderate their marking with others in the same subject, when there is only one teacher of the subject.
93. The school no longer has enough full-time, permanent teachers, but the high cost (averaging £3000 per week) of temporary staff means that other areas have suffered.

There are not enough books in the library and some subjects. The only gymnasium for physical education is regularly taken out of use for examinations and Year 9 in particular suffer as a result. Overall, the school is providing very poor value for the money it receives. Funding is broadly average. Nevertheless, money is being wasted; two lessons each week are devoted to form time for example, so pupils get fewer lessons than other schools, while the XL group spend much of their time out of school but their teachers are not reassigned to other classes in their absence.

94. The arrangements the school has made for performance management are unsatisfactory. The school did not comply with national requirements that the governing body ensure that performance objectives for the headteacher were agreed or set by December 2000; neither were objectives agreed or set for all other teachers by the end of February 2001. The school policy was written by the headteacher in June 2001, but the records of lesson observations date from November to December 2002. Consequently, there is no evidence of the impact of performance management objectives or outcomes on the quality of education that the school provides.
95. The school has had poor procedures for deciding the training that is undertaken by its teachers. The professional development of teachers has lacked cohesion and the focus has not been clearly on the identified priorities for school development. A strategy has only recently been put in place for ensuring that there is a close match between the training needs emerging from performance management activity, and the school's priorities. The current emphasis on improving this situation is illustrated by the plan for a training day in March 2003, shared with the middle schools from which pupils transfer to this school, devoted to Accelerated Learning. Opportunities for staff to attend external courses have been severely limited this financial year by the cuts in expenditure resulting from the school's budget deficit.
96. The procedures for inducting teachers new to the school are unsatisfactory. There is a satisfactory programme for permanent teachers who are new to the school, but the frequency with which the school has to use short-term temporary teachers has put severe strains on the quality of support that some hard-pressed heads of subject can provide for them. This contributes to unsatisfactory standards of teaching.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

97. The leadership and management of the sixth form have been as bad as the rest of the school. The same patterns of ignoring poor performance, such as the increasing trend of underperformance in the sixth form, and keeping staff in the dark have led to falling standards and unsatisfactory teaching. No systematic checking on the quality of teaching and learning has been carried out until the arrival of the acting headteacher. The data that showed that around one in four students would fail their AS level examinations was not acted upon. Very poor financial planning has led to the sixth form being unable to pay for itself and being subsidised by the funding that should be allocated to Years 10 and 11. However, this extra funding is not leading to an improved quality of education for the students. Record keeping has been poor; the A level results held on computer, for example, are not accurate. The head of sixth form did not even have a computer until part way through last term.
98. However, just as in the main school, there are already signs of improvement since September 2002 when the new head of sixth form was appointed. One major change was requested by her and quickly agreed by the acting headteacher. This was to

allow time for sixth form tutors to meet so that a clear picture of each individual could start to be built up. A very clear development plan for the sixth form has been drawn up and changes, such as making students use their study time to study, rather than play pool for example, are already improving attitudes to work.

Resources

99. While the sixth form has ample staffing and accommodation, the resources available in the library are insufficient to support research work required at this level. Such study is further hampered by the relatively short time that the library is open, making access impossible during break and after school. The overall use of resources is poor because nobody has a clear idea of how much the sixth form costs to run or what value is being obtained for the money that is spent.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

100. In order to reverse the downward trend in the quality of education provided, the senior management and governors should:

- (1) Improve the quality of teaching, especially in English, mathematics, French, German and information and communication technology, by:
 - ensuring that the work is not too easy for pupils so they are interested in their lessons;
 - making a concerted effort to improve standards of literacy and numeracy;
 - making sure teachers are aware of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and how these needs may be met;
 - making better use of homework.(paragraphs 30, 31, 44, 45, 33)
- (2) Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - instigating ways of checking up on the quality of teaching, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, using the strengths to improve practice and taking actions to put the weaknesses right;
 - analysing data on pupils' and students' performance and using the conclusions to inform teachers of how well they are doing and where they need to improve and to set the school's priorities for development;
 - ensuring governors carry out their duties of monitoring and evaluation properly and meeting all statutory requirements;(paragraphs 87, 89, 91)
- (3) Get the school onto a secure financial footing by:
 - determining the exact state of the finances;
 - drawing up plans to reduce the deficit budget;
 - working out how much it costs to operate the curriculum;
 - making efficient use of the resources available, especially teachers;
 - using finance to support the school's immediate priorities.(paragraphs 92, 93)
- (4) Improve the curriculum by:
 - increasing the amount of lessons taught each week;
 - reducing the number of classes that are split between teachers;
 - providing enough time for the teaching of citizenship, physical education and religious education;
 - ensuring that all pupils are taught sufficient information and communication technology.(paragraphs 39, 40, 41)
- (5) Improve the quality of the data on pupils and students by
 - ensuring that work is properly marked;
 - grades are systematically recorded;
 - outcomes are shared between teachers so that a full picture of a pupil or student emerges.(paragraphs 31, 70)

- (6) Improve the behaviour of pupils by:
 - ensuring that the new procedures for controlling behaviour are adhered to;
 - providing training for teachers in managing behaviour in the classroom.(paragraphs 29, 65)

Sixth form

- (1) Increase the amount of good teaching by identifying the good practice that already exists and spreading this across other teachers.
(paragraph 97)
- (2) Improve the teaching of mathematics by ensuring lessons always demand enough of students and that work is properly marked and assessed.
(paragraph 36)
- (3) Provide better advice for students by analysing data on their performance and informing them of their strengths and weaknesses.
(paragraph 72)
- (4) Provide a better curriculum by ensuring that students can study the subjects initially offered to them.
(paragraphs 57)
- (5) Improve the cost effectiveness of the sixth form by getting a clear idea of where money is being spent and what value the students are receiving for it.
(paragraph 99)

Other minor issues that the governors may wish to include in their planning:
Improve the quality of spiritual and social education.
Improve the provision for personal and social education.
Increase the number of books in the library.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 9 – 11	126
	Sixth form	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		76

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 9 – 11							
Number	0	6	46	43	21	8	2
Percentage	0	5	37	34	17	6	2
Sixth form							
Number	0	0	28	15	4	0	0
Percentage	0	0	60	32	9	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	854	185
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	35	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	126	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	16

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	45

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	167	149	316

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	132	116	125
	Girls	131	114	110
	Total	263	230	235
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	83 (71)	73 (65)	74 (73)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	36 (43)	46 (36)	40 (36)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	105	121	126
	Girls	113	119	122
	Total	218	240	248
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	69 (65)	76 (70)	78 (58)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	36 (26)	47 (41)	45 (29)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	105	139	244

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	50	91	99
	Girls	81	123	133
	Total	131	214	232
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	54 (53)	88 (90)	95 (95)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.4 (41.7)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	33	37	70
	Average point score per candidate	15.6	21.3	18.4
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18.0	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	33	37	70	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	13.7	13.2	13.4	N/a	N/a	N/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18.0	17.5	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1007	120	11
3	0	0
5	0	0
8	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
6	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	1	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	426

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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Average teaching group size: Y[] – Y[]

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	2760448
Total expenditure	2807483
Expenditure per pupil	3187
Balance brought forward from previous year	-43911
Balance carried forward to next year	-90946

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1039
Number of questionnaires returned	290

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	54	10	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	28	59	6	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	53	10	4	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	52	17	10	3
The teaching is good.	19	63	8	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	48	21	7	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	46	6	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	44	4	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	16	49	20	6	8
The school is well led and managed.	14	49	10	4	22
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	58	7	4	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	41	6	3	16

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Some higher attaining pupils produce work of very high quality.
- Boys' results have been improving at a faster rate than the national average since 1999.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning in Year 9 are unsatisfactory so pupils are now underachieving.
- Several teachers are on supply or temporary contracts and this leads to a lack of continuity in teaching and learning.
- There are a large number of 'split' classes; in some cases, this adversely affects the progress made by pupils.
- The use of data from assessment to guide teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Subjects other than English are not doing enough to improve pupils' basic skills.

101. In 2002, the results in the national English tests for 14 year olds were above the national average for all schools and in line with the average for similar schools. Girls do better than boys, but not by as much as is usually seen because the boys do significantly better than the national picture. Results fell back drastically in 1999 but since then they have improved and over the past three years the improvement has been at a rate that has been better than the national average because of an improvement in the performance of boys. In 2002, results in English were similar to those obtained in science and better than those in mathematics.
102. In 2002, GCSE results in English and English literature were average and pupils gained results that were similar to the other subjects they studied. There were no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Results have been consistent over the past three years.
103. Standards at the end of Year 9 are now average and are therefore below the level achieved in tests in 2002. The reason for this is that the teaching of some classes is now unsatisfactory and this leads to them making unsatisfactory progress. There is no clear pattern to the underachievement; in some classes it will be higher attainers while in others it will be the lower attainers. Thus achievement by the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average and, when their prior attainment is taken into account, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as other pupils.
104. In all year groups, most pupils are willing to participate in speaking activities. Higher attaining pupils can express themselves fluently and confidently and in a way that is appropriate for the circumstances. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson on *Macbeth*, in which pupils could explain in some detail the differences between the character and motivation of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Middle attainers find difficulty in explaining themselves more fully in response to questioning. Lower attainers express themselves briefly, tend to confuse their tenses and have a limited vocabulary. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to take part in drama, as was seen in a Year 10 lesson when pupils were able to explore contrasting social roles in plays they had written themselves based upon scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*.

105. By the end of Year 9 most pupils read a range of novels, plays and poems that is appropriate for their age group. Higher attainers read aloud with good expression and understanding. Middle attainers are usually fluent, and can mostly work out the meaning from the context, but tend to read in a rather expressionless manner. Lower attainers read a word at a time and are often dependent upon their teachers to help them understand what they have read. By the end of Year 11, pupils go on to read more complex literature. Higher attainers are able to explain and illustrate the contrasting ways in which George Orwell and Charles Dickens portrayed revolution in named texts. However, relatively few middle attainers are able to express their response to literature with the level of clarity that might be expected. Lower attainers tend to have a general idea about what they have read rather than responding to the text itself. Overall, pupils have a somewhat limited desire to read for their own interest.
106. By the end of Year 9 pupils have the chance to write in a variety of styles, including narrative, description, autobiography and leaflets. Pupils generally know how to redraft their work to improve its quality, but the extent to which they do so varies from one group to another. By the end of Year 11 pupils go on to improve the range of their writing. The highest attaining pupils, who are in a relatively small minority, produce work of very high quality on demanding topics such as the part played by music in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Such work is lengthy, very well expressed and well structured. Most pupils express themselves in a clear way on topics to do with the media or in everyday communications, such as writing a letter of thanks to a person who had helped them during work experience. However, inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar mars the work of many middle and lower attaining pupils. Pupils' use of information and communication technology is below the level that is usually seen.
107. In other subjects, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to undertake a range of extended reading and writing that would appropriately challenge them and so enable them to develop their capabilities. In geography and religious education, for example, pupils are set some reading tasks, but all too often this is confined to photocopied extracts, which can act as a constraint upon what pupils might achieve. There is too little demand for pupils to extend themselves by needing to read prescribed books in a library. Written tasks tend to confine pupils to completing writing frames rather than encouraging them to extend their thinking. In modern foreign languages, little opportunity is provided for pupils to write at length and few pupils are able to use complex structures in their writing. In information and communication technology, there was no evidence of pupils being required to read as part of their studies. In general, insufficient attention is given to accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar to ensure the needs of pupils are met.
108. Teaching and learning in Year 9 are unsatisfactory; in Years 10 and 11 they are satisfactory. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. In the majority of lessons, teachers exercise effective discipline and this creates an orderly atmosphere in which learning can take place. When lessons include variety and there are suitable opportunities for pupils to be active participants in their own learning, they become enthusiastic and creative and generally learn quickly. This was seen, for example, in a Year 9 lesson on *Macbeth*, which involved pupils considering how scenes from the play might be acted. Pupils were given clear directions on what was required, then allowed the scope to exercise their initiative and work together on the task. They were keen to discuss the text and to consider the exact meaning of passages. A similar level of involvement and good learning was seen when Year 11

pupils discussed well-chosen passages on the theme of war. When books are marked frequently and teachers provide good quality guidance on what pupils need to do to improve, pupils take pride in their work and have an improved sense of direction. Many of the cover sheets that accompany written work are used especially well in Years 10 and 11 to provide a thorough evaluation of the completed tasks. Additionally, some of the written assessments of Year 9 pupils' speaking and listening skills provide good, attainable targets for improvement.

109. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, and this mostly occurs in Year 9, teachers do not sufficiently take into account pupils' prior attainment. This means that the tasks set are unrealistic and some pupils simply do not understand what is required of them. The result of this is that they become inattentive, give up on the task and behave inappropriately. Time is wasted and learning does not take place or is minimal. In other instances, pupils are set tasks that have not been satisfactorily explained to them. In particular, teachers do not provide models of how pupils might answer more difficult questions to the extent that might be expected.
110. There are a number of classes taught by more than one teacher in each of the three years. In particular, the number of such 'split' classes in Year 9 is relatively high, including classes that are taught by three teachers, or, in the case of one class, four teachers. In some instances, this does not adversely affect standards. In a number of others, however, there is a lack of continuity and this does adversely affect pupils' learning so that pupils in these classes do not make enough progress. In two Year 9 classes seen the teacher meets the class for one lesson in a fortnight. This results in pupils losing track of the subject and teachers having little knowledge of pupils.
111. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory, despite the commitment of the head of department. At present temporary or supply teachers undertake a relatively high proportion of the teaching and a significant proportion of the unsatisfactory or less effective teaching occurs in these lessons. The difficulties created by 'split' classes relate to wider timetabling issues beyond the control of the head of department. The use of data in assessing pupils' progress and its use in guiding curriculum planning are unsatisfactory, but teachers have not received the training in these matters that might be expected. The department is managed well on a day-to-day basis and there is a spirit of co-operation amongst staff.
112. Progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. Progress and teaching were satisfactory in all three years. Now they are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory in Year 9.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Lessons are planned with clear objectives so pupils know what they are to do.
- The department has successfully introduced the National Numeracy strategy.

Areas for improvement

- Lower and middle attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not achieving standards that are high enough because teachers do not expect enough of them.
- Teachers do not control behaviour well enough to ensure that pupils pay attention in lessons.
- Standards and the quality of teaching have declined since the previous inspection because data has not been made available to the department.
- Some marking is cursory and there are examples where pupils' work is not marked.

113. Results in the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds were above average in comparison with all schools, but below the average for similar schools. Results in mathematics were worse than those in English and science. Over the last six years, there has been no clear trend in the results and little difference between the results of boys and girls.
114. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average but pupils' results in mathematics were significantly below those in most other subjects they studied in the school.
115. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of algebra when they solve simultaneous equations both graphically and by elimination. Lower attaining pupils have a sound understanding of place value, but have difficulty in ordering decimal numbers. Lower attaining pupils calculate missing angles in triangles and straight lines, while middle attainers calculate angles of polygons and intersecting lines. Higher attaining pupils structure their answers well when solving problems using Pythagoras's theorem.
116. Standards by the end of Year 11 are broadly average. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement for all pupils given their attainment at the end of Year 9. There are examples where pupils are learning well, particularly the higher attaining pupils, but for a significant minority of pupils there is a tendency to plan work at a lower level than their capabilities. Higher attainers possess sound skills in problem solving and have a good understanding of sine and cosine rules. Middle attaining pupils apply Pythagoras's theorem to simple problems with right-angled triangles, but have difficulty in applying it to practical problems. Lower attaining pupils do not really understand the idea of how to calculate areas of rectangles; they can calculate areas of simple rectangles using the formula, but cannot apply it to compound shapes. The numerical skills of low attaining pupils are weak. Although they can multiply by single-digit numbers, their understanding of place value is weaker and they have difficulty changing metric units, for example when changing metres to centimetres.
117. Pupils with special educational needs generally make progress in line with the rest of the pupils in Year 9, but in Years 10 and 11 progress is slower than the higher attaining pupils. Although they are placed in small classes and learning support assistants work with teachers to ensure that pupils are integrated in the lessons, pupils do not always stay on task and so have difficulty in understanding concepts.
118. Standards of literacy are generally average throughout the subject. Higher attaining pupils describe their results of investigations clearly and coherently, but lower attainers make many errors in spellings, particularly when writing mathematical terms, and teachers do not always correct them. Overall standards of presentation vary in mathematics. The majority of pupils set their work out clearly and develop

sound skills in structuring answers. There is a minority who do not take a pride in their work and work is not always completed.

119. The contribution that other subjects make to develop pupils' skills in understanding and using number is unsatisfactory. Teachers have not had sufficient training to acquire understanding of the needs of the National Numeracy Strategy. There is no whole school policy that would bring together good practice across departments so that mathematical skills can be enhanced and consolidated further. This lack of policy also leads to variations in the provision that different subjects make for numeracy. It is good in science, for example, but unsatisfactory in information and communication technology.
120. Overall the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory and results in unsatisfactory learning. The quality of teaching is better in Year 9, where it is satisfactory. Overall expectations of what pupils are expected to achieve are too low in the middle and lower sets in Years 10 and 11. This results in insufficient motivation and progress and there is underachievement for the pupils involved. For example, in a class of lower attaining pupils, the teacher set the pupils the task of investigating how to calculate the area of a parallelogram. Pupils spent too long on practical tasks and did not achieve the objective of the lesson. The tasks were of a low level and pupils spent too long chatting as they cut and pasted pieces of paper. In the better lessons, questions are asked that deepen pupils' understanding by challenging pupils to think about applying their understanding to new situations. This is not always the case and in the weaker lessons, pupils are simply given the answer. Teachers plan the majority of lessons so that there are clear objectives and an effective structure to the lesson. However, insufficient use is made of computers. In the best lessons teachers build on previous learning. They checked, for example, that pupils had a good recall of the circumference of a circle before they started to investigate how to calculate the area of a circle. In other lessons, teachers miss opportunities to give the pupils the chance to explain the method they used to work out answers.
121. Management of pupils is generally satisfactory in Year 9; it is weaker in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, the management of pupils is good and pupils are alert and concentrating well. However, in the weaker lessons, teachers fail to capture the pupils' interest and attention and to insist on high standards of behaviour. The teacher does not always insist that all are attentive when discussing the outcome of their investigations and consequently pupils do not fully understand the work, which leads to further confusion. Instead, pupils chatter quietly or write notes or text messages to each other. The use of homework is unsatisfactory. In the better lessons, it is set regularly and tends to relate to class work well. In other groups, work is not set regularly and occasionally, when it is set, is not completed and teachers do not follow up the missed homework. The quality of marking is inconsistent and marking varies between teachers. There is some good quality marking where teachers indicate where pupils have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. Some marking, however, is just crosses so pupils do not know where they have gone wrong. Other work is unmarked or pupils mark their own work too frequently so teachers cannot assess what the pupils understand and cannot track their progress.
122. The day-to-day management of mathematics is good, and there is a good level of support for all teachers. However, the leadership and management of mathematics are unsatisfactory, as there have been no effective strategies to raise standards. This is mainly because there has been insufficient information and guidance from senior management that is necessary to carry out the analysis of data. The capacity for improvement is better. The majority of teachers work well together and are keen to

raise achievement in mathematics. In Year 9, teachers have adopted the National Numeracy Strategy and in these lessons teaching is satisfactory. Nevertheless many weaknesses remain. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use computers to enhance their mathematics. There are unsatisfactory arrangements for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment as they progress through the school. Although regular tests take place, there is no system that standardises results or sets them against National Curriculum criteria. Pupils have little understanding of their attainment and what they need to do to improve except from the reports to parents where targets for improvement are generally sound.

123. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen from above average to average and the quality of teaching from very good to unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Year 9 so pupils do well.
- The department makes good use of data to change the way they work.
- Good management is spreading the best practice across the department.

Areas for improvement

- The teaching in Years 10 and 11 is not as good as that in Year 9 because the work is not as demanding.
- Teachers do not set targets when marking books so pupils are not clear how to improve their work.
- There are not enough textbooks or computers.

124. Results in the 2002 national tests for 14 year olds were above average and average when compared with similar schools. Boys did slightly better than girls. Results have improved at a similar rate to the national average since 1999. Results were similar to those in English and better than those in mathematics were. At GCSE, results were average in 2002; they had been above national averages and improving steadily until 2002. A higher proportion than is usual study for single science at GCSE and these pupils did well compared with their performance in other subjects. Those that studied for double science gained similar results to their other subjects.

125. Standards are now above average at the end of Years 9 and 11; standards in Year 11 have returned to those reflected in the examination results prior to 2002. Pupils' achievement is good in Year 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining pupils are able to express themselves well, using scientific language appropriately; they can make good scientific deductions and respond well to difficult investigations. The presentation of their work is good and, when they have the chance, they show good research skills. Lower attaining pupils have developed good practical skills and understand the basic concepts of the subject. They showed good understanding in the topics which impacted on themselves and their lives, such as those on genetics and evolution.

126. Teaching is good in Year 9 and so pupils learn well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are well qualified with good knowledge of their subjects. In all years, lessons are prepared well with clear objectives so that pupils know what is expected of them. In good lessons, more common in Year 9,

expectations are high, the pace is brisk and pupils are swept up by the enthusiasm of the teacher so learning is good. In one lesson on energy changes where pupils were given a lot of experiments to carry out, they rose to the challenge, organised themselves efficiently, completed the tasks set and learned a lot. Where the work is less demanding, more often in Years 10 and 11, the pace is slower and the pupils' learning is less successful. In other lessons, classes are too teacher directed and insufficiently challenged. Class management is generally good but the arrangement of pupils in groups is often haphazard. Pupils come to lessons willing to work and respond well to good teaching. They are keen to contribute to discussions and to answer questions. Pupils also take a pride in their written work and their exercise books are well presented. The very few instances of poor behaviour were handled effectively by teachers.

127. The use of assessment is good. The department analyses the results of external examinations carefully and makes appropriate adjustments to the curriculum. For example, GCSE results were below the level expected in 2002 and the department has developed a revision strategy for this year to try to avoid the same situation recurring. Pupils have annual targets and the department uses regular end of topic tests to give National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. This means that pupils are well aware of how they are measuring up to the target set at the beginning of the year. The marking of books is satisfactory, often with helpful comments, but there is no standard scheme for marking and the setting of short-term targets to help pupils to improve is haphazard. Resources are limited and the lack of textbooks severely restricts pupils' learning by not providing access to a convenient source of support material. Work with computers is very limited by lack of equipment.
128. The management of the department is good and the teachers work together as a team. Teaching is monitored on a regular basis and there is a system for checking exercise books by the head of department. Teachers receive good feedback and this helps to spread the good practice in the department. Almost all of the analysis of results has to be carried out by the department as, in the past, this has not been provided by the senior management. The two newly qualified teachers in the department are supported well but they have been given full timetables which greatly reduces the opportunities for in-house training and puts these teachers under inappropriate stress. There are good links established with the science teachers in the middle schools and the department is working with them on the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
129. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress in maintaining above average standards.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- Leadership and management are good so standards have improved.
- Assessment, including self-assessment, is good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils are not made to do enough homework.
- Marking of written work is not good enough to improve pupils' standards of literacy.

130. Results in 2002 were average, but pupils did worse in art and design than they did in most of their other subjects. There were very significant staffing changes in 2002. The head of department was absent for two terms and a senior experienced art teacher left; temporary teachers and a newly qualified teacher replaced them. Staffing is now back to normal with permanent, qualified, specialist teachers.
131. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average; this represents satisfactory achievement. A significant feature of standards in Year 9 is that there is no low attainment. The standard of three-dimensional work is generally good. However, three-dimensional work depicting abstract concepts such as 'The seven deadly sins' is proving too sophisticated for a small number of low attaining pupils. Girls do better than boys in Year 9; their work contains more depth and detail. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average overall and this represents satisfactory achievement. Standards are also average for pupils who are taking art as part of the expressive arts course. All pupils in the present Year 11 are following this course but it is being offered as an option course from now on. Pupils' work on the theme of 'Fantasy Myths and Legends' is very successful in capturing pupils' interest and imagination. The majority of boys have good standards in the three-dimensional modelling aspect of this work. Standards in Year 10 are higher than in Year 11 and are well above average, especially in three-dimensional work. The use of colour is bold and dramatic in all years. As at the time of the previous inspection, where work is done from direct observation standards are above average. However, there is little of this work carried out. In all years the standard of work produced for homework is below average as too little time and effort is spent on it.
132. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have very good knowledge and expertise in the subject. Planning is good and themes are made interesting for pupils. A minority of average and below average pupils depend too much on the teacher so they do not have an adequate understanding of how to experiment and extend their own ideas. However, in all years there is insufficient attention to marking pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar so their literacy skills are not improving as quickly as they should. There is some good use of information and communication technology for research but this is not extensive. The department has only now received a digital camera and printer and this lack has hindered development in this area. Assessment is good. It includes good strategies and support for pupils' self-assessment. Self-evaluation is an integral part of all units of work and helps pupils to assess their own progress and understand what can be improved. All pupils get individual attention in all lessons. This contributes to satisfactory progress for all pupils.
133. Leadership and management are good; there is a clear vision for the department, and strategies to improve. There was excellent support for the newly qualified teacher on the return of the head of department. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These aspects are considered in the work of artists and art movements. There is a department link with The Gambia and some African schools in other areas. This includes mutual support and exchanges of ideas, materials and artefacts.
134. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and examination results have risen.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Pupils have good opportunities to work with specialist agencies.
- Whole-day workshops enable pupils to work as teams and to develop their skills of participation.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils are underachieving because insufficient time is allocated to teaching the subject.
- For most pupils there is little planned development of citizenship skills in other subject areas.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunity to practise responsible citizenship skills in the school.

135. Overall standards in citizenship are unsatisfactory. The introduction of the subject into the personal, social and health education course has resulted in insufficient time for either subject to develop the depth of understanding, or to use and develop the skills of good citizenship.
136. Standards in Year 9 are below average and pupils are underachieving. Pupils are gaining an understanding of the various services employed by local government. They have discussed the purpose of laws and the stages that support their development. This is supported by work in religious education. However, lower attaining pupils lack an understanding of the real purpose of laws in society. Use of paired and group work encourages the development of communication skills although lower attaining pupils require support to remain on task and to achieve any depth of discussion. Pupils have very limited opportunities to plan their own work or to develop ideas through thoughtful extended writing. Most pupils respond to short answer, oral questions with interest, but there is little opportunity for them to develop their reasoning skills. They produce little written work other than recording the lesson activities, and there are very few opportunities for explanations and justifications of their own views.
137. Standards in Year 11 are below average. Pupils have limited understanding of finance and the different forms of investment. When challenged they respond well, for example about the choice of methods of savings. However, unless challenged they fail to be self-motivated or think deeply about the material. Pupils can work well in groups, although there is limited opportunity to demonstrate independent initiative in their work. A minority of pupils become passive during lessons, making minimum effort and relying on the teacher to provide information. There is little opportunity to work on sustained projects or investigations in order to develop skills. Through the present method of separate lessons devoted to citizenship there is insufficient time for pupils to cover the required syllabus or develop understanding of the issues involved. As a result the achievement of pupils overall is unsatisfactory.
138. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers share clear lesson objectives with their pupils and in most lessons these are reviewed at the end. Teachers use a variety of activities to interest and involve their pupils and the pace of lessons is generally good. However, the extensive number of staff from different departments teaching individual lessons means they cannot build on their own experiences to improve their expertise. There are no opportunities for staff to meet to exchange good practice or to discuss the development of pupils' skills. As a consequence of the two-week gap between the lessons in a module, and the lack of regular homework, it is difficult for teachers to maintain continuity or to enable pupils to develop a theme to any depth of understanding. The use of photocopied sheets instead of books or leaflets reduces the impact of information and fails to interest pupils.

139. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of active citizenship around the school as representatives on the school council and through organising charity fundraising. Peer counselling is developing a sense of responsibility and service, and in sport pupils have the opportunity to assist in the training of their peers. When pupils are asked to use their initiative through activities such as the Kielder Challenge they rise to the occasion. The pupils are rightly proud of the support they provide for pupils in The Gambia, promoting a sense of responsibility for others in developing countries. This involves a relatively small number of pupils however. Although the school welcomes individuals willing to take responsibility, such as in the organisation of the newly formed Christian Union group, a significant number of pupils are reluctant to volunteer for responsibility or for voluntary work. So far there has been no co-ordination of activities or volunteers in order to ensure that all pupils gain experience of active citizenship.
140. The teacher responsible for co-ordinating citizenship has made useful contacts with a variety of agencies outside the school enabling the pupils to learn about their work from the agencies themselves. The use of whole-day workshops, introduced last year for Year 9, is to be extended for all year groups and pupils will benefit from working as teams, in association with professionals from a variety of walks of life. The co-ordinator has correctly identified the areas for development and the subject is well placed to extend its influence into the work of other subject areas. Nevertheless, the deficiencies in staffing and the timetable, which are outside the control of the teacher responsible, are a result of unsatisfactory management.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching in textiles results in above average standards.
- Standards in Year 9 have improved significantly since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Higher attainers do not always get work that is hard enough for them.
- Some teachers do not control behaviour well enough in lessons on resistant materials.
- The systems for checking on the performance of both teachers and pupils are not good enough to allow areas for improvement to be identified.

141. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average. Girls performed better than boys did overall but their results were lower than those they obtained in most other subjects. GCSE results in 2002 were better than the previous year overall and reflect a rising trend.
142. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. In general design skills, evaluation and analysis are less well developed than making skills. This is evident in most material areas. The way that lessons are planned in modules that are taught between different teachers is leading to some problems. When pupils move from one teacher to the next, insufficient account is taken by some teachers of the standards pupils have reached in previous modules. So it is that the progress made with some teachers is better than the progress made by others and higher attainers, in particular, are not always stretched as much as they should be.
143. Standards in Year 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. However, standards vary considerably across

the department. They are consistently above average in electronics and textiles where pupils are confident in using materials and processes, work with accuracy and precision and show interest and enthusiasm. Where standards are good, pupils take care in presentation and work is characterised by effective research and evaluation; knowledge and understanding is developed well and pupils apply this effectively when designing their products. Whilst making skills are usually good, designing skills are often underdeveloped and lack the rigour required for high achievement. In general, the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation are less well developed; design specifications and subsequent analyses are not being used as the basis for performance criteria in projects; this is particularly evident within the design development stage of projects and often leads to superficial design activity. The quality of pupils' presentation of coursework is good; it is very good in textiles.

144. Throughout the school, pupils make good use of information and communication technology.
145. The quality of teaching in Year 9, and the learning it promotes, is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are usually planned well, and the pace of lessons is often brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of pupils of all levels of attainment and pupils with special educational needs progress at a rate that matches those of other pupils. However, work is not sufficiently matched to the standards already reached by some pupils and activities such as copying from previous pupils' work are unacceptable, as pupils learn nothing from it at all. The department has identified gifted and talented pupils; however, schemes of work and lesson activities are not sufficiently varied to ensure a consistent challenge for the most able. Homework is regularly set across the department and is used to reinforce learning. The department has recently established a new assessment system to improve the assessment and monitoring of pupils' performance; however, whilst work is regularly marked, assessment is not being used effectively to provide constructive feedback or set targets for future improvement.
146. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is some good teaching in textiles and food technology where pupils are actively engaged in activities, the pace of lessons is brisk and clear teaching and learning objectives are met. However, the poor behaviour of some pupils, because they are bored by the lesson content or the work is too easy for them, is not controlled by some teachers. Overall, lessons are planned well and the standard of marking is good. Teachers regularly mark pupils work against clear criteria and use positive feedback and suggestions for improvement.
147. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are satisfactory. They are good in food technology, textiles and electronics where pupils are interested in their lessons and work co-operatively and concentrate for long periods. Pupils are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety. In resistant materials, behaviour is unsatisfactory; a significant number of pupils do not work hard enough and are uncooperative. The poor learning environment in these lessons prevents most pupils from making satisfactory progress and those who want to learn are prevented from doing so. The disaffection of pupils in these lessons is largely due to unsatisfactory teaching from a series of temporary staff.
148. The department makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Teachers reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary in lessons, emphasise it in their planning and highlight it through wall displays in classrooms. A

good example of this is the sensory vocabulary used in food technology. In addition, the use of writing frames and templates in textiles and food technology supports the least able pupils. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactorily developed through activities such as accurate measurement, marking out and weighing.

149. Overall, the leadership and management of design and technology are satisfactory. The new head of department is building upon an established platform, understands many of the current limitations in provision and has identified a development plan for future improvement. The department is beginning to use self-evaluation as a tool for improvement, although scrutiny of teaching pupils' performance is not good enough to fully identify areas for improvement. Whilst there is some liaison between the school and the middle schools it is not sufficiently developed to ensure that work from Year 8 is developed and built upon in Year 9. This occasionally leads to a lack of challenge for some pupils, particularly the most able when work previously covered is repeated.
150. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards at GCSE have improved steadily and standards at the end of Year 9, which were previously below average, are now average. Whilst the new head of department has made good progress towards sharing good practice and developing a more co-ordinated approach, weaknesses in assessment, monitoring and evaluating performance still exist.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The end of unit tests are used very well to improve the progress made by pupils.
- Resources are used well to motivate pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils in lessons and the progress of higher attaining pupils is sometimes too slow.
- In some classes, the teacher does not control behaviour sufficiently to prevent it disrupting the whole class.

151. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were average. The results are an improvement on the previous year but are broadly in line with the results in other years. Pupils did as well in geography as they did in the other subjects that they studied.
152. Standards in Year 9 are average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement given pupils' standards when they entered the school. Pupils possess an appropriate range of geographical skills, such as locating places on maps and drawing graphs of climate. The work is mostly accurate but poor attitudes of the minority result in lower standards than expected because maps and diagrams are untidy or left incomplete. Pupils are knowledgeable about global topics and know a range of terms such as the 'Richter scale' in work on earthquakes. They know where and why earthquakes happen and understand the effect on people, but many do not show depth of understanding in discussion or written work. Higher attaining pupils, for example, used a series of photographs to gain information on the effect of earthquakes, but in oral work answers were brief and lacked explanation. Most pupils write clearly and pay attention to accuracy in spelling and punctuation but the quality of writing of many pupils is limited because they use vague terms such as 'nice' climate or 'good soils' and do not show how well they understand the topic.
153. The standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' standards at the end of Year 9. Pupils are knowledgeable about topics in physical geography such as earthquake studies, and of global issues such as the management of flooding in the Mississippi and Ganges valleys. They understand how the USA is better able to manage the problems of flooding compared to a developing country like Bangladesh. Many pupils however, write in general terms and do not explain their answers enough. They draw maps and diagrams to illustrate the topic but do not make enough use of them to explain the reasons for the floods. Pupils build on their map and graphical skills gained in Year 9. Lower attaining pupils in Year 10, for example, were able to identify compass directions and measure distances on a map of the local area, but discussion about the time taken to travel to work was weak because they did not develop answers enough. High attaining pupils draw accurate bar graphs about the annual rates of erosion of the coastline at Holderness and write detailed accounts. Attainment is limited, however, because they do not evaluate the different coastal protection schemes that are used or label maps and diagrams fully.
154. Teaching is satisfactory in Year 9. The objectives of lessons are shared with pupils and teachers usually consolidate these through discussion. In the better lessons this is effective because many pupils take part and improve their understanding of topics. In other lessons, however, many are passive, their concentration weakens and progress at times is slow. Teachers make good use of a range of resources, including computers, and this stimulates interest and engages pupils well. Low attaining pupils in a lesson about earthquakes, for example, made sound progress because the resources were well matched to their needs, while pupils with special education needs achieved well with the help of additional adult learning support. Marking is often good with helpful comments that inform pupils well about the quality of the work. However, the quality of marking varies from one class to another and not

enough attention is given to the correction of grammatical inaccuracies of some lower attaining groups. The end of module assessments, on the other hand, are very good and make a substantial contribution to the progress that pupils make in their studies. In some lessons, however, pupils do not make enough progress because teachers do not expect enough of them in the level of work and they are given too long to complete tasks.

155. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are well qualified and have good knowledge and understanding of topics. Explanations are clear; concepts are explained well in discussion and this results in most pupils making sound progress on the GCSE course. The more successful teachers manage the pupils very well. They set time controls for completion of tasks and closely monitor the progress that is made. On other occasions a combination of weak class management and poor pupil attitudes results in poor progress of all pupils in the group. Teachers do not always set challenging tasks for pupils. In Year 10, for example, too much time was allowed for undemanding colouring tasks and higher attainers in Year 11 were not sufficiently challenged to develop oral and written answers. As a result they were not consistently working to their full capabilities. Teachers give very good support to pupils both in lessons and through the marking of work, but learning is very teacher controlled with insufficient opportunities for independence and self-reliance on the part of pupils.
156. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. The day-to-day management is good with clear direction about the work of the subject through policies and schemes of work. Teachers are supported well, but the monitoring of teaching and marking is unsatisfactory. The national data that can be used to review the performance of GCSE pupils is only now being made available by the new school management. Consequently analyses of results and taking effective action to improve standards are not an established feature of the department's work. The development plan identifies appropriate targets for attention, but although key technical words are displayed in rooms, the planning and implementation of strategies for promoting literacy and numeracy are not yet in place. The sharing of information about pupils' standards in geography at the end of Year 8 is variable with the relevant information being available from some middle schools, but not all.
157. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory and standards have been maintained.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers work hard, provide good teaching in Years 10 and 11, and ensure that pupils achieve well in examinations.
- Pupils respond positively and try hard to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- The analysis of information about pupils' progress, and the use of conclusions to further improve performance, are insufficiently developed.
- The strategies for strengthening the literacy skills of all pupils, and particularly those in Year 9, are not fully embedded in the work of the department.
- The use of computers is under-developed.

158. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were above the national average. Pupils performed better in history than they did in most of the other subjects. There has been an upward trend in results for the past three years.
159. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement given that most pupils join the school at the start of Year 9 with average levels of attainment. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics being studied. In one lesson, for example, higher attaining pupils showed good understanding of the extent of changes to Parliamentary representation resulting from the Great Reform Act of 1832. Not only did they recall that the act had removed many 'rotten and pocket' boroughs but they also knew that it did not give the right to vote to many middle class men or to any working class men. Pupils readily linked that to the rise of Chartism in the 1830s and this aided their understanding of what Chartists were and what they began to campaign for. The written work of higher attaining pupils is fluent and shows that they have developed the skills that enable them to analyse historical information and to select sufficient and relevant evidence to support their opinions. However, lower attaining pupils struggle to write convincing answers to questions calling for analysis and the use of relevant supporting evidence. So, while they describe events well in such answers as how a child might feel on moving from a rural village to one of the new big industrial towns, they are less successful in accounting for the differing attitudes that canal, dock and factory owners had towards the building of the Liverpool to Manchester railway.
160. Standards in Year 11 are above average and this represents good achievement. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work, know how well they are learning, and are keen to do well in examinations. In a Year 10 lesson on how the Nazis thought about, and treated, people they regarded as 'undesirables', pupils showed good recall and understanding of the methods Hitler used to gain power. Their responses to their teacher's questions included such words and phrases as "fear", "force", "giving them jobs", and "he used propaganda". These answers came from across the range of attainment; one pupil with special educational needs, for example, pointed out that many middle class people voted for Hitler. Pupils went on to apply this good level of understanding to the question of why ordinary Germans did nothing to stop inhumane treatment of minority groups when Hitler was in power. The discussion about whether, if they had lived near an asylum in Southern Germany in the 1930s, they would have known about, or suspected, the methods being employed to deal with mentally ill people was lively and well argued. Similarly, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils displayed a good grasp of why there was such a high mortality rate among people undergoing surgical operations in early 19th century England, and of the advance in anaesthetics that played a part in lowering the death rate during operations. The differences in attainment between lower and higher attaining pupils again show in their written work. Pupils of higher attainment use their good grasp of topics, and developing analytical skills, to produce answers that successfully address the question, as in work requiring the evaluation of the relative influence of Michael Collins, James Craig, and David Lloyd George on the decision to partition Ireland in 1921, while the written answers of pupils of lower attainment lack a well-planned structure and fail to select and prioritise the supporting evidence sufficiently well to produce coherent arguments that stay focused on the point. So, although these pupils work hard to produce attractively presented descriptions in coursework on the Chartist Settlement at Dodford, their work lacks the degree of analysis and argument necessary to achieve higher GCSE grades. In work that calls for such qualities lower attaining pupils sometimes include information that is superfluous, and wander off the point.

161. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Year 9. There are three specialist teachers of history but, at the time of the inspection, one of them was on long-term sick leave. Pupils in their classes benefit from good standards of teaching, although the pupils of the absentee teacher have experienced a succession of short-term supply teachers and the standard of teaching is unsatisfactory in those classes. One Year 9 class is taught by a non-specialist who receives, and values, good support from the head of history. Lessons move at a satisfactory pace and pupils of all levels of attainment acquire good oral knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. Whilst teaching strategies aimed at improving the literacy standards of pupils have been adopted in some lessons they do not yet feature with sufficient prominence in the work of all teachers. Teaching strategies that help lower attainers to develop the important basic skills essential to greater success in analytical historical writing are increasingly used but are not yet fully embedded in the subject's practice.
162. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good. Teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject, allied to the experience they have of the demands on pupils made by the GCSE course, mean that lessons are purposeful and focus well on examination requirements. For example, in a Year 11 lesson the tasks given to pupils throughout the lesson developed their learning well. By the time of the final summing up, the teacher's clear explanation of how the introduction of anaesthetics led to more deaths during operations allowed pupils to speculate accurately on the reason for that – in the words of one pupil, "doctors could take their time and do more serious operations." The teacher's emphasis on the marks available for each answer in the homework then set provided good guidance for success in examination answers. The quality of teachers' marking is good and pupils benefit from comments that show why marks and grades have been allocated and what they should do to improve. However, in all years, teachers do not make enough use of computers to help pupils develop their research and presentation skills.
163. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The regular teachers share the commitment to the continuous improvement of pupil learning and achievement that is displayed by the head of history. Whilst the subject documents do not articulate clearly enough such expectations of all teachers as those they use, for example agreed strategies for improving pupils' literacy, this is more a reflection of the failure of senior management to provide leadership on such matters. Similarly, the department has not been provided with the information on standards that would allow the head of department to identify areas for improvement. The head of history leads by hard work and good example, promoting a positive and open attitude towards any initiatives that promise improved teaching and learning.
164. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards of teaching and learning have been maintained and GCSE results have improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strength

- The new co-ordinator is developing new systems and is fully aware of the subject's strengths and weaknesses.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is poor and pupils underachieve badly as a result.
- Pupils are disgruntled by the lack of specialist teachers and the number of temporary staff.
- Leadership and management have been poor and have resulted in poor progress being made since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' experiences of information and communication technology within other subjects are patchy and statutory curriculum requirements are not met in Years 9 to 11.

165. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were far below the national average and pupils underachieved badly. Many pupils failed to complete coursework, which was one of the reasons for the poor results; coursework was also marked incorrectly. There was very little difference between boys and girls. Pupils did far worse in information and communication technology than in any of their other subjects. Results have fallen significantly since 1999 and are now far worse than those attained at the time of the previous inspection.

166. Standards by the end of Year 9 are well below average and achievement is poor. Pupils have a well below average knowledge and understanding of computer modelling. For example, whilst higher attaining pupils know how to use the *AutoSum* feature, middle attaining pupils do not understand the concept of this shortcut facility. Pupils have little opportunity to use systems and control facilities and are underachieving within this element. Design and technology is one of the main curriculum areas where pupils use information and communication technology and are also assessed. However, the subject currently makes very little contribution to the pupils' knowledge, understanding or skills in information and communication technology.

167. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well below average; this represents a poor level of achievement. The majority of pupils do not follow a course of study in information and communication technology and only use computers occasionally in other subjects; their achievement is poor. Standards on the GCSE course are well below average. Pupils have a well below average knowledge of system design; lower attainers know that they need to research and evaluate the needs of the client but do this in only a superficial way. Higher attainers have an above average knowledge of databases; they construct a database and use multiple query routines well. Middle attaining pupils have a basic knowledge of presentation techniques; they use colour gradients for backgrounds but are unable to discuss why one presentation is better than another. Lower attainers use only basic image manipulation techniques whilst middle attaining pupils can transpose information from one application to another. Most pupils have only a weak understanding of control systems. Pupils have a poor knowledge of technical vocabulary and do not use technical terms widely enough in their verbal or written answers. Pupils have gaps in their coursework, some of which has not been marked, and are unaware of how to improve their work.

168. Pupils with special educational needs make poor progress; they have insufficient support and teachers do not match the work closely enough to meet their needs. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls. There is no specific provision for pupils who are gifted and talented although many of these pupils do make good use of the computer facilities during the lunch breaks. Many of these are confident programmers and have a high level knowledge of website construction. The majority of pupils in Years 9 to 11 do not have access to their full National Curriculum entitlement.
169. There are not enough specialist teachers of the subject and this has resulted in pupils having a succession of temporary staff, which in turn has led to poor pupil achievement.
170. In Year 9, because information and communication technology is supposed to be delivered within other subjects there was very little teaching available to observe during the inspection and a judgement on the quality of teaching has not been made. However, pupils' learning is poor. They get very few opportunities to develop key skills or to practise using the software applications. Most subjects do not actually plan to deliver information and communication technology in a systematic way.
171. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is poor. Teachers do not have the subject knowledge; for example, in one Year 11 class the teacher did not know what CPU stood for. There are insufficient specialist teachers, with one group not having a permanent teacher since September of Year 11; pupils are disgruntled with the situation and their work has suffered because of this. Pupils' work is not always marked; this is particularly the case with pupils who are taking GCSE this year. One group's GCSE coursework has not been marked and they are unaware of how to improve their work. Pupils' attitudes are generally unsatisfactory; there are occasions when pupils do not listen to the teacher's instructions and are therefore uncertain how to proceed. This was the case in a Year 9 class when the teacher was explaining about 'absolutes' within a spreadsheet; most pupils were fiddling with the keyboards and were not paying attention. In a Year 10 English class where the pupils were typing their autobiographies, many pupils were wandering around the room, girls were putting on their makeup and boys were playing computer games; in this lesson pupils made very poor progress. Teachers' expectations are too low; work is not planned to extend the very able or to support pupils with special educational needs. The structure of lessons is poor, and even when teachers do inform pupils what they are going to learn they make comments such as, "You will be bored, the topic is boring, you need to learn this boring stuff."!
172. The quality of leadership and management has been poor since the previous inspection when information and communication technology was a key issue for improvement. It is only in the last year since the arrival of the current co-ordinator that the situation has begun to improve. There is now a much better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. New computer systems have been installed although these are still not stable and crashed in a number of lessons, which led to pupils not doing anything in the lesson. Assessment systems are in the process of being rewritten although they are currently unsatisfactory. The new co-ordinator has to spend too much time supporting staff who are not competent to deliver the subject; this is taking him away from his main task of managing the subject throughout the school. The co-ordinator also carries out many other senior management responsibilities and again these are distractions from his main role.

173. Progress since the previous inspection has been poor. The quality of teaching is now far worse and standards have fallen.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strength

- Teaching in Spanish is good and pupils learn well as a result.

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching, especially in the management of behaviour, in French and German leads to pupils underachieving.
- Girls do not perform as well as they should in French and German because they are not made to work hard enough.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills.

174. In 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in the GCSE examination in French and German was well below the national average, but was well above in Spanish. In French and German these results were worse than the previous three years and pupils, especially the girls, performed worse in these two subjects than they did in most other subjects they took in the school. In Spanish, however, results in 2002 were significantly better than they had been in previous years. Almost all pupils are entered for the GCSE and gain grades A* to G in all three subjects.
175. All pupils study French in Year 9 and the vast majority study either Spanish or German as well; a small minority of pupils currently studies two languages in Years 10 and 11.
176. Standards in Year 9 in French are below average. This represents unsatisfactory achievement as the higher attaining pupils are not making as much progress as they should. Staffing and organisational difficulties have meant that several classes have up to three different teachers and pupils have made slow progress, sometimes repeating work that one teacher has covered without moving on quickly enough. By the end of Year 9, most pupils understand a range of topics such as descriptions of where they live but few are able to distinguish the difference between the past and present in French. For example, few are able to say what they did last weekend and what they do most weekends.
177. Pupils are better at listening to tapes and reading than they are at speaking and writing. They regularly have to make notes from long extracts that contain some complicated expressions, which they do willingly and well. Much of their speaking, however, uses short, simple sentences and too often they have poor pronunciation because it is not corrected. In lessons where teachers pay attention to the errors that are being made, pupils develop good pronunciation. When writing, pupils are not often given opportunities to write at length which means that the higher attaining pupils are at a disadvantage. A few more can write paragraphs expressing their likes and dislikes, for example, and pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in writing because of the help that they are given. At the end of one lesson in French, for example, pupils could write about their ideal house and include details about the number of garages or the size of the living room.
178. In German and Spanish, standards are below average by the end of Year 9 because pupils have only just begun to learn the language. During the year they make

satisfactory progress in listening and reading but, in German particularly, pronunciation and fluency are weak because of a lack of practice and many pupils are reluctant to work from memory. This means that the higher attaining pupils make slightly less progress than they should.

179. Standards are below average in French and German by the end of Year 11. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement. Pupils have not achieved as well as they might because there has been a large turnover in staff recently and, as in Year 9, there are many classes that have several teachers so there have been problems with continuity. A few staff also have problems ensuring that an orderly classroom is maintained where pupils can hear the instructions. Some pupils learning French and German have poor attitudes to learning a language and behave badly which means they do not make as much progress as they should; they find it difficult to concentrate for the full hour of the lessons.
180. Pupils make some progress in a range of topics during Years 10 and 11 in French and German, such as eating healthily or being able to talk about their school subjects but they still find writing accurately very difficult. The writing of higher attaining pupils lacks some of the more complex language that would be expected at the higher levels. They are not encouraged to use a variety of expressions, linking their phrases with little beyond 'and' or 'because'. Many pupils have difficulty in recalling basic grammatical rules, especially in German, but in some lessons in French and Spanish, they are beginning to make careful notes. Speaking skills are weaker than they should be for most pupils, including the higher attaining girls, because they do not practise holding sustained conversations often enough in class. Girls are too often content to sit and do as little as possible and because teachers do not challenge them, they are making less progress than they should. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially in listening, because they are given well-planned tasks and are carefully guided by the teacher. Higher attainers make unsatisfactory progress overall because they are not often asked to work on extended or imaginative pieces of work.
181. In Spanish, standards are above average and pupils are achieving well in Years 10 and 11. They are particularly good at understanding tapes and are able to read some longer texts. They are well prepared for the demands of the examination and the speaking element of the examination is very well prepared. Writing remains, however, an area where less is expected of the pupils.
182. The quality of the teaching is unsatisfactory overall in French and German, although it is good in Spanish. There is too much variation in the quality of the teaching and, in particular, in the management of behaviour. In the very good lessons, which were particularly evident in Spanish, teachers planned interesting activities that were well suited to the needs of the pupils. Teachers often prevent misbehaviour by ensuring that pupils are interested in the work they are being asked to do. For example, pupils in a Spanish lesson were expected to act out a café scene including as much information as they could and to learn the dialogue to perform to the class from memory. The pupils rose to the challenge immediately, adding in new language and touches of humour and thoroughly enjoyed the lesson. The best lessons also included a prompt start with teachers insisting on silence when something was being explained. This was in marked contrast to a poor Year 11 lesson in French which started late and where several boys were not silenced at any point so that other pupils could not hear the instructions should they have wanted to.

183. Generally though, instructions are clear; pupils know what they have to do and get on with the work. Too much of the teaching in weak lessons is done in English, which does not give pupils the opportunity to hear a good spoken language. This, coupled by a general inattention to errors, leads to anglicised pronunciation by pupils. A few teachers do not have sufficient command of the language to give instructions in anything other than English.
184. Pupils in most lessons are being encouraged to record their work carefully and to use their notes for reference later, but pupils do not have a textbook each to take home which makes setting homework difficult and leads to over-simplified tasks. Marking usually signals errors but it does not always suggest how the work could have been improved. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are clear about the examination criteria and what is needed to improve their marks but they are sometimes not entered for the higher level papers in listening and reading, so missing out on the top grades. Currently little information and communication technology is used in lesson time as access to computers has been difficult.
185. The leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory although the management at day-to-day level is good. There has therefore been unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection as results in French and German have fallen and behaviour in some classes has deteriorated. The current head of department has an enormous task and has not been given sufficient support or time to allow her to monitor the quality of teaching or the consistency of approach across the department. She has correctly identified the areas most in need of development but the recent turnover in staff has meant that any new initiatives have not had time to be properly implemented. Staff are committed to working hard to improve still further in order to reduce the inconsistencies in teaching quality seen in the department.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers are hardworking excellent musicians who train pupils well.
- The subject is very popular so there are large numbers of pupils receiving instrumental lessons and a very good range of musical activities that develop pupils' performance skills.

Areas for improvement

- The schemes of work do not provide enough detail to ensure all aspects of the examination syllabus are covered.
- There are not enough computers to allow all pupils to make use of music technology.
- Too many lessons overrun because lessons are not structured or planned tightly enough.

186. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were average. There were too few candidates to make judgements on the relative performances of boys and girls or trends in results. Pupils' results in music were not significantly different from those in most other subjects that they studied.
187. Standards are above average in Year 9 and pupils are achieving well. These standards are lower than those indicated by the 2002 teacher assessments, which gave too much emphasis to pupils' performance skills in the overall grades. Higher attaining pupils have well-developed instrumental skills because of the high quality

instrumental tuition they receive from the visiting teachers. They work well in groups and pairs and can compose and perform short pieces with accurate accompaniments on the keyboards. Occasionally they are not challenged enough by the extension materials provided and do not make as much progress as they could. For example, pupils working in groups to perform an introduction to the class performance found the melody line and simple accompaniment too easy and spent some of their time practising other pieces instead of the work set. Those with less experience of music understand the concept of triadic chords but struggle to find the correct starting note on the keyboard. They cannot always maintain their own part accurately within group performances and a small number of pupils occasionally disrupt the others' learning during lessons. All pupils are better at the practical aspects rather than listening to and appraising music. They do not have the opportunity to create, refine or manipulate their pieces because they do not use computers with music software. Contributions to literacy skills are not yet developed, with only a small amount of attention given to the use of key words and musical vocabulary. There are no clear links with numeracy made in lessons.

188. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average and all pupils achieve at a satisfactory level in relation to their work in Year 9. Higher attaining pupils are good instrumentalists and achieve very high standards in performing on their chosen instrument. They can read traditional musical notation well and use this to notate their own compositions. Their understanding of the more theoretical and historical aspects of music is weak for this stage of the GCSE course. For example, in one Year 11 lesson a group of four pupils could not identify when particular styles of music were composed and even suggested that Beethoven was a much earlier composer than Mozart because "he used cadences in his music". Pupils are not always aware of how the aspects they are studying relate to each other. In one lesson the tasks were not connected and pupils found it difficult to see how listening to a movement from Haydn's *Surprise Symphony* could be linked to the music of Steve Reich. Lower attainers enjoy the practical aspects of the course but struggle with composing extended pieces and incorporating harmony. Pupils with access to computers with music software at home are able to present their notated pieces well but this is rarely undertaken in school because of the lack of equipment.
189. Teaching and learning are good in Year 9 but only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. A major strength lies in the teachers' excellent subject knowledge, which they pass on well. Pupils enjoy music lessons because teachers are hardworking and passionate musicians who foster a love for the subject. Pupils respond by working hard and enthusiastically, especially in the extra-curricular activities, resulting in very good relationships. In practical sessions the teachers go round the class giving good support to pupils. However, lessons are not structured tightly enough, so not enough emphasis is placed on productivity and working to strict time limits in individual tasks, especially in Years 10 and 11. Concentration slackens when pupils continue with the same activity for too long, and the pace of the lesson slows down. Consequently lessons frequently overrun and leave no time to summarise what has been learned. Marking of pupils' work is not consistent and as a result pupils are not always aware of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
190. Leadership is good, while management is satisfactory. The organisation of the 12 visiting teachers and the wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities is well managed but takes up a great deal of time and commitment of the head of department. Consequently she has very little time left to ensure the curriculum is well planned and that the teaching within the department is formally monitored. There is a very unusual situation in that the second in department is the current assistant

headteacher and is also the line manager for the head of music. This results in the unsatisfactory situation of the head of department not being able to monitor the teaching within the department formally. Short-term planning does not exist for examination courses and the planning for Year 9 is vague and does not fully relate to the programmes of study. Therefore the schemes of work are unsatisfactory as an aid to planning successful lessons. Assessment procedures are not clear and are not consistently used throughout the department because of the unsatisfactory monitoring and the lack of guidance given by senior management. The department has very good links with the community and its partner schools. A large number of pupils partake in the subsidised instrumental lessons. There are many concerts and productions throughout the year including an annual European concert tour. All these activities are very well supported and ensure that music has a positive impact on the whole school and is an important part of pupils' educational and personal development.

191. There has been only satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards of teaching have been maintained but unsatisfactory progress has been made in improving the quality and use of computers.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well at GCSE, as a result of good teaching.
- Very good provision for extra-curricular sport enables all pupils, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel.
- Strong links with the community and local sports clubs enhance and extend standards of attainment.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough time allocated to the subject in Year 9 to ensure that the progress that pupils make is of the same good standard as the teaching would merit.
- There is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to bring the good lessons up to the standard of the very best.

192. The 2002 GCSE results were above average and a significant improvement on the 2001 results. Pupils gained results that were similar to the other subjects they studied.
193. By the end of Year 9, standards are below average, and this represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' standards on entry to the school.
194. Most Year 9 pupils, including those with special educational needs, show average competence in a range of games and understand the principles of play in team games. Boys and girls achieve average standards in football and basketball, consolidating the basic skills of the games through strategic play. Low attaining pupils make good progress developing ball control in both games. The performance of high attaining pupils in team games is well illustrated by the Year 9 netball and cricket teams, which won their respective Bromsgrove and District Championships. Standards are below average in gymnastics and dance. Although most pupils understand the principles of balance, the majority find difficulty in performing individually with confidence and quality. There is a lack of control in movement, particularly in jumping and landing activities. Most pupils know how to warm up and

why they do it, but cannot do this independently. Pupils' progress in learning the skills of evaluating and improving performance depends on which class they are in. These skills are generally underdeveloped. Similarly, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop satisfactorily in some lessons. Although learning is often good in individual lessons, achievement is only satisfactory overall, as not enough time is given to the subject to ensure sufficient progress.

195. By Year 11, standards are average overall, representing a good level of achievement. There is a significant proportion of pupils who perform to a higher standard in games, and those who attend the extra-curricular programme make very good progress. Good work was seen in a Year 11 basketball lesson. Most pupils had a good understanding of the game, and as well as being effective players, they took on the responsibilities of timekeeper, coach, referee and scorer. The performance of high attaining pupils in this sport is indicated by the successes of the Year 10 girls' and Year 11 boys' teams, which won the West Midlands Schools' Basketball Championships. GCSE practical work is of an above average standard. Written coursework is above average overall, showing a good knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. There is little evidence of pupils' use of information and communication technology in their coursework.
196. Extra-curricular sport is a strong aspect of the department's work, providing very good opportunities for all pupils, particularly the gifted and talented, to make very good progress in their chosen sports, both in school and beyond. School teams and individual pupils regularly gain representative honours at county, regional and national levels. The school currently has pupils competing nationally in netball, hockey, basketball, football and athletics. Very good links with the community and local sports clubs enhance and extend standards of attainment.
197. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. The teachers' management and organisation of pupils are of a high order, and relationships between staff and pupils are good, creating a supportive learning environment. This contributes significantly to the pupils' good behaviour, standards of dress and the high level of participation in lessons. Pupils' attitudes are generally positive, and often very good, reflected in the energy and effort they put into lessons and their support for extra-curricular activities. Teachers have good specialist knowledge, but some are less secure about what is required by the National Curriculum, and the methods that enable pupils to take an active role in learning and to develop independence. Most planning is detailed and thorough, but challenges are not always appropriate for all abilities. Teachers make good use of resources, particularly information and communication technology in gymnastics, to give pupils feedback on their performance. Questioning is used skilfully to consolidate learning in most lessons, but some teachers make too little use of this strategy to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding in the health and fitness, and in the evaluating and improving aspects of lessons. Pupils learn particularly well when they are challenged physically and intellectually at a lively pace. Very good progress took place in a badminton lesson, where time targets were used to move pupils forward and set a demanding pace. Very good progress supported pupils' observation and evaluation in this lesson enabling them to comment positively on each other's work. The marking of pupils' GCSE coursework is regular and encouraging, but pupils do not receive enough information to know what progress they are making, or how to improve their work. Opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are too inconsistent.

198. The head of department provides very good leadership and management, which has enabled the department to embrace change positively and move forward over the last three years. Priority has been given to raising standards of attainment, and the strong staff team has successfully devised strategies to achieve this. Despite the absence of guidance and direction from the senior management, the department has used its own initiative to raise GCSE results to above average, and there are indications of even more improvement in the coming year. A particularly effective strategy has been to invite parents to join their sons and daughters for an after-school revision session that aims to show parents how they can help pupils revise, effectively, at home. In recognition of the quality of extra-curricular sport, the school has been awarded the Sportsmark, with Distinction. Monitoring of teaching and learning has begun, but further development of this strategy is needed to ensure consistency in approach to teaching, and to create further opportunities for sharing best practice. As reported in the last inspection, the indoor accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory. Use of the gymnasium is lost for a significant proportion of time during the year, because of examinations, and this has a negative effect on standards and progress. An even greater detriment to continuity and progress is the lack of time allocated to the subject in Year 9.
199. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards in Years 9 to 11 have been maintained and there has been a significant improvement in examination results. Extra-curricular sport goes from strength to strength and the quality of teaching is now good overall.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils following the full GCSE course are well motivated and progressing very well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour so lessons are orderly.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient time to enable teachers to deliver the agreed syllabus.
- The team of non-specialist teachers changes too frequently to allow them to develop their own knowledge and understanding.
- Resources are poor and the library does not contain the quality of books necessary to support pupils' investigations.
- Most pupils have no opportunity for first-hand experience of people and places of other faiths.

200. Results in the 2002 GCSE course were well above average and improved upon the above average results from the previous year. The numbers of pupils entering for the examination have fallen over the last three years and only pupils from the highest ability sets are entered. As a result, far more girls than boys are following the subject at full course GCSE level. Overall, pupils gained results that were similar to the other subjects they studied. Pupils from the upper middle ability groups are entered for the short course GCSE. Results are average and have improved steadily over the last three years. Numbers entered are rising; however, more girls than boys are following the course and girls are doing better than boys.
201. Standards are below average by the end of Year 9 because of the lack of time that results in sections of the syllabus being omitted and lack of opportunity to discuss and

develop understanding of the topics. Pupils start their GCSE work and higher attaining pupils are gaining a good grasp of the key features of the life of Christ and can identify the teachings that are illustrated through the parables and some miracles. Middle attaining pupils, whilst having a clear understanding of the meaning of prejudice and discrimination and the different areas that are most affected by it, do not have the time to consider the principle that supports religious belief in equality. Where higher attaining pupils consider this religious principle, they do not have the time to relate it to modern-day experiences. The two week gap between lessons results in lower attaining pupils, in particular, failing to consolidate their learning or developing their understanding of the principle involved because they have forgotten the work they have already covered. As a consequence, although pupils' progress in lessons is satisfactory, their achievement overall is unsatisfactory. The need to focus on the requirements of the GCSE course on Christianity in Year 9 results in a significant proportion of pupils having no experience of the study of the major Eastern religions, despite it being a requirement of the locally agreed syllabus.

202. By the end of Year 11 standards are below average. Pupils' knowledge of specific aspects of Christianity is above average in the highest groups due to the intensive specialist teaching they receive. However, standards are below average for most other pupils due in part to lack of prior knowledge and also lack of the opportunity for the development of understanding. Knowledge of other faiths is poor in all groups because there is a lack of opportunity for study. There is little evidence of extended writing in any group, or use of explanation except in the higher attaining groups. Achievement in the highest attaining groups is good due to the specialist teaching, and to the high expectations that are met by the pupils who are challenged to complete the full GCSE course in just one hour per fortnight. Achievement of the majority of pupils is unsatisfactory due to the insufficient time allocation that prevents consolidation of information and reduces the development of skills.
203. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers generally have high expectations of their pupils and in the best lessons teachers use a variety of activities in order to involve pupils actively in their work. At times teachers attempt to cover the syllabus by including too much information in a lesson, and this can result in either lack of depth or reliance on the teacher simply delivering the necessary information. Teachers have clear lesson objectives that they share with their pupils and they are beginning to revisit these objectives at the end of the lesson to encourage pupils to evaluate what they have learned. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour, and relationships between staff and pupils are positive. They are good role models, treating the responses of their pupils with encouragement and respect. As a result the behaviour in most lessons is good. Where the pace of lessons drops or where questions fail to challenge pupils, their attention wanders and concentration is lost. In a small minority of lessons teachers failed to think about their objectives in advance, resulting in delivery of the content rather than development of understanding. Pupils following the GCSE course are supported well by their teacher's knowledge and understanding of the examination and clearly have confidence in his ability to support their success. As a result they work hard and achieve very well.
204. The department's resources were poor at the time of the last inspection and have remained so. There are insufficient appropriate books in the library to support any independent investigation by pupils, and the use of extensive photocopying, mentioned in the last report, remains a feature. There are no class textbooks so although teachers take pains to support the development of vocabulary in their pupils and encourage them to read aloud from the worksheets, there are no opportunities for them to research or further their knowledge. A consequence of the emphasis on

Christianity is that pupils have very little opportunity to consider the beliefs and culture of non-Christian people living in Britain or to have the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of people and places of worship belonging to other faiths.

205. The head of department has attempted to develop a variety of strategies to cope with the current situation of staff and time inadequacies, but the management of the subject in the school is unsatisfactory. Management of GCSE groups is done well and the results reflect this. For the majority of other staff, however, there is insufficient time for management or for the development of teaching in the subject. The lack of consistency in staffing means teachers cannot develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject from their previous experience. The present senior management team have recognised this situation and plans are being considered that could rectify this in the future. Since the last inspection the short course GCSE has been successfully introduced; however, most other issues have not been addressed. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	1	0	76	0	12	0	1.7
Mathematics	3	67	62	0	15	1.7	0.8
Other Social Studies	1	100	74	100	11	5	1.5

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	24	96	87	17	43	4.6	5.8
Chemistry	13	100	90	23	43	5.4	5.9
Biology	21	76	88	14	34	4.0	5.3
Physics	7	86	88	14	40	4.0	5.7
Design and technology	8	100	91	13	30	4.5	5.4
Business studies	12	33	92	8	32	1.7	5.5
Computer studies	6	83	86	0	23	3.7	4.6
Sports/PE studies	7	100	92	14	25	5.1	5.1
Art and design	9	100	96	11	46	5.8	6.6
Music	5	100	93	20	35	6.4	5.7
Geography	5	100	92	20	38	5.6	5.7
History	10	70	88	40	35	5.2	5.5
Psychology	14	71	87	21	34	4.1	5.3
English literature	10	100	95	40	37	5.4	5.9
Communication studies	8	63	93	0	31	2.5	5.5
French	4	75	89	25	38	4.0	5.6
German	1	100	91	0	40	6.0	5.8
Spanish	1	100	89	0	39	2.0	5.7
Other languages	2	100	93	100	56	10.0	6.8
Vocational studies	7	86	76	14	26	4.3	4.4

General studies	34	85	85	35	30	4.8	4.9
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection focused on mathematics and chemistry, but biology was also sampled. Results in biology were below average in 2001, but improved in 2002. Results were also below average in physics in 2001; too few candidates studied physics in 2002 to make meaningful comparisons with previous years. Three biology lessons were observed; all were taught well. In each lesson the teacher linked the work to that covered in previous lessons, concentrated on detail and rounded the lesson off with a very good summary.

Mathematics

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

Strength

- Concepts are explained clearly because teachers have a good knowledge of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Standards and the quality of teaching have declined since the previous inspection because of unsatisfactory leadership.
- Marking is cursory and does not tell students how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- There is no system for assessing students' work regularly so that their progress can be monitored and evaluated.
- The opportunities for students to develop their study skills are limited and there is not enough use of computers.

206. The students in the sixth form study mathematics courses at AS level and A level and generally complete the course. In total 39 students currently study the subject in the sixth form of whom 11 students are studying it at A level. The school offers AS and A level in the areas of pure mathematics, statistics and discrete mathematics. The highest attaining students also have the opportunity to study further mathematics at A level. The school also gives students the opportunity to resit their GCSE and in 2002, 10 students followed that course.

207. In 2001, results at A level were below average. Students did not do as well as they did in their other subjects and the girls achieved lower grades than the boys did. Results were even lower in 2002 and this reflects a downward trend.

208. Overall, standards in Year 13 are below average and students are underachieving. This is partly due to unfinished work and limited practice of methods. Students have difficulty in applying Newton Raphson's method in further mathematics but good work was seen where students extend their understanding of polynomial functions to finding complex roots of those functions. In statistics, students' secure understanding of the Central Limit Theorem allows them to use it to solve problems. The standards of work seen in Year 12 are below average and students are underachieving. Basic skills in algebra are weak, for example when manipulating indices to support new work on functions and inverses. However, students are extending their GCSE work into new areas; for example they have the opportunity to extend the work that they

were introduced to on their GCSE mathematics course in the methods module and they study discrete maths.

209. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall, which leads to unsatisfactory learning. In the majority of lessons, the teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. They give good support with clear explanations when students ask for clarification and this allows students to improve their understanding. However, students spend too long practising a technique in lessons rather than learning new work. For example, students spent too long on writing a program to use Newton Raphson's method and did not have time to apply it to the problems. In the better lessons, the good features are the quality of questioning. Teachers generally involve students well by asking questions that would deepen their understanding and the students generally respond well. This was evident when the teacher introduced students to graphs and networks in the discrete mathematics module. The teacher checked that the students understood the new terminology so that by the end of the lesson, they could identify the characteristics of Eulerian and semi-Eulerian graphs. Teachers generally conduct lessons at a satisfactory pace, resulting in average gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. However, this does not always happen, and too often the lessons start late either because students are late arriving, or through lack of appropriate resources, for example when there were insufficient graphic calculators and the students wasted time trying to get the computer programs set up. Students are generally alert throughout the lesson and they maintain a good level of concentration.
210. Effective use is made of homework to consolidate and extend work that is introduced in the lesson. However, the quality of the marking and assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory. There is very little marking that would point out where students have made mistakes and indicate what they need to do to improve. There is no formal programme of regular assessments that would allow teachers to see how students are progressing over time so that they could give effective support for those experiencing difficulties. In the better lessons, students generally participate very well in discussions, responding well to questions, but few volunteer suggestions. However, in a minority of lessons, there are missed opportunities to involve students more actively in lessons and to develop their capacity for independent study and research.
211. The day-to-day organisation of mathematics is satisfactory and the teachers work well together. However, the leadership and management of mathematics are unsatisfactory overall as there have been no effective strategies to raise the achievement of students. The department has not had the relevant information to analyse the results and track students' progress effectively, consequently there have been no plans in place to reverse the downward trend in attainment and achievement of students. The overall procedures for assessing students' progress as they go through the sixth form are unsatisfactory. There is no regular programme of formal, standardised tests with which students' progress is measured against their prior attainment. Therefore, targets for future attainment cannot be shared and validated.
212. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection; teaching is much worse and standards have declined.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for the subject with students.
- Students are now achieving well as a result of the good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use is made of assessment information, and feedback to students is insufficiently detailed and diagnostic
- Teachers do not make enough use of computers.

213. The school offers courses at AS and A level. Around 10 students take up the subject in Year 12, and few fail to complete the course. The A level results in 2001 were average and students performed as well as they did in their other subjects. Results in 2002 were lower than those in 2001.
214. Standards in the current Year 12 and Year 13 are average. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics covered earlier in the course are developing, helped by detailed notes that are examined regularly by the teacher. Standards of literacy are good, assisted by a focus on key words by the teacher. In both Years 12 and 13, students' answers to class questions are expressed well, while written work reflects similar standards. Numeracy skills are good, with calculations performed correctly and to an appropriate degree of accuracy. Students following the AS course in Year 12 are, after one and a half terms, producing work that is average for this course. Student assignments are well presented, and practical skills are developed by an appropriate blend of theory and experimental work. Students are equally at ease when following instructions or planning their own work to achieve desired outcomes. Overall, students are now achieving well given their results on starting the courses.
215. Teaching is good. The standard of teaching is illustrated by a Year 13 lesson on ion exchange where the implications of ion charge and radius for hydration were elicited, making full use of what students already knew and allowing them to apply trends in atomic properties in a new context. Teachers have good subject knowledge, lesson planning is very good, and the positive approach from teachers and students in lessons generates a calm working atmosphere. Use of exposition and question-and-answer are skilful, guiding students to develop their understanding. Students respond very well in this environment, co-operating with their teacher and each other. Feedback to students on their written work is frequent and detailed, including model answers to parts of questions on occasions, but lacks individual diagnostic guidance.
216. Leadership is good, but management is only satisfactory as the teacher responsible for chemistry has not been provided with the necessary data on students' performance. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is frequent and effective. Classes have limited access to computers.
217. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved, but examination results are now lower.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject so can answer questions in great depth.
- Teaching is good in textiles and students do well in this area.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of computer-aided design and making.
- Teachers are not picking up on work that is too superficial.

218. The school offers three courses at AS and A level covering textiles, graphics and resistant materials. About 22 students study the subject at AS level in Year 12 and this falls to around 18 in Year 13 A2 course. Most students complete their course.
219. Results in the 2001 examinations were below average and students gained results that were similar to their other subjects. Results in 2002 improved on those in 2001.
220. The standards of students currently in Years 12 and 13 are average overall and they are making satisfactory progress given their standards on starting the course, although achievement is good in textiles. Students have a well-developed knowledge and understanding of materials and processes, and use product analysis and effective research techniques to support their designing and making. However, students are not rigorous enough in their application of technical knowledge and understanding when designing and this often leads to superficial annotation and underdeveloped ideas. Students have a clear appreciation of the implications of social, moral and cultural considerations on product design and they have an understanding of the wider implications of design decisions. Students' work is characterised by a thorough and detailed approach to all aspects of study, particularly in textiles where they work hard and take great care in their presentation. This is apparent in the Year 12 product study where analysis of an existing product leads to an improved design for a specific market. Students use a variety of presentation styles in their work and ideas are clearly annotated against specified criteria. Computer-aided design and manufacturing is being used to a limited extent in systems and control and in textiles but is not being used in resistant materials and graphics and this is a weakness in the provision.
221. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but is good in textiles. Lessons are well planned, with a brisk pace and focused teaching. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and are able to respond to students' questions in depth, drawing upon a range of examples to support learning. The quality of teacher-led discussions is good; they are characteristically focused and relevant. Overall, teachers use assessment and monitoring procedures well, although variations across the department exist. In textiles, work is rigorously marked against examination board criteria and targets are set for individuals; this is good practice and leads to improved attainment. However, teachers are not picking up on the deficiencies in students' work that are leading to designs remaining at a level that is too simple for the students' abilities. Students' attitudes to the subject are very

positive. They are interested in their lessons, concentrate well and work hard. Behaviour throughout the department is excellent and students are polite and always demonstrate a due regard for health and safety.

222. The leadership and management of design and technology are satisfactory. There is appropriate monitoring and recording and the teachers in charge of the three courses are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses in the various teaching groups. However, there is insufficient analysis of examination performance to set targets and inform curriculum planning.
223. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The new courses have been successfully implemented and standards have been maintained.

BUSINESS

The focus was on business studies.

Business studies

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards are now rising as a result of improved provision and the newly appointed head of department.
- The developing links with business are making an important contribution to students' understanding of the business community.

Area for improvement

- Teaching does not always stretch the most able or actively involve them in lessons.

224. The school offers a combined business and economics course leading to AS and A level. Most students complete their course.
225. The A level results in 2001 were very low but the most recent results show an improvement, albeit from a small number of students who studied the subject. Students did much worse in business studies than they did in the other subjects that they studied. This was due to poor provision (students were studying for two A levels in the time usually allotted to only one), and staffing difficulties that have now been satisfactorily addressed.
226. Standards in both Year 12 and Year 13 are now average. This represents satisfactory achievement given students' standards of entry to the course. Students have an average knowledge of business concepts, such as how the interaction of demand and supply of products affects the price to the consumer. They are familiar with business terminology and use it appropriately in discussion and written work. Year 12 students, for example, write clear notes to explain terms such as 'monetarism' and 'medium of exchange' in a study about the functions of money, whilst Year 13 students understand the term 'fixed and current assets' in appraising business efficiency. In extended pieces of work, however, many write in abstract terms and do not make enough use of real examples. Students make effective use of number skills to plot demand and supply graphs. A significant weakness is the failure of students to understand and respond fully to question requirements. Year 13 students, for

example, failed to analyse the question requirements and evaluate evidence in appropriate depth about the pricing of products in relation to the market strength.

227. Teaching is satisfactory. The morale of students is rising because they have confidence in the teaching and learn well as a result. Teachers have good subject knowledge so their explanations are very clear. This leads to students listening carefully and understanding concepts the first time that they are taught them. In a Year 13 lesson about business efficiency for example, students made good progress because explanations and guidance in how to read and interpret company balance sheets enabled them to use data to assess the financial health of the business. Good use is made of real business to consolidate theoretical aspects of study, and this is extended to encourage students to participate in the Young Enterprise scheme in the school. Discussion is a regular feature of lessons and generally this is productive because many students are interested; they are willing to contribute ideas and as a result students improve their understanding of topics. Occasionally, however, teaching does not always ensure that the minority of students is actively involved in learning because they are insufficiently challenged and make less progress than is expected. In some lessons not enough is expected of students because learning is very teacher directed without sufficient challenge in the preparation and engagement in the lesson to develop ideas about what they have researched and the conclusions they have drawn.
228. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has made significant progress in improving provision in the subject. The course structure has been changed; there is now adequate time to cover the syllabus and this is leading to improving standards. Students have regular access to staff for consultation and this is enhancing students' confidence. The priorities for future development are appropriate, but how the success of the proposals is to be measured is insufficiently specific. The department's strategies for promoting aspects of literacy and numeracy have not been identified and incorporated into planning, but consideration of the ethical aspects of topics is well developed. Resources are satisfactory except for the need to further develop book resources and to make more use of information and communication technology.
229. There was no report at the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on computer studies.

Computer studies

Overall, the quality of provision in computer studies is **good**.

Strengths

- Students are now achieving well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good, which builds students' confidence.

Area for improvement

- Students are not informed well enough about the course, so those taking the examination last year performed very poorly.

230. The school offers both AS and A level courses in computer studies. Numbers choosing the subject are good and few students fail to complete their courses.
231. Results in the 2001 A level examinations were below average. However, students gained significantly better results in computer studies than they did in most of their other subjects. Results in the 2002 AS level were very disappointing with many students failing to gain a pass grade. Results at A level were also disappointing with many students underachieving badly. Many of the students who did not achieve well should not have been on the courses to begin with; many would have been more suited to the information technology course. Students say that they did not understand the complexities and the mathematical demands of the courses.
232. Standards in the current Year 13 are average, which represents a good level of achievement. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of technical solutions. Students know that they need to test their programs and evaluate how well they work to gain higher marks in the examinations. Standards in Year 12 are average and this represents satisfactory achievement. Students have a satisfactory understanding of how the advancement of information and communication technology has impacted on society. For example, in a Year 12 class, higher attaining students were able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of censorship with regard to Internet sites. Lower attainers struggled with the topic and did not think about the consequences of 'blanket' censorship. Students have a good knowledge of small company payroll systems and have produced their own systems using *Visual Basic*. Students have a sound knowledge of technical terms and higher attainers are able to give extensive verbal answers, for example when discussing the merits of different storage systems.
233. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, the teacher in a Year 13 class, demonstrated a very good knowledge of coding and used this effectively to show students how to improve their work in line with examination criteria. The pace of lessons is normally good although there are occasions when the teacher does too much talking, the pace drops, and progress is slowed. Teachers have satisfactory expectations of their students in terms of both what students can achieve and how students should behave. For example, the teacher jollied students up and challenged students when they arrived late for a lesson. Relationships are good and there is a good sense of humour between the teachers and the students; this helps to build students' confidence. Homework is set appropriately and marking is regular and informative. Teachers use questioning well to really push students for in-depth answers, as was the case when students were asked about the morality of censorship.
234. The leadership and management of computer studies are satisfactory. The subject leader is aware of the need to review the courses and to better inform students about the demands of the course. The head of department has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject.
235. No judgement was given in the previous report about the subject and therefore it is not possible to comment on the progress made.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus was on physical education.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Very good relationships between staff and students create an excellent learning atmosphere.
- Students' attitudes are very good and they take an active role in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Marking of theoretical coursework does not give enough information to students about how they are progressing against targets set.
- Students' opportunities to participate in physical activity in the enrichment curriculum are limited to once a fortnight.

236. The school offers courses at AS and A2 levels. The subject attracts viable numbers and almost all students complete their AS course and go on to A2 level. The 2001 A level results were average and students did better than in other subjects they studied. Results were even better in 2002. Overall, students are achieving well.
237. Students in Year 12 have an average knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues in sport. They describe, confidently, how sport has developed out of popular culture in the past, and high attainers are quick to identify some of the reasons why this has occurred. Independent learning skills develop well, and most students show good information and communication technology skills, using the Internet to research ancient ethnic sports that are still celebrated in England. In the Sport Academy course, Year 12 students also use their computer skills, effectively, to extend their knowledge and understanding of how to use the Internet as a sports coaching resource.
238. Year 13 students are producing work of above average standards. They show a good understanding of the principles of fitness training, and the quality of their individual research into a selected method of training is high. All students presented their research to the group, effectively, supported by a well-written account of the topic. High attaining students show competence in a range of research skills, but a few lower attainers are content to rely on the Internet. Students' communication skills develop, satisfactorily, through opportunities to discuss their work. In their study of historical aspects of physical education, students have good knowledge of the social context of 19th century England, and express their views with confidence. Two students demonstrated very good computer skills in preparing and delivering an impressive presentation on the 1870 Education Act, and its implications for the people in terms of physical education. Written coursework reflects a range of attainment, but indicates good progress. There are some very good examples of students' capacity for independent study and research. It was not possible to observe any practical work during the inspection, but teachers' records indicate that it is well above average. Many individuals achieve success in extra-curricular sport and there are currently five students developing their chosen sport at national level.

239. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and share their enthusiasm by planning interesting, challenging lessons. Students respond very positively, and an excellent atmosphere for learning results. Students' attitudes are very good, reflected in the quality of their active contribution to lessons, through discussion and presentations. Teachers use a range of motivating strategies to extend the depth and breadth of students' learning. As part of their study of the development of the subject in the nineteenth century, students visited Rugby School to see how sport developed amongst the privileged classes, and also experienced a drill session reminiscent of that undertaken by pupils in Victorian elementary schools. These experiences gave them a richer understanding of how and why these developments took place. Very good use of questions and resources ensures that students of all abilities make good progress. Teachers are proficient in using information and communication technology, and ensure that students' skills are also extended. Internet research is used effectively, and high attaining students are challenged appropriately by mounting presentations using information technology. Marking is satisfactory, but could be improved by indicating how students are progressing against their target goals and emphasising how they might further improve their work.
240. The leadership and management of the subject are very good, well supported by a strong staff team. Raising standards of attainment is central to the department's planning, and the head of department has successfully taken the initiative in devising strategies to improve standards. Assessment data is used well to set individual targets and estimate students' progress, particularly in Year 13. The support and guidance to individual students are good. Physical education also contributes to the enrichment of the sixth form curriculum through fortnightly opportunities for all students to participate in physical activities. This is well supported by students, who feel that it should be a weekly event. Students can also opt to follow the innovative Sport Academy course in Year 12. This course has a vocational bias, and includes a chance to gain the Community Sports Leader Award.
241. There has been good progress in physical education since the last inspection. A level results have improved and the quality of teaching is now good overall.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on music, but art and design, drama and media studies were also sampled. Results in art and design were below average in 2001; there were too few students studying the subject in 2002 to make reliable comparisons with previous years. One art and design lesson was observed; the teaching was good. Very good guidance was provided for individuals, supported well by texts that helped them to understand the influences of the work of other artists. Two media studies lessons were observed. In a good lesson, the students were pushed through the work by using strictly timed activities whereas in the satisfactory lesson there was too much direction from the teacher when the students could have worked answers out for themselves. Good timing was also the key to the good drama lesson observed, where no time was wasted at all.

Music

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

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic musicians with excellent subject knowledge.
- There are excellent relationships between staff and students that ensure students enjoy the subject and are eager to learn.
- Students' performance skills are improved because of the high quality opportunities for extra-curricular musical activities.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not use computers and music software to enhance their compositions.
- Students' composing skills are generally weak.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to take an active role in lessons, or to ask questions.
- The planning for sixth form courses is weak so teachers and students do not know if they are covering the syllabus requirements.

242. The department offers courses in AS and A level music. All students completed the AS course, but only half of them are currently continuing with music in Year 13. Results in the 2001 A level examinations were above average, but students gained results that were similar to their other subjects. Results in 2002 were similar but national averages are not yet available for comparison.

243. The standards of students currently in Years 12 and 13 are broadly average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Performance standards are very high as was demonstrated by two Year 13 students who expertly performed a movement from a concerto for two violins by Vivaldi at an evening concert during the inspection week. Students are well focused and are good independent learners. They are able to use a wide range of musical terminology confidently and accurately. For example in a Year 13 lesson one student made very good comparison with the use of the tri-tone in a recitative passage from *Les Miserables* by Schönberg to that used in Bernstein's *West Side Story*. They have well-developed analytical skills and are capable of thorough research work into specific topics, as was seen in one student's excellent analysis of two contrasting performances of a Vivaldi violin concerto. Students' knowledge and understanding of topics they have studied earlier are secure. Performance skills are greatly enhanced by the regular opportunities to take part in high quality ensembles and expert tuition from the visiting instrumental teachers. Composing skills are generally much weaker with most students producing only simple structured pieces. Students in both Years 12 and 13 have very good literacy skills and express their understanding clearly and in detail when answering spoken or written questions. They are not able to fully develop all their key skills because they do not have enough opportunity to use music software and computers in lessons.

244. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. Teachers know their students extremely well and give extra support to those who need it. The best feature of the teaching is the excellent knowledge, enthusiasm and musicianship of teachers. This is used to good effect when demonstrating musical points and questioning the students, and is also evident when the teachers answer questions asked by the students. In the better lessons the relationships between teachers and students are excellent and ensure students enjoy the subject and are eager to learn. Students are given very helpful feedback about their performance during practical tasks and are regularly encouraged to reflect on their own and others' performances. Less

successful features include not providing enough opportunities for students to contribute in discussions and take a more active role. Lessons are not planned well enough, rarely have clear learning objectives at the outset and do not end with a summary to evaluate what has been learned. Marking of work is not consistent. Teachers do not always make effective comments on students' written work so students are not sure how well they are doing or what to do to improve their work; for example, the comment "mostly good" in one Year 12 student's folder was particularly unhelpful. There are not enough music books in the school library or within the department so it is very difficult for students to learn to carry out individual research. Teachers are aware that they do not yet make enough use of information and communication technology to support and enhance learning in music.

245. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have resulted in satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The staff team are highly skilled and work well together. They are well supported by the visiting instrumental teachers. The management of the extensive range of performance opportunities provided to students is good and ensures students make progress in this area. However, the focus on these practical aspects has resulted in little time being spent on the planning needed to ensure delivery of all areas of the examination courses. For example, there is no short-term planning so teachers and students do not know if they are fully covering the syllabus requirements.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on psychology, but geography, religious education and politics were also sampled. Results were average in geography in 2001 and improved considerably in 2002. Two lessons were observed in geography; both were good and characterised by good planning and clear explanations. One satisfactory politics lesson was observed. The chosen research task was a good one, but there were too few resources to make the most of it. One good religious education lesson was observed where the teacher asked difficult questions that really made the students think.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good so students are now doing well.
- The assessment of coursework is particularly informative and helps students to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Results were very disappointing in 2002 as the students spent a long time without a teacher.
- There is not enough monitoring of teaching to allow strengths and weaknesses to be identified.

246. Only one candidate was entered for A level in each of the years 2000 and 2001. No national comparisons are yet available for 2002, but results were very disappointing; half of the candidates failed to get any grade at all at AS level. The students who took the examination in 2002 had long periods where they did not have a teacher.
247. Standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are now average. Year 12 students are able to use psychological terms such as 'independent variable', 'null hypothesis' and 'ecological validity' with understanding. They have grasped the methodology of psychological

investigations and are able to set out and evaluate key studies and their own psychological experiments. Students in Year 13 are able to analyse critically and see further implications in investigations, for instance ethical considerations such as confidentiality or the problems of replication. Final coursework being completed indicates a good standard of achievement with fuller and more comprehensive writing skills being used.

248. The quality of teaching is good. The pace of lessons is brisk and purposeful and this contributes greatly to learning. Students are challenged to analyse and evaluate evidence in psychological investigations. Because of the demands of the chosen syllabus there is a reliance on note-taking to get through the large amount of material, particularly at AS level, so that lessons become didactic and leave less room for independent learning. However, there is opportunity for group/paired work and discussion so that students become more confident in expressing their views and more able to use psychological terminology with understanding. Coursework is marked regularly and in extended assignments supports individual target setting by identifying key issues and making evaluative comments that are discussed with the student. In shorter pieces marking tends to be generic and encouraging without indicating a level of achievement.
249. Leadership in this subject is good with vision and plans to improve delivery and monitoring. However, no written statement or development plan exists and further training and appraisal of staff have yet to be realised. Timetabling for Year13 has been unsatisfactory with too many clashes, denying students access to the curriculum through missed lessons and militating against progress and learning. There is not enough checking on the quality of teaching to identify strengths and weaknesses. Improvement since the last inspection is not applicable as this subject was not in the curriculum at that time.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature, but French, German and Spanish were also sampled. Too few candidates studied any foreign languages in 2001 to make statistical comparisons with national averages. Two lessons in each language were observed; one in Spanish was good and one each in French and Spanish were unsatisfactory. In the unsatisfactory French lesson the teacher used too much English, while the teacher became ill in the Spanish lesson and teaching was clearly not up to the usual standard. The other Spanish lesson made very good use of resources to set a brisk pace. In each of the satisfactory lessons, the pace could have been greater.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Most students are articulate and enjoy discussing literature.
- Highest attaining students produce work of very good quality.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies at present do not ensure that all students, particularly the middle attainers, are suitably supported.
- A number of students have a narrow attitude to the subject and read just a minimum.
- Students have not developed independent learning skills to the extent that might be expected.

250. The subject is a popular choice at A level and a high proportion of students who start courses finish them, whether to AS level or to A level. Results at A level in 2001 were average. Results obtained in 1999 and 2000 were below the national average. Results in 2002 were similar to those obtained in 1999 and 2000.
251. Standards are currently average. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, their achievement is satisfactory.
252. Most students are articulate, accustomed to working in groups and ready to share ideas with their teachers and fellow students. They listen carefully to each other, are respectful of different points of view, yet are ready to question and challenge each other. Many are interested in the presentation of social and moral themes in literature, and see their relevance to themselves. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson on Willy Russell's *Educating Rita*, when students showed insight into how stage directions and the delivery of dialogue could be used to create characters from particular social backgrounds. There is a wide range in the quality of students' written work. Very good, well-reasoned and well-illustrated work was seen by higher attainers on how George Orwell presents the theme of indoctrination in *1984*, though the work of lower attainers was poorly organised and contained a number of elementary errors of spelling and grammar. Whilst some students read widely and have literary interests of their own, a significant proportion of them do not. A consequence of this is that they have only limited ability to make comparisons or to exercise independent judgement about what they read.
253. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a particularly good rapport between students and teachers, and teachers create many opportunities for students to discuss and enjoy literature together. Teachers also have a good knowledge of the subject itself and of the course requirements. This was seen, for example, in a Year 12 lesson on *The Taming of the Shrew*, where the teacher's clear explanation of assessment objectives helped to give the students a good understanding of the skills they needed to develop and gave the lesson a sharp focus. However, in most of the lessons seen, teachers do not sufficiently take into account the prior attainment of students in their planning. Generally, higher attainers understand the work and make good progress. However, a number of middle and lower attaining students have more limited understanding and cannot express their response to what they have read in a lucid fashion. The notes of such students are often superficial. In the lessons observed, teachers do not model full and explicit responses to literature to the extent that might be expected. It is also the case that students in some classes do not complete as many pieces of extended writing as are normally seen and this, in turn, means they do not receive the benefits of having their work marked and a written appraisal being provided. Teachers' marking is generally of a high quality, providing an evaluation of students' work and suggesting targets for improvement. Whilst students do have some opportunities to develop their research skills, for example in connection with their coursework, other opportunities are missed for them to be required to use their skills more frequently and so to develop greater independence in how they study.
254. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, with an appropriate emphasis on raising standards. There was no discrete judgement made about English literature at the time of the previous inspection, consequently it is not possible to make a judgement on progress since then.