

INSPECTION REPORT

THE BLYTH-JEX HIGH SCHOOL

Norwich

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121176

Headteacher: Ms K Topping

Reporting inspector: W Keast
1522

Dates of inspection: 3 - 7 March 2003

Inspection number: 250933

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:	12 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Clement's Hill Norwich
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Revd K G Crocker
Date of previous inspection:	4 December 2000

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28199	P Lawley	Team inspector	English Drama English - 6 form	
18178	I Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics	
29742	P Fyans	Team inspector	Science Chemistry - 6 form	
4689	M Christian	Team inspector	Art and design	
2495	B Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology Design and technology - 6 form	
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Geography History	How well is the school led and managed?
15208	A Briggs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Performing arts - 6 form	
2496	T O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French - 6 form	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30264	L Jones	Team inspector	Music	
30072	J Skivington	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship Psychology - 6 form	
3726	M Bean	Team inspector	Physical education Physical education - 6 form	How well does the school care for its pupils?
20670	P Spencer Ellis	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
16038	J Bavin	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
2501	R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art - 6 form	How well is the school led and managed? - 6 form How well does the school care for its pupils? - 6 form

27719	P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics - 6 form	The school's results and pupils' achievements - 6 form How well are pupils taught? - 6 form
32267	S Smith	Team inspector	Biology - 6 form	
32231	A Lyons	Team inspector	Business education - 6 form	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? - 6 form
20573	S Jordan	Team inspector	Geography - 6 form	
10761	P Willan	Team inspector	History - 6 form	
32208	D Aitken	Team inspector	German - 6 form	
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Sociology - 6 form	
9537	C Marden	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development - 6 form
3525	P McGregor	Team inspector		
1355	S Morgan	Team inspector		
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Blyth-Jex High School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls, aged from 12 to 18. The school operates on two sites, separated by a major road, approximately 10 minutes walk apart. In collaboration with two nearby schools, the school makes a joint sixth form provision - the Kett, with 325 students. The school has 675 pupils in Years 8 to 11. This is smaller than most other secondary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal (23.2 per cent) is above average. The proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs (22.9 per cent) and the proportion of pupils who have a statement of their needs (3.6 per cent) are both above average. The most frequently identified need is of moderate learning difficulty and, to some extent, behavioural difficulties. The school has approximately 20 pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. This is a low proportion and reflects the nature of the area. Twelve pupils speak English as an additional language and a very small number are at an early stage in learning the language. Pupils come from an area of significant deprivation and their attainment when they come to the school is currently below the national average. This is higher than in previous years when their attainment has been well below average. An above average proportion of pupils leave or join the school other than at the end of a school year. The school has had great difficulty in appointing suitably qualified and experienced staff. In 2002, the school achieved a Sportsmark award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Standards are below average but rising in line with the national trend. Pupils are generally achieving well in relation to their attainment when they come to the school. This results from the sound teaching, with much that is good or better, and the good attitudes to learning of many pupils in the main school, and the good teaching in the sixth form. Management is very good and the leadership of the headteacher is excellent. The school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- A substantial proportion of teaching is good or very good, which enables pupils to achieve well
- Information, obtained from marking and testing, is used very well to set focused individual targets which promote higher standards
- A good range of learning opportunities is provided for pupils, with a particular strength in Year 10
- Looks after the pupils' welfare very well and very good procedures, understood by pupils, for promoting good behaviour have resulted in improved behaviour and involvement in learning
- Senior managers are very effective, supported by good subject management, under the excellent leadership of the headteacher
- An excellent vision for the sixth form is shown by the head teachers of Blyth-Jex, Hearstease and Sprowston schools supported by the energy and determination of key staff to make it successful

What could be improved

- Pupils are underachieving in music in Years 8 and 9; provision is unsatisfactory and does not fulfil National Curriculum requirements
- Managing the development of special educational needs provision is not fully secure, mainly due to lack of non-teaching time for its co-ordination

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 2000. In the context in which it has been working, the school has made very good improvement since then. Standards show an upward trend, the strength in pupil welfare and care has been maintained and the analysis of test information, leading to the setting of personal targets, has improved significantly. All key issues raised in the previous report have been tackled and improvement achieved. Greatest progress has been made in curriculum development, improved teaching, resulting from the professional development of the staff, and the development of the joint sixth form. Effective literacy and numeracy policies

have been introduced, pupils' behaviour has improved, attendance is improving, there are better opportunities for pupils' personal development and constructive, curriculum links with middle schools are developing strongly.

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 examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E
A-levels	As the joint Kett sixth form is a new provision, there will be no A-level results until 2003			

Key		
very high	well	A*
above average		A
above average		B C
average		
below average		D E
well below average		
very low		E*

Similar schools are those in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is between 21 and 35 per cent.

Results, in the end of Year 9 testing in 2002, were well below the national average, below the average for similar schools but in line with the average, gained nationally, by pupils with similar end of Year 6 results. Results in English were well below all national comparators. Results in mathematics and science were below the national average, in line with similar schools and above, and well above, the respective averages for pupils with similar end of Year 6 results, showing good and very good achievement by these pupils. The low results in English, which could be attributed to the serious staffing difficulties experienced in the subject, therefore pulled the overall results down. Over the last five years, results have been rising in line with the national trend.

GCSE results in 2002, overall, were very low, in the lowest five per cent, for pupils with similar end of Year 9 results and pupils, therefore, underachieved. However, this was again mainly due to the fall in English results. The five-year trend in results is rising in line with the national trend. Results in most subjects were significantly below the national averages. Overall results in science were in line with the average. Mathematics and science results were, respectively, above and well above, similar schools averages. Both were in line with the results gained by pupils with similar end of Year 9 results. On a subject by subject basis, the majority of pupils gained results that were broadly in line with those gained nationally by pupils with similar end of Year 9 results.

The school did not meet its targets of 34 per cent of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A* to C with an average point score of 30. The targets set for 2003 are significantly higher than these and will prove very challenging.

The standards of work of pupils currently in Year 9 are higher and overall at a level below that expected levels for their age. They are at expected levels in modern foreign languages, physical and religious education. They are well below in information and communication technology (ICT) and music. Nevertheless, pupils are generally achieving well in relation to their attainment when they came to the school. Their achievement is satisfactory in ICT but they are underachieving in music. Overall, current standards in Year 11 are also below the levels expected nationally and are similarly higher than last year's result. They are at the expected level in history, modern foreign languages, physical and religious education, and well below in English and ICT. Overall, most pupils are achieving well in relation to their attainment when they started the course. In English and ICT their achievement is satisfactory.

Current standards of students' work in the sixth form are at the expected levels for the courses they are following and students are achieving well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and take pride in their work. They listen attentively and settle to work in most lessons without fuss. In many lessons, however, they are slow to volunteer answers to teachers' questions.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in most lessons and around the school is good. The occasional incidents of misbehaviour of a few pupils is not allowed to interrupt the learning of others. The number of fixed period exclusions is below average.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships are good. Pupils help each other and work together productively. They respond well when given the opportunity to take responsibility but they do not readily take the initiative. Pupils of different abilities and from different backgrounds mix, work and get on well together and are all included in the full range of school activities.
Attendance	Although attendance has improved, it remains well below average. Too many pupils miss school because parents take them on holiday in term time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 8 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

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

Teaching was at least good in more than three fifths of the lessons observed in Years 8 to 11, and in more than one in ten it was very good. In a few lessons it was unsatisfactory. This is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. Teaching in English is satisfactory and in mathematics and science it is good. In other subjects it is satisfactory or good, overall, except in music.

Particular strengths in the teaching lie in teachers' good subject knowledge, which shows through in skilful questioning and clear explanations, and in good pupil management, resulting in purposeful and calm lessons. The marking and assessment of pupils' work is a strength in most subjects. It is closely linked to examination requirements and pupils' individual targets for these. This leads to pupils being very aware of their current attainment, what they need to do to improve it and how they might achieve this. Teaching ensures that, in the majority of subjects, most pupils are acquiring the appropriate knowledge and skills well. Pupils are interested in their lessons and so work hard and maintain their concentration. Teaching was unsatisfactory when pupils made too little progress either because work was too undemanding, or was too difficult, leading to behavioural issues which were inadequately managed.

In the sixth form, strengths of the teaching were teachers' very good subject knowledge combined with their awareness of examination requirements. Weaker aspects of teaching and learning lie in the limited range of styles used and insufficient systematic development of the key skills that promotes students' independent learning.

The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught in English and mathematics. The contribution to the teaching and practice of these in other subjects is satisfactory and is developing. Most subjects contribute well to pupils' opportunities to practice using ICT skills as an aid to learning.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs are well met in the teaching of small groups withdrawn from mainstream lessons. In ordinary lessons, the picture is more varied but satisfactory overall. Lower-attaining pupils are supported well. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported in lessons, when this is needed. The needs of the highest-attaining pupils are well met in extra-curricular opportunities but, within lessons, the challenge their work provides is inconsistent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum in Years 8 and 9 is broad, balanced and suited to pupils' needs. The good new curriculum in Year 10 offers them a flexible choice of subjects which provides pathways along academic, vocational and work-related routes to higher education or employment. The personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) is very good and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, study support and the orchestra. The requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met in music. In the sixth form a very good range of subjects is offered which meets the needs of the students.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good and effective provision. The curriculum has been appropriately modified to respond to their needs. Pupils are well supported and there is particularly effective provision to manage and support those with behavioural needs. They take part fully in all activities. Management of some aspects is restricted by the lack of time allocated for monitoring in lessons and development of new initiatives.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. There are six pupils at stages one and two of the EAL register. They receive limited specialist teaching but very good in-class support. Where possible, pupils have the opportunity to be examined in their mother tongue.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Pupils have appropriate opportunities for reflection and for thinking about others. They learn about moral issues and choices, particularly through citizenship. They have good opportunities to work together but have relatively few chances to take on responsibilities. They learn about their own and other cultures in art and some other subjects, but opportunities are missed for developing appreciation of music.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care the school takes of its pupils is a major strength. An ethos of care for others and for the environment is consistent across the school. The systems for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Assessment procedures are very good and the school has a very effective system for setting target grades or levels in each subject, for all pupils. Pupils respond well to this system and strive to meet the targets.

The school works hard to involve parents and keep them informed, but some parents could do more to support their children's education, for example by ensuring that they do not miss school unnecessarily.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent leadership by the headteacher has played a key role in transforming the school. She has a long-standing and deep commitment to the school as an institution at the heart of the community and a place in which all are given the opportunity to achieve well and experience a sense of self-worth. Senior managers and year managers have supported this very well. The leadership and management provided by heads of faculties and departments is generally good.

Aspect	Comment
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors satisfactorily fulfil their responsibilities. They have a strong commitment to the school and a generally appropriate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. In acting as a critical friend, they often ask challenging questions, but are sometimes dependent upon the school's own monitoring of teaching and learning. They ensure that the school meets its statutory obligations in all respects except providing a daily act of collective worship and ensuring that all pupils have full access to the National Curriculum in music.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance well and generally takes effective action to improve this. The school development plan is focused well on the key issues from the last inspection. It clearly identifies tasks, who will carry them out and how success in doing so will be evaluated. There are strong systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the different subject areas and individual teachers, which are generally consistently put into practice. In most cases, line management is clearly identified and works effectively to monitor, guide and support staff.
The strategic use of resources	The school's budget is under considerable pressure. In these difficult circumstances, the school's finances are efficiently managed and there is good strategic use of resources. The school improvement plan is well costed and spending decisions relate to declared educational priorities. Financial controls are tight. Systems are effective in keeping the headteacher, senior managers and governors fully informed of developing situations.

The principles of best value are effectively applied. The school asks itself challenging questions and has a good awareness of its own performance in comparison with other establishments. Proper procedures are followed when contracts are placed for goods and services. The school recognises that it needs to improve the extent to which it consults parents and is actively seeking ways to do this.

Leadership and management in music are poor resulting in curriculum requirements not being met, little assessment and pupils underachieving.

Overall, the school is adequately staffed, although many appointments are recent and difficulties remain. Accommodation and resources for learning are good but with some identified areas for improvement. Minimising the impact of the split-site nature of the school takes time, energy and resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Pupils make good progress. • The school is approachable. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school does not work closely enough with parents. • The amount of homework is not right.

Inspectors broadly agree with parents' positive views about the school. Inspectors found homework to be used appropriately, although teachers do not always keep to the agreed homework schedule. The school works hard to involve parents, but many parents attend school events only irregularly.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

THE KETT JOINT SIXTH FORM

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The Kett is a sixth form partnership, organised across the sites of three schools, with 325 students on roll. It was established eighteen months ago. Year 12 has roughly twice the number of students as Year 13. Numbers of male and female students are similar. Currently over forty courses are offered. A mix of one- and two-year vocational courses, as well as A/S and A-level GCE courses, run alongside work-related learning and courses run in conjunction with a local college of further education. These courses cater for the needs of students with a wide range of aptitudes and aspirations, including some high attaining students and some with identified special needs, of whom a small number have statements of special educational need. A few students speak English as an additional language, with a very small number at an early stage of learning the language. The Kett sixth form is open to 16-year-olds from other schools. Entry is dependent on course requirements, students' prior attainment and their attitudes to study. Overall, the attainment of students at the start of Year 12 is below average.

The partnership was established partly in response to the new funding arrangements for post-16 education that put the future of the sixth forms in the two smaller schools in jeopardy. The aims are to capitalise on the established experiences and expertise in each school whilst, at the same time, widening the range of post-16 opportunities for all. Students, although on the roll of one of the three schools, are able to take courses on any or all of the sites. Regular transport is provided for them to travel between sites. The director of The Kett works to the three headteachers and a management committee of governors from all three schools takes overall responsibility for the sixth form.

The first group of students taking two-year courses will complete their studies in the summer of 2003. Therefore, no cumulative results from previous years are available with which to compare current standards. Challenging targets have been set, aiming to improve student recruitment and retention, raise point scores and increase the numbers of students applying to higher education year on year.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is an effective sixth form. Current standards are broadly average and students achieve well in relation to their widely differing starting points. The quality of teaching is good. Leadership and management are sound overall, with particular strengths in the way The Kett has been promoted across the three schools. The sharing of resources across the three sites results in a very good range of courses being offered. This has improved the access students have to courses they want to follow and which equip them for work, or for continuing their studies. The sixth form is generally cost effective. However, the management of its resources, in particular the planning for future spending on the sixth form, is weak and lacks the detail that governors and headteachers need to monitor the impact of spending decisions.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good across the three centres, particularly teachers' subject knowledge and expertise that results in students' good achievement
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and a desire to do well
- The curriculum has very good breadth and relevance, matching students' different learning needs and linking with other local providers
- An excellent vision for the sixth form is shown by the headteachers of Blyth-Jex, Heartsease and Sprowston schools, supported by the energy and determination of key staff to make it successful.

What could be improved

- Inconsistencies across The Kett, at this early stage in its development, in communication, the management of resources and the administration systems, result in inefficiencies.

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	Satisfactory. Standards are in line with national averages and students achieve well. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and positive relationships between students and teachers result in good teaching and learning overall. Teachers sometimes dominate by talking too much so students are not sufficiently involved in learning. Collaboration between sites is just beginning.
Biology	Good. Standards are above average. Teaching is good and lessons build well on students' knowledge and understanding. Students achieve well. The two heads of department are working closely together to develop the benefits of shared expertise and resources.
Chemistry	Good. Very good teaching enables students to make good progress. Students are encouraged to think about chemical concepts and apply the challenge that chemistry provides. Standards are broadly average.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Standards are average and teaching and learning are sound. Planning is insufficient to make best use of time where several lessons are grouped together. As a result, students' concentration sometimes lapses and the pace of learning slows.
Business education AVCE	Good. The very good teaching is underpinned by teachers' very good subject knowledge. Students learn very well because teachers give careful and thorough explanations on how they can improve. Students achieve very well overall but are hampered somewhat by variations over two sites, particularly in the access to suitable ICT. Standards are broadly average.
Physical education	Good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Standards of work in current groups are broadly average. Relationships are good and students' attitudes positive, contributing to their good achievement. Students receive limited written feedback on how to improve their work.
Art and design	Good. Teaching and learning are good and standards are above average. Students respond enthusiastically to the challenges teachers set. There is effective collaboration between staff and a shared commitment to improving standards.
Performing arts	Very good. Standards are above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Students enjoy the subject and achieve very well because of the outstanding specialist teaching they receive. Lack of formal links between sites, however, means that opportunities for sharing facilities are missed.
Geography	Very good. Standards are above average. Teaching is very strong and results in very effective learning and achievement. Teachers know their students well and the support and guidance they give are used well by students to improve their work.
History	Good. Standards are broadly average representing good achievement. Teaching is effective and teachers provide constructive advice to students on how to improve their work. Few enrichment activities are planned to support students'

	wider learning.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Psychology	Good. Teaching is good and students achieve well. Standards overall are average. Teachers have high expectations and students are challenged. The guidance provided has not given students a sufficiently clear idea about the course content and academic requirements.
Sociology	Good. Standards are average. Students have very good attitudes and are effectively supported and guided through a well-led course. Teaching is good. Marking is detailed but not always linked to examination mark schemes.
English literature	Good. Teaching is good, founded on good subject knowledge, and used well to brief and instruct students. Standards are above average in Year 13, showing good achievement through the course. Some groups are too small to permit a full range of teaching approaches.
French	Good. Standards are above average. The quality of the teaching is good. Students have positive attitudes to the subject and they achieve well. Their written work is a particular strength. Good use is made of ICT but students have access to only a limited range of media and texts.
German	Just satisfactory. Very small numbers choose the subject. Teaching is generally good. Achievement is at least satisfactory. Weak skills restrict the ability of some students to work independently. Provision is fragmented across sites, with no clear ethos for the subject.

Additionally, most other courses were sampled. The teaching was good in the majority of these lessons, showing a consistency across the curriculum. Teachers had very good levels of expertise. Relationships between the teachers and students were very good and productive in helping students to improve their work. Teachers worked hard to encourage all students to participate in class discussions but, in general, male students were less confident and more reluctant to take part than the female students. Standards were average and sometimes above average for the course. Examples of above average standards were seen in food technology and economics, and below average standards in vocational art and design and physics. In general studies, and in a media studies group, the teaching was excellent and standards above average.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Well. Students receive good support from teachers who go out of their way to provide academic and personal help when it is needed. However, staff and students experience difficulties in making contact across different sites. The oral feedback students receive from their teachers is good but, in a number of subjects, students do not receive enough written information on how to improve. Some students are accepted onto courses without a sufficiently clear picture of what is expected and then leave or change courses. Assessment is satisfactory. The Kett is currently establishing a programme that includes the setting of targets for all students and monitoring their progress. Reporting arrangements are appropriate. Careers advice is satisfactory overall but uneven in quality and quantity. Many receive good guidance on future options.

Aspect	Comment
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Sound. The headteachers and governors, with the support of the director of the sixth form and the key staff from the partner schools have shown very good leadership. The outstanding vision, underpinned by the desire to raise students' aspirations, has led to a much broader and more fitting curriculum for the students. The management of resources and communication across the three sites is sound but some aspects need to be improved. Inconsistencies, for example, in administrative systems and ICT, frustrate and hamper the efficient and effective day-to-day management of senior and middle managers. Some students do not attend regularly and complexities of organisation make checking on this very difficult. The planning and monitoring of spending is weak. Statutory requirements with regard to the teaching of religious education are not met.

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"> • They are well taught • They are positive about their sixth form experience • Students enjoy their courses • Support from their teachers is very good • Courses are appropriate for their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to teachers on sites which are not their home school • More shared activities between the students on different sites • Better advice on the choice of courses in the sixth form • Better advice on their options after sixth form

During the inspection, students talked positively about what The Kett offered them and how they were confident that initial difficulties were gradually being sorted out. The views expressed by students in the questionnaire closely matched the findings of the inspection team. Access to teachers was sometimes difficult between different sites and further complicated by different computer systems. Inspectors felt there were indeed some missed opportunities for students to join together for certain activities, like careers presentations and assemblies. It was also noted, however, that students were sometimes reluctant to take advantage, or were unaware, of opportunities for shared activities and visits. Year 12 students were more willing to see themselves as part of The Kett, and to benefit from common activities, than Year 13 students. Students would benefit from clearer advice on sixth form courses and their options when they leave.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Throughout this report, references to Key Stage 3 relate to Years 8 and 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, when most take GCSEs, are considered to be in Key Stage 4. Test results at each key stage are compared with the national average, as well as against similar schools¹. In judging standards, inspectors analysed results attained in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 and GCSEs taken in Year 11, both in 2002 and in previous years. Inspectors looked at and judged work currently being done in lessons and at work done throughout the past year. They met with pupils and discussed their work with them as well as with their teachers.
- 2 The attainment of pupils when they join the school in Year 8, as indicated by the results which they attain in the national tests taken at their previous schools at the end of Year 6, has been well below the national average. Pupils who joined the school in 2002 had higher Year 6 test results, and their attainment is below the national average. This is confirmed by the results of testing, using nationally referenced material, carried out by the school at the start of Year 8.
- 3 Results in the end of Year 9 tests in 2002, although well below the national average in all three of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and below the average of similar schools, represent satisfactory achievement when compared with pupils' low starting point. Pupils did less well in English than they did in mathematics or science. In English, where results fell in 2002, pupils achieved less well than would be expected from their Year 6 test scores. By contrast, results in mathematics represent good achievement, and those in science represent very good achievement. The dramatic fall in English results in 2002 can be attributed to the staffing problems suffered by the school over the course of the past year. Over the last five years, results have generally been rising at the same rate as they are nationally. Taken overall, boys and girls perform equally well. In teacher assessments of other subjects, results generally indicated good progress from pupils' attainment at the start of Year 8, particularly so in French and German. Music assessments were low. In art and ICT the results were based on inaccurate systems of assessment.
- 4 Pupils currently in Year 9 are doing better than the 2002 results and are generally working below the expected levels for pupils of their age. They are achieving well, in most subjects, in relation to their well-below average attainment when they come to the school. Their achievement is satisfactory in ICT but they are underachieving in music through weaknesses in teaching, the curriculum and target-setting.
- 5 GCSE results in 2002 (based on comparing the average total point score²) were well below the national average and the average for similar schools. The results were in the lowest five per cent, nationally, for pupils who had obtained similar results in their Year 9 national tests³. Overall, therefore, pupils significantly underachieved in 2002. As in last year's Year 9 results, this can largely be attributed to low English results and this, in turn, reflects the staffing difficulties that have been experienced. Thirty per cent of pupils gained five or more grades A* to C and 77 per cent gained five or more grades A* to G. These proportions were also well below average. Nevertheless, the school results show a rising trend which is broadly similar to the national trend. Boys performed slightly better

¹ Similar schools means those schools in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is between 21 and 35 per cent

² A pupils' GCSE total point score is calculated by scoring a grade A* as 8, a grade A as 7, etc

³ Schools where pupils gained an average point score of least 30 but less than 33.

than girls. The school did not meet the targets it set itself of 34 per cent of pupils gaining 5 or more grades A* to C with an average point score of 30, that it had set itself. The targets set for 2003 are significantly higher than for 2002 and will prove very challenging though inspection evidence suggests that results will be higher in several subjects.

- 6 Comparisons between school and national results are in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C. When a school, as in the case of Blyth-Jex, has pupils starting from a low level of attainment and few higher-attaining pupils, it is not unusual for the school results to be significantly below the national subject averages. The important question is whether the results high enough for these pupils. Results in English were well below the average for schools with pupils who had similar end of Year 9 results and pupils clearly underachieved. In mathematics and science, results were in line with the average for schools with similar Year 9 results. In other subjects, a more detailed analysis shows that in most subjects the majority of pupils gained results that were broadly comparable with the results gained, in those subjects nationally, by pupils with similar results in the end of Year 9 tests.
- 7 The standards of work of pupils currently in Year 11 are an improvement on last year's results and are below the expected level for pupils of their age. Within this overall picture, current standards are at the expected level in history, physical education and religious education and well below expected levels in English and ICT, where pupils have expected knowledge of basic facts but lack the understanding to be able to answer the 'how?' or 'why?' type of questions. In most subjects, pupils are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of Year 10. They are making satisfactory progress in English and in ICT, as staffing is more stable.
- 8 Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make reasonable academic progress in most subjects. When teaching is strong pupils with special educational needs make good progress during individual lessons but, because of inconsistencies in teachers' approaches, they achieve at a satisfactory, rather than good rate over time. They achieve well in mathematics, science, modern languages and humanities. Pupils have also achieved well in the GCSE examinations for design and technology (resistant materials). The school's persistent and successful encouragement of positive behaviour means that those pupils who need to, make good gains in controlling their temper and developing their communication skills.
- 9 Standards of literacy are below average across the age range, but have risen in the last year, particularly in Years 8 and 9. When writing, pupils lack consistency in spelling and punctuation using conventional forms, so that they do not always convey their understanding well. Their ability to discuss ideas and to answer questions in class is better, and matches national expectations. Standards of numeracy are below average but these do not stop pupils learning and making progress in other subjects.

Sixth form

- 10 In almost all of the focus subjects that were inspected, evidence from current work and lessons indicates that the standards of work of students in Year 13 are broadly in line with national averages or above. Continuation rates are sound with over 90 per cent of students continuing studies from Year 12 into Year 13. A few students have started courses but left without completing them, and a few others have changed courses.
- 11 In nearly half the subjects inspected, students' standards are above national averages. In English, standards in Year 13 are better than Year 12 as a result of good teaching, students' commitment and teachers' on-going assessments, which include supportive comments on how to improve. In psychology, standards overall are average but the samples of work seen during the inspection indicate

rising standards due to high teacher expectation and the level of challenge. In French, standards are particularly high in written work and supported well through class discussion, which enables high levels of involvement and interaction.

- 12 The sixth form offers a range of opportunities for all students to continue to study beyond Year 11. On the basis of students' widely differing starting points, they achieve well overall. In several subjects where there is close cooperation of staff in the partner schools, such as in art and design, chemistry and biology, the greater consistency and shared expectations evident in the quality of teaching are positive factors in students' good progress.
- 13 Achievement in business education, geography and performing arts is well above what might be expected of the students concerned. In business education, the improving standards and very good achievement result from the detailed guidance students receive on the examination and course requirements, and teachers' effective use of performance data to plan their lessons. Students are challenged by very effective questioning in geography. In performing arts, the high standards are a result of the high quality and, at times, inspirational teaching. Based on their previous attainment, students are achieving satisfactorily in design and technology. Numbers are very small in German but achievement is at least satisfactory.
- 14 Standards in key skills are satisfactory. The courses are suitably matched to the majority of the students' needs. By successfully compiling portfolios of evidence for Level 2 accreditation, students are well placed to gain the additional points they need to satisfy entry requirements to the universities of their choice. However, for some students, Level 2 accreditation is below the standard they could be expected to achieve, given their prior attainment. Almost all students are working towards accreditation in ICT, to support their studies and future employment prospects. A small number are completing work that fulfils Level 3 in communication as part of their general studies course.
- 15 The promotion and standard of key skills in subjects varies. Good standards of ICT were seen in English and physical education but, in design and technology, the skills were underused. Students' ability to take in information and present it coherently was well developed in media studies and general studies. Standards of oral and written language are underdeveloped in some subjects, with female students generally making more consistent progress than the male students. Mathematics is developed well across a number of subjects in the sixth form. Algebraic skills are used for writing equations and substituting in formulae in chemistry, while students make very good use of their work in mechanics for their physics studies. Statistical skills are developed well in economics, psychology and sociology, as well as in biology for calculations of correlation and regression.
- 16 The small numbers of students with special education needs are supported well and enabled to gain results that represent good overall achievement. Standards achieved by students with particular gifts and talents are satisfactory overall but are inconsistent across the three sites, because identification systems vary.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 17 In their questionnaire responses, 86 per cent of parents indicated that their children liked school. Discussions with pupils confirmed this, with many developing a growing pride in the school. The pride that pupils take in their work is evident from the generally high standard of presentation seen in their work, and this contributes to pupils' good achievement. In lessons, pupils listen attentively and work with concentration, particularly where tasks are broken down into short, well-chosen activities. In most

lessons, pupils settle without fuss to the tasks set by their teachers. Their response is frequently subdued, however. In most subjects, throughout the school, pupils of all abilities are generally slow to volunteer answers to teachers' questions, so that teachers often have to work very hard to get pupils to contribute actively to discussion in lessons.

- 18 Behaviour is good in almost all lessons. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, where there was a significant amount of unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils' good behaviour now contributes positively to the progress that they make. There is still a small number of pupils in each year group who are poorly motivated and whose behaviour gives cause for concern. As a result, however, of the school's very effective systems for managing behaviour and its sound provision for pupils' moral development, incidents of misbehaviour, seen in a few lessons, were not allowed to interrupt the learning of other pupils. In a lesson in Year 8, for example, where a small group of pupils were behaving badly, the teacher was able successfully to deploy the school's systems and called the duty teacher to take some of the pupils out. Significantly, however, all of the other pupils showed real maturity. They got on with their work and none allowed themselves to get distracted. Behaviour around the school is good. When moving between the school's two sites, pupils behave sensibly. They show respect for the school's facilities. None, for example, were seen cutting across the school's soccer pitch. Over the past year, there have been no permanent exclusions and 19 fixed term exclusions. This is below average for schools of similar size.
- 19 As a result of the school's good provision for pupils' social development, relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils get on well with one another, both in lessons and around the school. In lessons, pupils collaborate together effectively when working in pairs and small groups. They share tasks fairly so that each gets a turn. They readily help one another, for example when using computers. In most instances, pupils respond positively to opportunities they are given to take responsibility, for example through the recently re-established School Council. Generally, however, pupils have fewer opportunities to take on responsibilities than are usually seen in secondary schools. This also extends to opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Although pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing in each subject and, as a result of good marking, they mostly know what they need to do to improve, they are very dependent on teachers and do not readily take the initiative in learning, for example through undertaking their own independent research.
- 20 A noticeable strength of the school's provision is the extent to which pupils with special educational needs are included in all activities and so have good opportunities to make friendships with other pupils. Members of staff in the learning support centre (LSC) and in the behaviour improvement centre (BIC) work hard, and successfully, to gain pupils' trust and to motivate them. They genuinely care about pupils, who recognise this and appreciate the help they receive. In lessons that take place in the centres, pupils work industriously at those areas where they have greatest difficulty. In most classes, because of the emphasis that staff place upon clear and consistent expectations of behaviour, pupils with special needs behave well. Their attention is, understandably, held most successfully by skilful teaching. This was evident in a science lesson when you could have heard a pin drop as the teacher demonstrated that contact with water changed the colour of cobalt chloride paper.
- 21 Attendance has improved steadily but it remains well below average. In particular, too many pupils miss valuable lesson time because parents take them out of school for family holidays during the school term. In addition, a number of children have regular bouts of absence due to sickness. These absences, in many instances, are not supported by medical evidence from the pupil's family doctor. Where pupils' attendance is poor, this contributes to their low attainment. Pupils generally arrive at school on time and, in the main, they are punctual in getting to lessons. Inevitably, however, late arrival for the start of lessons is a problem on those occasions when pupils have to move between the school's two sites. It takes about 10 minutes to walk from one site to the other, and when this results in a lesson

starting 10 minutes late, it means a fifth of the lesson time is lost. This problem has arisen from fundamental movement of subject bases, and plans are in hand to resolve it in the next year.

Sixth form

- 22 Attitudes to learning are good. In the lessons seen during the inspection, students were very diligent and well motivated. Almost all students do their set work conscientiously, both in and out of lessons. A few individuals have found the step up to more advanced academic and vocational courses very hard. Some of them attend erratically and do not show the same commitment to work as others when they are in lessons, in spite of teachers' best efforts to support and encourage them. Where teaching is highly motivating and stimulates students to use their initiative and have a go with a piece of work, their responses are impressive. This was evident in a Year 12 dance lesson, where students were inspired to improvise solo phrases based on Christopher Bruce's 'Ghost Dances'. They showed total commitment. Students' responses to the questionnaire completed before the inspection were positive about their experience of the sixth form. The many students with whom formal and informal discussions were held during the inspection endorsed these views. Students valued the wide range of courses available to them and nearly all felt the courses met their needs.
- 23 Students' behaviour is good. They show respect for one another and for adults, and conduct themselves sensibly on journeys from one site to another. Development of their personal and learning skills is satisfactory. Students are willing to cooperate and to support each other, but are not particularly avid and curious learners. For example, in a planned debate about whether war in Iraq was justified, they were happy to offer moral support and to listen to others speaking. They had very limited information on which to draw because they had not read widely enough or done any additional, personal research. Students are less skilled in arguing a case than are others of their age. This is partly because of lack of practice in gathering and using evidence earlier in their school careers. They recognise that they have fairly limited experiences of life beyond the local area to use in debate. The Kett has not yet found a way of broadening students' horizons systematically through a coherent and meaningful enrichment programme, which develops critical thinking skills and lays foundations for independent work, ready for courses of advanced study. Students are happy to be involved in a range of activities beyond lessons and outside school. For example, a few work very well with younger pupils in the Learning Zone. Others play instruments in different bands and ensembles.
- 24 Students are developing positive attitudes to the longer-term benefits of education. They recognise that the effort they make now can contribute positively to what they achieve in adult life. Their commitment offers a secure foundation for a continuing interest in learning. Most students value the wider range of opportunities offered by the new venture and are happy to try to make good use of them, in spite of the inevitable early teething troubles. Most of those who were ill-prepared for the demands of sixth form courses and lacked motivation to persist with their studies, left soon after the start of the first term.
- 25 Relationships are good. Barriers between students from different sites break down as they get used to working together. Some find it easier than others to fit in or be welcoming, but most students show enough goodwill for effective teamwork and collaboration in and out of lessons. They would welcome more shared social and other activities across the sites to foster a sense of community. Some students were happy to take on responsibility for organising a sixth form ball.
- 26 Overall attendance is unsatisfactory. This is partly because absence and dropout rates were high at the start of the year. Absence levels among students who are continuing with their studies are higher than they should be if the vast majority of them are to complete their courses successfully.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 27 Teaching is at least satisfactory and, with much that is good, leads to pupils learning well. It was at least good in more than three fifths of the lessons observed, and in more than one in ten it was very good. A small proportion, about one in twenty, of lessons observed was unsatisfactory. This is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. Teaching is satisfactory or good, overall, in all subjects but music, where it is unsatisfactory over time. It is satisfactory in English and good in mathematics and science.
- 28 Teachers have good knowledge of their subject which is apparent in the way in which many use skilful questioning to determine, at the beginning of a lesson, what pupils really understand and remember from their previous learning. They then build on this foundation to help pupils to learn more. Explanations are clearly given and where pupils experience difficulties, teachers easily draw on their own understanding to re-phrase explanations or look at the problem in a different way. In this way, they are able to meet well the learning needs of individual pupils.
- 29 There is a consistency in sharing with pupils what are the expected learning outcomes from the lesson rather than simply telling them what they are going to be doing. This helps the pupils to understand what it is they should be learning and is the basis for a quick review, at the end of most lessons, of what has been learnt. This strategy, as part of teachers' good planning, provides a sound structure in which pupils can build their knowledge and understanding.
- 30 Teachers manage pupils well. The variety of activities in lessons, including good use of ICT, gains pupils' interest, helps learning to move at a good pace and keeps pupils involved. In their questionnaire responses, 96 per cent of parents expressed the view that the school has high expectations of their children to work hard and achieve their best. Inspectors broadly agree. Teachers set work at an appropriate level for pupils' learning needs, and this is a notable improvement since the last inspection where this was identified as a weakness. As a result, pupils generally behave and concentrate well, and work hard. The difficult behaviour of some pupils is usually handled well with teachers using the school's system if necessary. Where teaching was seen to be unsatisfactory it was generally because the level of work was not well matched to pupils needs, either being undemanding and leading to insufficient learning taking place, or too difficult and leading to behavioural problems which were not adequately managed.
- 31 Teachers have a clear understanding of what is needed for examination success. The requirements of particular National Curriculum levels are often prominently displayed and reference to these is generally included in the good marking of pupils' work. The range of activities and teaching strategies, including discussion and an emphasis upon the correct use of subject vocabulary, cover the curriculum requirements of most subjects well. This helps pupils practise and develop their basic oracy, literacy and numeracy skills. It helps pupils develop well the necessary subject skills, for example skills of investigation in science, of designing in technology or of analysis of evidence in history. Pupils have clear, well-understood target levels or grades to work towards. The marking of their work, and the written comments of teachers, helps them to recognise what they have achieved, what they need to do to improve and how they might go about this. This is a clear strength in most subjects across the school and is helping pupils to learn and so raise their standards of attainment. It is not the case in music where the teaching uses limited strategies which do not cover the requirements of the National Curriculum and assessment is weak.
- 32 Lessons for small groups of pupils, led by teaching assistants in the learning support centre, are of consistently good quality. They are characterised by good relationships between pupils and staff and a clear focus, so pupils understand what they are doing and why. These features mean that pupils work hard and the lessons move along at a suitably rapid pace, enabling pupils to assimilate information and practice skills without becoming bored.

- 33 The quality of teaching of pupils with special needs in classes in the main school is more varied but is at least satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers plan very carefully to take pupils' individual needs into account. They modify questions in order to both include and challenge different pupils according to their level of understanding, thereby achieving a skilful balance of sensitive and demanding teaching. In good lessons, teachers make sure that the resources are likely to capture pupils' interest, such as an excerpt from Richard Branson's biography describing a dangerous moment with his hot air balloon. When teaching is unsatisfactory it is because teachers have not planned sufficiently carefully either to use helpful resources or to address individual needs and so pupils with special educational needs lack interest, focus and purpose. While all teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils, the effectiveness of their support in lessons varies. They are most helpful to pupils and staff when they have the confidence to take initiative and move around the class providing discreet reminders about behaviour and extra explanations as required. The high personal teaching commitment of the special educational needs co-ordinator significantly curtails opportunities to visit classes and see how teachers and support assistants are getting on and there is very little opportunity for support staff to discuss their role with teachers. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported, if necessary, within the classroom.
- 34 The highest-attaining pupils are challenged well by some of the work that they are given to do but this is not consistently the case. This issue was identified in the previous report. Since then, a programme of extra-curricular support and challenge has been introduced to respond to their learning needs. The professional development of teachers has led to better opportunities being provided in the teaching programmes but the school recognises, and is planning to meet, the need for further development.

Sixth form

- 35 Overall, teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better. One third of the lessons observed were very good or excellent and four-fifths were good or better. Teaching in all subjects was at least satisfactory and in most it was good. Teaching was very good in chemistry, geography, business education and performing arts, and satisfactory in design and technology.
- 36 The strengths of the teaching were the teachers' very good subject knowledge combined with their awareness of examination requirements. In performing arts, some outstanding teaching results in high levels of creative, intellectual effort and learning. In history, where teachers have a very good knowledge of assessment and examination criteria, their teaching was carefully tailored to meeting these requirements. In media studies and geography, teachers' expert exposition, with probing and challenging questioning, engaged students and led to very good learning.
- 37 A very good contribution to learning in business education was made by the targeted coaching and the rigorous and constructive marking of students' work that shows them how to improve their grades. Teaching also exploits the links between real life experiences and the students' coursework, to excellent effect. In a lesson on customer service, a student who works in a local store was able to compare personal experience with the theoretical model being discussed.
- 38 Students were positive about the support they received from staff and commented that teachers made their lessons interesting and gave generously of their time outside lessons. Notable examples of these good relationships were in biology, where teachers use Internet conferencing to stay in regular contact with their students and in geography, where teachers were effective in teaching the skills that enable students to study independently.

- 39 Teachers provide stimulating and good quality work for students with special educational needs. Work in individual subjects is well matched to their learning needs.
- 40 The weaker aspects of this overall positive picture of teaching and learning lie in the limited range of teaching and learning styles used and the insufficiently systematic development of the key skills that promote students' independent and autonomous learning. In some English and biology lessons, students were so intent on taking notes that there were few opportunities for them to ask questions, explore ideas and to interact with the teacher and others in the class. In mathematics, teacher talk tended to dominate the lessons and, at times, students were not fully engaged in the work.
- 41 Where teaching groups are small, students' learning can be restricted, because they are unable to share ideas widely and learn as part of a group. It also makes it difficult for teachers to plan a diverse and stimulating range of learning opportunities. For some students, the combination of these factors, together with the length of sessions when lessons are blocked together, causes them to lose interest and motivation.

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

- 42 In Years 8 and 9, the school offers the full National Curriculum with additional features – a broad expressive arts element that includes dance, a taught personal, social and health education (PSHE) course and, in Year 8, a communication skills course alternating with drama. All pupils follow a taught course in ICT and can choose either French or German as a foreign language. The good breadth of the curriculum is achieved through its pattern of six 50-minute lessons daily, which has been devised partly to facilitate movement between the two school sites. The penalty for this is that the single weekly period allocated to art and music falls below the recommended time for these subjects. The curriculum in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory overall in its breadth, balance and relevance to pupils' needs.
- 43 In Year 11, pupils follow a conventional curriculum of a core of eight subjects, which includes PSHE, careers and a short GCSE religious education course for all. A choice of history or geography and two from a good range of academic, expressive and vocational subjects completes the offer. The real emerging strength of the school's curriculum lies in its revised and innovative structure for the current Year 10. Following a smaller core of subjects, which still includes PSHE, careers, religious education and an ICT course, pupils can choose a series of well-structured pathways taking them along academic, vocational or work-related routes, with continuity into post-16 education in the sixth form or further education college. The new curriculum model is closely aligned to national initiatives and is specifically designed to meet the needs and aspirations of the school's pupils. The quality, breadth and relevance of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 are good overall.
- 44 Planning and organisation of the curriculum in individual subjects are good in mathematics, science, history, geography, physical education, English in Years 8 and 9 and design and technology in Years 10 and 11. Elsewhere, they are satisfactory with the exception of music, where the full requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met in Years 8 and 9.
- 45 There are several strengths in the curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs. These arise from a thoughtful response to meeting pupils' individual needs and a shared commitment to including all pupils as much as possible in all subjects, activities and experiences. This is evident with the inclusion, for example, of pupils with physical disabilities in physical education. It is also apparent in the organisation of lessons that take place for individuals or small groups in the learning support centre. These are arranged on a rota basis so that pupils do not miss the same lesson each week. Similarly, it

is to the school's credit that members of staff avoid pigeon-holing pupils, with the result that those who receive extra help for literacy, have strengths in mathematics acknowledged. The 'alternative curriculum', with its emphasis upon work experience and social skills, is very helpful to certain pupils, often those who have difficulty in coping with conventional National Curriculum lessons. It is available to many pupils who benefit from the structure and support of the BIC, although it is not exclusive to these pupils.

- 46 Early assessments are carried out to determine the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Limited specialist support is available for those at an early stage of learning the language. Teachers are aware of the targets in the pupils' IEPs and plan work accordingly. Good practice was observed, amongst others in English, science and religious education. Pupils are well supported, for example through minority language dictionaries in the library and some subject areas and laboratory safety instructions in minority languages. Pupils have the opportunity, where possible, to be examined in their mother tongue. Numbers vary from year to year. In 2002, two pupils achieved A* grades in Hebrew and Persian. One pupil has been entered for Hebrew this year and some pupils in Year 10 will be examined in Bengali and Punjabi.
- 47 The school is tackling pupils' literacy needs well across the subjects, especially in Years 8 and 9. Subject specific vocabulary is stressed and pupils are taught their definitions and encouraged to use the language accurately. Discussion is used well, in some subjects, to encourage pupils to express their thoughts and ideas and to justify judgements. Other subjects, for example history and geography, provide good opportunities for pupils to improve their writing. The library promotes reading for pleasure, well. The school's policy to ensure that each subject takes responsibility for improving literacy is having a beneficial effect. The school has worked hard on developing its numeracy policy and the majority of departments have built numeracy into their schemes of work. As a result, most departments are using opportunities to develop this work well as part of the routine teaching. In geography for example, pupils use scales and coordinates.
- 48 The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. A strong programme of sports includes competitive games in which school teams have achieved local successes. English enhanced by poetry events, quizzes and an active library club. Science offers a masterclass for gifted and talented pupils, and visits to First World War battlefields support history and French. Additionally there are visits to galleries and exhibitions to support work in art. Revision and study support sessions are offered in mathematics, design and technology, information technology and languages. There is a good school orchestra, featuring a wide range of instruments. The programme of events for pupils identified as gifted and talented is developing well. The newly-appointed co-ordinator has an infectious enthusiasm and the programme benefits from his wider contacts.
- 49 The curriculum is designed and managed with full regard both to the range of pupils' aptitudes and needs and to the need to manage its implementation on a split school site. Pupils have good access to all aspects of the curriculum and the increased flexibility of the new arrangement in Year 10 represents an effort to provide a distinctive and more personalised education for all pupils. The governors maintain a good critical overview of the curriculum through their curriculum and standards committee. Recent committee minutes show a broad range of discussion of curriculum issues, including presentations from various subject areas. The curriculum is managed and organised well and the school intends to apply to its forthcoming review of Years 8 and 9 the same sort of innovative thinking that has led to the quality of the current Year 10 curriculum.
- 50 Provision for PSHE is very good. It is taught, as a subject, by a small team of teachers within the humanities area. The work is very well planned, including lesson plans linked to appropriate teaching materials. The programme includes all the nationally required areas. Drugs and sex education are an

integral part and are dealt with, progressively, as pupils move through the school. The school keeps parents aware of their right to withdraw pupils from sex education. Careers education is also integral, with elements of careers-related work for each year group. The school has developed a very good resource for careers within the library and this is well used to support careers lessons and as an additional reference resource. The developing role of the local Connexions service is supporting the work well. Careers advice is open and pupils are made aware of the post 16 opportunities available to them. An increasing number of pupils is looking to continue education in the Kett sixth form. A very good programme of work experience is carefully planned and built into the teaching programme. The school was part of a small, county working group putting this material together. It is now used by all the county's schools.

- 51 The school is active in seeking ways in which the community can contribute to pupils' learning. Business and enterprise links are being formed with institutions like the HSBC bank. A numeracy trail has been developed in Norwich castle. The school runs its own bank, with external support. Plans are well advanced to introduce the Young Enterprise scheme and hold enterprise days. A graduate mentor works with selected Year 11 pupils who show potential for higher education and the school is working to widen pupils' horizons and raise their self-confidence in this area. The Connexions team are working, with a wide variety of agencies, to develop personal relationships.
- 52 During the past two years, the school has been very active in developing its links with middle schools. Visits have been made to the main feeder schools, Year 7 co-ordinators have visited their former pupils and there has been a good level of exchange of data, curriculum plans and schemes of work. Joint planning and teaching ventures have been undertaken in science, design and technology, history and geography and the overall quality of links and relationships is now good.
- 53 The school makes satisfactory provision, overall, for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when, in particular, provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development was identified as in need of improvement. Each faculty now deliberately plans for these aspects of pupils' personal development and attempts have been made to identify opportunities in each subject for experiences such as reflection and empathy with others. A good feature of this planning is that its success, or otherwise, is assessed frankly. This honest and open approach to auditing what the school does, puts the school in a good position to further improve its provision. The school's sound provision for pupils' personal development contributes to the improved relationships, behaviour and attitudes seen in the inspection.
- 54 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for reflection in some subjects, particularly art, science, modern foreign languages and religious education. In science, for example, inspectors saw some thoughtful work on environmental issues when considering the impact of acid rain. Weekly themes, linking year group assemblies and the 20-minute afternoon form periods, include some opportunities for empathy in issues, such as human rights. In a Year 9 assembly, for example, the headteacher spoke movingly of her experience in touring Mozambique and meeting children who had been denied access to pens and writing paper. Some opportunities for reflection are missed, however, and sometimes pupils are less awed than teachers expect. Some assemblies offer only a perfunctory opportunity for thoughtful reflection. The assemblies do not constitute an act of collective worship and the school does not meet the statutory requirement.
- 55 There is sound provision for pupils' moral development. Together with the very good systems in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, this results in pupils behaving well, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils have opportunities to discuss and take a stand on moral issues, particularly when learning about citizenship and in religious education and geography. They are given the opportunity to organise charity fund-raising activities. The recently re-established school council,

involving representatives elected from each year group, is discussing issues of real interest and concern to pupils and is beginning to play a part in the leadership of the school. There are generally fewer opportunities for pupils to take individual positions of responsibility than are often found in other schools. Although there is a prefect scheme, with pupils in Year 11 given some authority, the school acknowledges that this is not working very effectively this year. Some of the prefects in Year 11 do not always represent the best role models for younger pupils.

- 56 The school does a good job in promoting pupils' social development. Although pupils do not join the school until the start of Year 8, many are relatively immature when they start at Blyth-Jex. The very good pastoral support they receive, coupled with the numerous well-planned opportunities they have in most subjects for good collaborative working, enables them to quickly settle into orderly routines. These support their learning and contribute to their generally good achievement. For example, the productive paired working in French contributes to the progress that they make. Through working together effectively in lessons, pupils are helped to get on well with one another and with the teachers and other adults in the school. Pupils are encouraged to take a pride in the school and in their own work. Investment by the school in improving the school environment, for example by refurbishing the toilets, has resulted in raised self-esteem among pupils. In turn, pupils' personal pride is reflected in the good standard of presentation of their work.
- 57 Promotion of pupils' cultural development is satisfactory and includes learning about other cultures in preparation for life in multicultural Britain. Some subjects, particularly art and modern languages, make a good contribution to pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures. There are some good elements too in religious education, where pupils learn about the beliefs and values of different faiths, although opportunities are missed for organising visits to different places of worship or for bringing in speakers who can talk directly to pupils about their personal experiences and beliefs. Opportunities are also missed for developing pupils' appreciation of music. In addition to the weaknesses in the school's curriculum provision for this subject, music does not routinely make a contribution to school assemblies.

Sixth form

- 58 The quality and range of learning opportunities in the curriculum are good. The curriculum is broad and offers students a very wide range of courses to choose from. It caters well for all their differing abilities and aspirations by offering a mix of academic courses and both intermediate and advanced vocational programmes. For a small number of students, a one-year course, taught partly in The Kett and partly in a work environment, provides a very effective bridge between formal education and employment. The curriculum is very well matched to local circumstances and students' benefit from additional opportunities provided by local colleges of further education.
- 59 All students attend a weekly tutorial. Some tutors use the session well, extending students' general knowledge and their awareness of world events through planned debates and presentations.
- 60 Additional breadth is provided through the work-shadowing programme, one of a number of initiatives aimed at raising students' aspirations and enriching the formal curriculum. For some students it has been a chance to set their studies and coursework in a wider context, whilst for others it has been a chance to 'taste' a particular profession and to confirm or rethink their career plans.
- 61 A good range of extra curricular provision includes team sports, such as basketball and football, visits and visitors. Students take part in field trips and there are strong links with the community through performances, exhibitions and performing arts activities. Groups have visited the House of Commons, participated in conferences and attended presentations by visiting speakers. Visits are made to local

places of interest and abroad. Travelling time between sites makes it hard for some students to join together to participate in team games and other after-school activities.

- 62 Currently, and while the sixth form is still being established, there is a mismatch between the numbers staying on into the sixth form and the number of courses offered. This has led to the creation of some very small teaching groups, particularly in Year 13, as The Kett honours a promise to continue running advanced level courses once students have begun their studies.
- 63 To enable the sixth form to operate across the three schools, subjects have a fixed amount of time, arranged within two half-day sessions each week. The long periods of time are used imaginatively and productively in some subjects but there are significant disadvantages in the organisation of others. The arrangement is very effective where teachers plan and use the time well, for example by allowing for changes of activities and sometimes changes of staff. Many students value the extended time that enables them to concentrate on a particular subject and for the extended study time. However, a short absence by a student or member of staff results in the loss of a large proportion of teaching and learning time. Curriculum planning across The Kett as a whole is still at an early stage.
- 64 Students' communication and ICT skills are appropriately supported through key skills lessons, but provision for numeracy is problematic because timetable constraints mean only small numbers are able to access the course. The Kett has no specific policy for developing numeracy, ICT and literacy within subjects.
- 65 One notional half-day session provides reduced curriculum time and attempts to make-up the time elsewhere in the week are unsuccessful. This creates inequalities in subjects that affect students' attainment and progress.
- 66 A weakness of the curriculum is the variability of access and provision for ICT. Currently, each site has a different set of computer programs and the systems are not linked. This creates problems for students, accessing and modifying their work on different sites, and a considerable loss of time spent in reformatting it.
- 67 Statutory requirements with regard to the teaching of religious education are not met.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 68 Arrangements for child protection are very good. A well-established policy complies with locally agreed procedures and the designated person has undergone recent and relevant training. Systems and procedures are published and well known by staff, and teachers and ancillary workers receive appropriate training.
- 69 Health and safety procedures are also very good. Regular and appropriate checks are carried out, where necessary by outside contractors, for example on electrical equipment and physical education equipment. There is a very clear procedure for notifying any defect or problem and all notifications are dealt with speedily, many within 24 hours. Detailed, relevant records are kept and are accessible for all who need them. A health and safety audit was carried out in 2002 and all issues arising from this have been resolved or are in the process of being tackled. First-aid boxes are strategically placed around the two school sites. The number of trained first-aid people at present is low to cover effectively the two sites but others are in the process of undergoing training and this will rectify the situation.
- 70 Form tutors and year managers move through the school with their pupils, so they know them very well. Pupil records are kept up to date and are accessible to form tutors when needed. Constant

monitoring of pupils takes place, often through the use of incident sheets. Pupils feel sufficiently secure with their teachers to self-refer when they feel that they need some extra assistance in maintaining standards, whether it be of work or behaviour. This sense of security contributes to the feeling that any incidences of bullying will be dealt with promptly by the staff. A measure of the success of this strategy is the good behaviour which was noted on and between the two school sites during the inspection.

- 71 The school has made great progress since the last inspection in improving behaviour generally and in making every effort to keep pupils within the school education system. The use of a behaviour contract and the existence of the BIC have made a tremendous contribution to this initiative. Pupil management meetings are held weekly, where good practice is shared and particularly serious issues are passed on. This has led to a consistency of approach throughout the school. A well-defined series of steps, within the procedures, are very well known to all pupils and staff, so pupils who are causing concern know exactly where they are and what is likely to happen next should they not modify their behaviour.
- 72 Attendance is still a cause for concern as it was in the last report. The school has instituted a variety of measures to improve the situation, for example first-day calling for any absence, and these are slowly beginning to show effect. Form tutors and year managers monitor attendance very closely and absences are analysed very carefully to identify any patterns. The emphasis the school has placed on the importance of attendance, and the measures they have put in place, are slowly being effective in raising the overall standards of attainment in the school.
- 73 The rewards system in the school is very well-liked by all pupils who try hard to gain the awards on offer, both individually and collectively as form groups. The system has been instrumental in improving behaviour generally and in promoting attendance, and these in turn have contributed to the raising of standards and achievements.
- 74 Overall, arrangements for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic performance are very good. The school collates information on each pupil, from the results of national and other tests. Test results, together with national referencing, are used to determine target grades in each subject. Teachers review pupils' academic progress at the end of each term and report on pupils' effort every half-term. This enables a comparison to be made between the pupils' effort and progress, and the target grade. Further encouragement is provided by a higher, 'challenging' level or grade. Pupils record their targets in their personal journals. They are fully aware of their targets, are able to explain what they mean and welcome the system as a valuable aid to improving personal performance.
- 75 The school uses the accumulating information to check the overall progress of the subject departments. Heads of department have been trained in the use of the data and are able to assess departmental performance and the performance of different classes within the subject. The approach is not yet fully embedded, although the majority of departments are effectively using the information.
- 76 The majority of classroom teachers use the information well and respond to the target grades as part of the routine marking of pupils' work. In mathematics for example, marking includes a reference to the level or grade of the work being marked, and enables the pupil and teacher to see whether the target is being met. Marking also includes additional advice on what the pupil needs to do to improve and reach the final target. Similar approaches are used, for example in English, science, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Teachers in history and geography make good use of the information to track and guide pupils' progress and to adapt their teaching. Assessment systems are not yet fully implemented in music and ICT.

Sixth form

Assessment

- 77 Assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance is sound. Assessment is good in English, art, media studies, history and sociology and, in the AVCE business course, the targeted guidance about how to improve helps students to make very good progress. Students are encouraged and receive good levels of support and guidance from subject teachers. However, in some subjects, whilst the oral feedback is of high quality there is insufficient written information given to students explaining how they can modify and improve their work. Access to teachers outside lessons is sometimes difficult and students would appreciate more written comments to guide their independent study.
- 78 The Kett is currently establishing a common assessment programme across the three sites. This includes the setting of target grades, based on each student's previous attainment, and the opportunity for subject areas to use assessment data to help in evaluating courses. Regular reviews of progress suitably involve the student, tutor and parent. Reporting arrangements are appropriate, with regular written progress reports. These include a record of target grades and the agreed "next steps" needed for progress in each subject. Timely opportunities are also being incorporated for guidance on higher education and careers, although further development is needed for the efficient coordination of careers advice across the three sites.

Advice, support and guidance

- 79 Students receive effective individual support and guidance from their subject teachers and tutors, overall. The relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students value the way that teachers are prepared to help them by running additional revision classes and arranging one-to-one tutorials. They expressed the view that the good support they receive contributes to their good progress.
- 80 Students found the taster days and the induction arrangements very useful and instructive. The management meetings between course leaders from the different sites are helping staff to become more aware of what is offered in The Kett and enabling them to provide better quality and more reliable guidance to their students.
- 81 In discussion, students had mixed feelings about the two-week work-shadowing programme. Some felt it gave them little new information and distracted them from their other work, but others were very enthusiastic and valued the experience and the contacts they had made. Most students feel the appointment system to meet with careers officers is very helpful, and the links with universities and national businesses are helping them recognise the potential benefits of study and work beyond their immediate locality. Nevertheless, some students feel they were not given appropriate advice about their future options. Students from different sites miss the chance to share the presentations provided by careers officers. This is because the organisation of these events is not coordinated, each site having a different careers officer.
- 82 The partnership adopts a successful 'early warning' system to identify the students who are struggling and in need of additional help. However, despite the best efforts of the staff, a small but significant proportion of students lose motivation and drop out of courses, sometimes because they cannot keep up with the level of work or because they discover the course is not what they expected. The Kett has begun to tackle this on a number of fronts, initially by ensuring students have the qualifications that support study at a higher level and that, early in the course, they receive realistic predictions of their

likely success. An achievement project has been introduced to give support to vulnerable students or those who are finding it difficult to meet their personal goals. Learning mentors give one-to-one advice and support to these students.

- 83 The necessary steps have been taken to ensure students' safety to and from different sites. However, the weaknesses that stem from incompatible computer systems, also affect the extent to which attendance can be speedily and effectively monitored. The records showing which students are on site are not always accurate. The three schools have different systems for tracking absences, and for checking that absentees do not fall further behind if they are struggling. The lack of an efficient, common system to check who is away and why, results in unreliable attendance data for the sixth form, particularly as teachers do not always take a register. This makes it very difficult to follow up on occasional or repeated absence, and to take steps to support the student before it is too late to make a difference.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 84 The number of parents who returned their questionnaires or attended the pre-inspection meeting was low. They expressed broad satisfaction with the school. A high proportion say their children like school. Nine out of ten parents consider that the school is approachable and that their children make good progress. All but a handful consider that the school expects pupils to work hard and do their best. Inspectors agree with these positive views.
- 85 Around one in five parents were unhappy with homework. From the few comments on questionnaires, as many thought there was too much, as too little. Many, of those who expressed concerns, were worried principally with the fact that the agreed timetable for the setting of homework was not always kept to by teachers. Inspectors consider that the amount of homework is appropriate but agree that the situation could be improved if all teachers kept to the agreed schedule for setting homework so that pupils do not find they are given too much to do at once.
- 86 Almost a quarter of those parents who returned their questionnaires considered that the school does not work closely with them, and this is a significant minority. The evidence from the inspection is that the school works hard to involve parents and to keep them well informed. In addition to annual reports on pupils' progress, which are satisfactory, parents are sent a short statement each half-term which summarises their children's progress and effort in each subject. There are regular, informative newsletters, written in a friendly, readable style. The school has made attempts to survey parents' views through questionnaires so that they can take account of them when setting priorities for development but, as with the Ofsted questionnaire, the response rate has been low. Attendance by parents at evenings organised by the school is often poor. Even at evenings held to discuss their children's progress, attendance by parents is unusually low, with sometimes only half turning up to meet teachers.
- 87 The lack of support of a significant minority of parents also has an effect on pupils' attendance. A number of pupils miss lesson time because parents keep them off school for frequent, sporadic incidents of minor ill-health which are insufficiently serious to involve referral to a doctor, and many pupils miss a significant amount of teaching because parents book family holidays during the school term.
- 88 Parents expressed positive views about the sixth form in the meeting prior to the inspection and in their responses to the questionnaire. They valued the added breadth and choice The Kett provided and showed an understanding about the teething troubles that they felt were gradually being dealt with. There were however some concerns regarding communications, in particular about students'

attendance and on the reporting procedures that enabled parents to monitor the progress being made. A point was raised about the need for teachers on the three sites to share consistent expectations and to demonstrate their commitment to the underlying philosophy of The Kett.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 89 Leadership and management of the school are very good. Although the headteacher has been in post for less than two years, her contribution and commitment to the school date from considerably earlier. Since her appointment as headteacher, she has taken forward the developmental work, begun by her predecessor, with great resolve and effectiveness. Her excellent leadership has been a key factor in the rapid improvement of the school to its current effectiveness, with high morale and a very positive outlook for the future. Leadership is characterised by a very clear vision of a school at the heart of the community it serves, striving for continued improvement, seeking to raise the achievement and consequent feeling of self-worth of all who learn and teach there. There is a clear unity of purpose within the school, towards these goals.
- 90 The contribution of other senior managerial staff is very good. Roles are very clearly defined and carried out with high commitment, energy and effectiveness. Senior managers have been carefully deployed to concentrate on areas in which their particular strengths can have the best impact. Year managers support the school's work very well, ensuring that procedures are used well to monitor and guide the progress of pupils. The clear structures for line-managing faculties and subject departments work well in most cases. The leadership and management of faculties and subject departments are good overall. They are very strong in science, where they have succeeded in transforming the faculty in a very short time. In most cases, subject leaders have a good awareness of the strengths and issues for development in their areas, and play an effective role in monitoring and improving, teaching and learning. Leadership and management in English and ICT, where there have been recent appointments and staffing difficulties remain, are satisfactory. Leadership and management of music are poor, with underachievement, only perfunctory assessment procedures in place and a failure to meet statutory curriculum requirements.
- 91 The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the work of the school. Governors, many of whom are fairly recent appointments, have a high commitment to the school, a general awareness of its achievements and the challenges that it faces, are appreciative of the improvements that have been achieved, and express strong support for the direction in which it is moving. Many governors regularly visit the school and these visits, together with regular reports to governors by subject leaders, help to keep them informed. However, governors rely on the school for much of their information and to monitor its own performance. There are currently no formal systems for the governors to do this, for example by having close, regular, monitoring links to particular subject areas. Regular meetings between the headteacher and senior governors have been productive in raising some challenging questions and the committee structure has been helpful in improving the extent to which governors scrutinise the various areas of the school's work and in increasing their role in this. The governors fulfil their statutory duties with the exception of ensuring the provision of a daily act of collective worship and of full access to the National Curriculum in music.
- 92 The school questions what it is doing and how successful it is frequently and thoroughly, and takes effective action to improve. Most subject leaders regularly observe lessons and check pupils' work within their departments. The curriculum management group meets weekly and is an effective forum for reviewing practice and planning improvements. It provides good links between subject leaders and ensures they have a good understanding of a whole-school perspective. The information gathered from examinations, testing and marking is systematically analysed and used well to identify issues and to set individual and subject targets.

- 93 A first task for the headteacher, on taking over the school, was to complete the overhaul of teaching and learning. Good systems were introduced to determine strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and the governors and senior management did not shirk from making difficult decisions regarding the structure of the staff team to ensure the quality of learning improved. The school is now working hard to improve the recruitment and retention of staff. It has recently started working towards Investors in People as a way of demonstrating the value of staff as its most important resource. Links with a university education department have been re-established and have resulted in the school accepting several initial teacher training (ITT) students to help attract new teachers and bring new ideas to the school.
- 94 A very good school improvement plan is well focused on the key issues from the last inspection and links these with the school's own priorities, derived from its good self-evaluation. The priorities included are very appropriate for moving the school forward from its current position. Tasks are clearly identified and costed, responsibilities are assigned and criteria for success are declared. The implementation of the plan is closely monitored and its effectiveness is carefully evaluated. The identified underachievement has led to firm action. For example, the English faculty has been moved to the other site to be nearer to the library, the Year 10 curriculum has been fundamentally changed and there have been important changes in the design and technology options in a developing partnership with a school with specialist technology college status. There is a strong commitment to the National Key Stage 3 Strategy as an effective tool for improvement. Moving faculty bases has resulted in a school year of extra pupil movement between sites and the consequent loss of teaching time to travel time. Plans are well advanced to extend the school day from September 2003 to include time for travelling between sites.
- 95 The school's budget is currently under considerable pressure. Within the constraints imposed by this, the school takes spending decisions carefully and uses its available resources well to support its planned development. Financial systems are tight and effective. The last audit concluded that the school was managing its finances properly, with no major issues being identified.
- 96 Through continually reviewing its effectiveness, by identifying areas of weaknesses through the careful analysis of national test data and comparison with schools both locally and nationally, the school is clearly demonstrating good practice in seeking to achieve best value from the use of its resources. Good procedures are in place to ensure value for money in the spending of resources, for example through considering how other schools have found more cost-effective ways of providing cover for absent teachers. The school council is providing an opportunity for pupils to voice their opinions about the education they receive; teachers have many opportunities to do so but, in spite of the school's best efforts, successful ways have yet to be found to elicit the views of the majority of parents.
- 97 Good leadership of the special educational needs department has successfully promoted a strong climate of mutual support and team work which means, for example, that all support staff willingly take a share in the essential administrative tasks. The co-ordinator leads a team which never loses sight of the importance of recognising the individual nature of pupils' difficulties. This contributes to the strong relationships with pupils and so plays a significant part in pupils being willing to accept help in class. This in turn has a direct bearing on how well pupils learn. Pupils themselves are satisfied customers who appreciate the help they receive and readily identify their improvements, such as *'I can spell computer now'*. Attendance is not an issue for these pupils. Nevertheless, the special educational needs co-ordinator's too heavy teaching timetable means that monitoring teaching or the work of support staff in lessons does not take place. This accounts for some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of support staff in different lessons.

- 98 The lack of time for the special educational needs co-ordinator to fulfil his role has also contributed to the school being too far behind in its implementation of the new Code of Practice. There is no-one in the school with a really good understanding of the implications of the new Code. Key staff have not had the training they need in order to inform themselves sufficiently to drive the necessary developments for the school. However, this situation has also arisen because, while recognising that the provision for pupils with special educational needs is an area for development, senior managers have not got together to plan a considered and informed response to the new requirements.
- 99 The BIC is led and managed well on a day-to-day basis. The manager's experience of youth work and understanding of pupils' difficulties has a direct bearing on the success achieved in bringing pupils' quite extreme behaviour difficulties under control and preventing exclusions. However, day-to-day practice far exceeds the school's longer term planning. While the senior manager acknowledges, for example, the risk of pupils becoming too dependent on the centre, there is no rigorous discussion determining how best to develop its work.
- 100 The school has had a turbulent time since it was last inspected. The turnover of staff has been substantial. Over the last five years there have been four different headteachers and all subject departments have had some level of staffing disruption. The disruption has also affected administrative and support staff, with the replacement of nearly all administrative assistants and 13 teaching assistants.
- 101 As a result of many highly successful appointments the school is now adequately staffed. Specialist teachers are generally well matched to their curriculum responsibilities in most departments, and they are supported by a good number of highly valued learning support and clerical assistants. Response to advertisements has been generally poor with some subject areas attracting only one applicant. Very few people outside Norfolk apply for posts in the school and the school is trying new advertising initiatives to tackle this. Staff new to the school, and newly qualified teachers, are supported well through an effective induction programme and informative staff handbook. Newly qualified teachers are regularly observed teaching by senior staff and have a well-structured programme of meetings to induct them into the profession.
- 102 Arrangements for the professional development of teaching and support staff are good. Effective internal training courses and procedures identify and respond to individual training needs, linked to the school's aims. Good practice is shared within the school but there remains inconsistency across some departments. Administrative and technical staff receive some joint training with teaching staff and training specific to their own roles. The school has recently canvassed the views of all staff regarding membership of the Norfolk well-being scheme. The arrangements for performance management are satisfactory. Targets for improvement are rigorous and carefully develop the key areas identified by individual staff. Support mechanisms are clear and built into the planning well. As a result of all these measures the quality of teaching and learning are improving and the school is becoming more popular with pupils and teachers.
- 103 Accommodation is good on both sites, with the exception of some of the design and technology rooms which are ill-equipped for their purpose and the audio-visual room for modern foreign languages which is out of commission.. The west site is a particular strength as it reflects the caring nature of the school and promotes the valuing of pupil work, through the quality of display. Departments have suites of room and plenty of nearby storage space. Resources are good, although there are shortages in ICT provision in music, design and technology and science. The library is a strength for the main school. It is a very pleasant room, well-stocked with books and periodicals. The librarian works well with departments to develop pupils' library skills and promote their use of the resource.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

- 104 Overall leadership and management of the sixth form are sound with some significant strengths and also areas for improvement.
- 105 The headteachers and governors, with the support of the director of the sixth form and the key staff from partner schools, have shown very good leadership. Opening The Kett has been an ambitious and visionary project, led by the three headteachers. Their outstanding vision is underpinned by the desire to raise students' aspirations and actively to encourage an enthusiasm for learning that will last beyond formal education. The Kett is shortly to complete a second academic year in which a lot has been achieved over a relatively short time. Whilst key staff realise there is still much to do, governors and headteachers are solidly behind the partnership and recognise the benefits to the whole student population.
- 106 By pooling the resources that each school generates for seventeen- and eighteen-year-old students, The Kett gives them greater choice, and access to relevant courses that would be uneconomic and unviable in separate schools. The sixth form, and the preparation for it, promotes life-long learning. Students, who had not previously seen themselves as learners beyond the age of sixteen, have enrolled on courses and are taking an active part in the life of The Kett. There have been positive gains in helping to raise students' aspirations and achievement.
- 107 The leadership and management of subjects and courses are good or very good in about half the subjects inspected and sound in the rest. In some subjects, for example in art and design, the sciences and psychology, staff have taken the initiative, embraced the idea of The Kett and are sharing good practice, expertise and experiences. Regular meetings have led to the formation of common documentation and joint planning in some subjects, or in others, to teachers' better understanding and awareness of what each school offers. There have been gains for teachers' professional development and for students transferring from Year 11 to Year 12. However, in a few subjects, where the questions of seniority or individual roles and responsibilities within The Kett have not been addressed squarely, changes are proving slow to happen. This accounts for some of the inconsistencies that exist, across subjects and sites, and the lost opportunities for collaboration.
- 108 A key weakness that hampers efficient management is in the means of communication. The computer systems that underpin so much of the organisation and management of The Kett are incompatible. This affects the speed and flow of information from one site to another and restricts the efficiency and smooth running of the routine day-to-day work of senior staff and subject leaders. The tasks of checking attendance, accessing assessment data, having regular contact with colleagues and students and processing examination entries, are time-consuming and cause enormous frustration for staff. On occasion, serious mis-communication has occurred. Improving these management systems and standardising the information and layout of key documents, like the timetable and performance data, would allow staff to concentrate their time and efforts on securing improvement and raising standards. For students, it would help improve communications with teachers across sites and allow them better access to their work on computers, and in a form that more accurately reflects the business environment that they are likely to meet outside school.
- 109 Monitoring of what is being offered is satisfactory overall. The strengths include the programme of monitoring led by the director of the sixth form and the professional development opportunities that spring from these activities. Senior staff are well placed to capitalise on the strengths identified and tackle areas for development in their individual schools and across the sixth form.

- 110 The governing body, in full support of the vision for its future, has ensured that the partnership arrangements for The Kett are protected within a legal framework. A rationale for the distribution of resources, and how they benefit students, underpins these arrangements. Governors have a sound understanding of how the aims are being implemented and the strengths and weaknesses within the curriculum. However, they have not been sufficiently probing of the links between their strategic plans and the detail of the financial arrangements.
- 111 Governors are aware that they are not fulfilling their statutory obligations with regard to the teaching of religious education.
- 112 Strategic planning is sound, based on a good plan with clear objectives and challenging targets. The plans are imaginative and have served to underpin the launch of The Kett and the partnership between the three contributing schools. The priorities for the sixth form link well with priorities for each of the partner schools. The task of monitoring the progress towards meeting the objectives is made difficult because the criteria in some areas are lacking sharply-worded, quantifiable outcomes. However, increasing recruitment and retention rates, applications to higher education and students' average point scores in advanced examinations are key objectives, and these targets are challenging and unequivocal.
- 113 The sixth form is cost effective and running, in general terms, within its budget. Nevertheless, the financial planning for the future is not sufficiently robust and is unsatisfactory overall. The impact of spending decisions, both on the main school and the sixth form, are not analysed in enough detail by headteachers or governors. A number of teaching groups are running with very small numbers, and at considerable cost to the main schools and the sixth form. Whilst the rationale for this arrangement is convincing in the short term and as The Kett is being established, such groups are unviable and unsustainable in the longer term.

Resources

- 114 Staffing, resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall.
- 115 Almost all teachers are subject specialists and they are qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach. Arrangements for professional development and performance management are good, and work in partnership with the school that staff refer to as their 'home school'. Teachers have a good and up-to-date knowledge of their subject and the examination requirements, and this has helped to raise students' examination performance.
- 116 Resources are satisfactory, though with inconsistencies between sites and subjects. History, biology and chemistry have sufficient, good quality resources. Good use is made of a digital projector and digital camera attached to a microscope, in biology and chemistry. However, deficiencies were noted, for example in the availability of up-to-date maps in leisure and tourism, and in the range of texts and other resources in French and German. The library provision across The Kett is satisfactory, housing a suitable range of study materials and other publications and periodicals. The library is good on one site and unsatisfactory on the other two.
- 117 The standard of accommodation varies greatly on the three sites, in terms of the sixth form social areas, the study spaces and teaching rooms. A number of courses are planned and run without making best use of the resources and accommodation across The Kett as a whole, and this limits the work of the students. Whilst much of the accommodation is well decorated, has good quality displays and is a suitable size for the groups that use them, a number of teaching rooms are unsuitable and this restricts

teaching and learning styles. Accommodation is good in art and design, where students can work outside their lessons. Unsuitable accommodation includes mobile classrooms or rooms that are too small, as in physics and geography. In sociology, where the room is used for other subjects, equipment has to be moved around and this wastes teaching time. The performing arts department lacks sufficient performance space.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

118 The rigorous monitoring that the school has undergone has resulted in an appropriate school improvement plan in which important issues are identified and plans to tackle them are recorded. This has led to the improvements which have taken place. The plan recognises that many of these issues have not been fully resolved and work remains to be done. The school should continue to implement this current planning. In addition, to raise further the standards and the quality of education provided, the school and governors should:

- (1) improve the provision in music so that
 - pupils experience the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum
 - attainment is raised and pupils understand how well they are achieving
 - more pupils are attracted to and maintained on courses in Years 10 and 11
 - it makes a much greater contribution to pupils cultural and spiritual development
(*para: 4,27,31,44,57,90,200,202,204,205*)

- (2) plan for the future management of the special educational needs provision, so that the progress that has been achieved can be continued, to
 - ensure that the implications of the new Code of Practice are fully understood
 - monitor the classroom work of the teaching assistants
 - monitor specifically the teaching of pupils with special educational needs
 - include the future development of the behaviour improvement centre
(*para: 33,140,141,142*)

In addition, the governors and school should consider including the following less important, but significant, issues in their action plan if they are not already there:

- Ensuring the accuracy of teacher assessment (*para:3,75,87,149,184*)
- Providing more consistent challenge to the higher-attaining pupil (*para:34,131,171,178,189*)
- Improving pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy (*para: 9,127,131,139,149,168,185,207*)
- Improving attendance and seeking greater response and involvement of parents (*para: 15,72,86,87,96*)

Meeting statutory requirements for collective worship (*para 54*)

Sixth form

119 The Kett management committee of governors, the headteachers of the three schools and the director of The Kett should:

- (1) Improve communication, the management of resources and the administration systems.
This will enable
 - teachers to work more closely together and share good practice
 - administrative systems to work more effectively and efficiently between sites, particularly those concerning ICT systems and attendance

- financial management and strategic planning to be tighter so that governors and key staff can more easily monitor the impact of spending on students' achievements.

(para:62-66,78,81,83,107,108,112,113,116,117)

The following less important issues should also be considered:

- underdeveloped use of ICT and oral and written language in some subjects *(para:15)*
- inconsistencies in the identification of gifted and talented students *(para:16)*
- insufficient opportunities for students to widen their horizons *(para:23)*
- insufficient opportunities in some lessons for students to develop independent learning skills *(para:40)*
- statutory requirements with regard to the teaching of religious education are not met *(paras:67,111)*
- in some subjects, students do not receive enough written constructive criticism of their work *(para:77)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 8 – 11	117
	Sixth form	74\$
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		63

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 8 – 11							
Number	1	17	54	40	4	1	0
Percentage	1	15	46	34	3	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	22	33	15	0	0	0
Percentage	3	30	45	20	0	0	0

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

\$The quality of teaching was not graded in two of the observed lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y 8 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	675	325
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	157	25

Special educational needs	Y8 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	156	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.8
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	78	89	167

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	16	38	39
	Girls	37	49	46
	Total	53	87	85
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	34 (49)	52 (57)	51 (55)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (10)	26 (32)	17 (32)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	24	44	32
	Girls	49	52	53
	Total	73	96	85
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	44 (58)	57 (66)	51 (55)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	6 (22)	26 (36)	26 (26)
	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	75	84	159

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	16	57	65
	Girls	31	66	73
	Total	47	123	138
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	30 (27)	77 (83)	86 (92)
	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	28.4
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	16	38
	National		n/a

Please note, there are no results for The Kett joint sixth form.

The first cohort of students taking A-level examinations will do so in summer 2003.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	645	19	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	3	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y8 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	41.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.4

Education support staff: Y8 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	649

Deployment of teachers: Y8 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.7%
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Average teaching group size: Y8 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	22.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	2664471
Total expenditure	2482840
Expenditure per pupil	3324
Balance brought forward from previous year	42508
Balance carried forward to next year	224139

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	16.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.9
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.9
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.9
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	675
Number of questionnaires returned	106

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	58	8	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	3	5	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	59	7	5	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	51	12	8	6
The teaching is good.	25	60	6	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	46	11	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	36	4	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	42	3	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	49	20	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	28	54	7	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	48	8	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	52	4	2	12

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Lessons are well planned, particularly in Years 8 and 9, to tackle weaknesses in writing so as to improve standards
- Good coaching and prompting of pupils, as they work in class, sustains their commitment and interest
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are better than other language skills

Areas for improvement

- Tasks for lower-attaining pupils do not always match their interests and capabilities
- Not enough specific advice is given to pupils about their written work, on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve.

- 120 Results in national tests at the end of Year 9, taken in 2002, were well below the national average. Less than half of all pupils attained at or above the expected level. Results fell substantially from the previous year. Girls did better than boys, but by a smaller margin than they do nationally. Results were well below both the average found in schools where pupils start with similar levels of attainment, and within similar schools. Results in English were worse than those in mathematics and science.
- 121 GCSE English results, in 2002, were significantly below the national average. The proportion gaining grades A* to C was less than two-thirds of that found nationally. Following national trends, girls did better than boys, but both were equally behind the figures for their respective genders. GCSE English literature results were significantly below the national average for those obtaining higher grades. Here, boys did worse than girls and were further behind the national average for their gender than were girls.
- 122 By the end of Year 9, in work seen in lessons, standards have improved from those indicated by last year's national testing. Achievement in Years 8 and 9 is good. Pupils' attainment when they came to the school was well below national average. Attainment in writing now falls below national expectations. In their first two years in school, pupils make better progress than was previously the case, in response to improved teaching. This makes good use of national initiatives and better defines what pupils need to do to raise their standards of writing. Standards of speaking and listening are better than writing, and match national expectations. This is because teachers create good, regular opportunities for pupils to answer questions, discuss ideas and make presentations. Pupils examine ideas productively in small groups, and answer questions in brief words and phrases. They make short presentations to the rest of the class to share their ideas, and their peers listen with attention and interest. Standards of reading are below national expectations. Pupils read books and newspapers for pleasure and information, extracting relevant information. One group of lower-attaining pupils read a wide selection of film reviews, learning well how to classify categories of film by genre, and explaining to the rest of the class, in turn, a definition of a genre they had selected. Pupils write letters, diaries and short stories confidently, using well-formed handwriting, and show considerable pride in the presentation of their written work. Approximately two-thirds of pupils spell many common words as they sound, rather than in the conventional form, and about half use restricted sentence structures which lack variety. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when they

are helped in class by additional staff who support them by prompting and offering additional explanations.

- 123 By the end of Year 11, standards are still well below those found nationally, but better than those reported in 2002. Pupils achieve adequately in Years 10 and 11. In the GCSE course, pupils produce a good range of written work, including autobiographies, letters, notes and reviews of books and poetry. They write vividly about personal experiences, as in the piece describing a first visit to Blackpool, and the moment of discovery that the tracks noticed in the road were used by trams. Writing is clearly laid out and computers are used well to present work logically so that it communicates clearly to the reader. Pupils acquire good levels of computer expertise in the manipulation and display of words and ideas, mixing colour, print size and designs imported from the Internet to expand and convey their own ideas. Pupils also understand and narrate securely, the main events of books and plays they have read, and go on to think deeply about issues which concern them. For example, the experience of a young soldier facing combat for the first time was explored through a series of imaginary letters home to his family. Again, most pupils continue to lack security in spelling according to convention. Half of all pupils, including lower-attaining pupils, write frequently in short, monotonous sentences, which lack interest and variety. The gap between boys' and girls' standards of writing is similar to that found in last year's GCSE results, but boys are better than girls when both speaking and listening, and in assignments involving the use of computers. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as expected. In classes where the teacher makes expectations clear, helping them by checking what they know and can do as they work, they make good progress. In a few lessons, where they are not given focused guidance on what is expected of them, they lose interest and fall behind as a result.
- 124 The quality of teaching is sound overall, with many good features. Teachers plan lessons well in most cases, using good subject knowledge and questioning techniques to ensure that pupils consolidate and build knowledge well. They coach and prompt individual pupils well as they work in class, and this sustains pupils' interest and extends their learning. Written work is marked conscientiously, but with insufficient specific advice on what pupils need to do better, in order to improve.
- 125 Attitudes and behaviour are good, because work is generally well-matched to pupils' levels of interest and ability. Their work rate is satisfactory and they show independence and commitment. By contrast, where some teaching was unsatisfactory and tasks set were unsuitable, lower-attaining pupils failed to apply themselves and become frustrated with their own lack of progress.
- 126 English is soundly managed by an acting head of department who has led the specialist team in productive action to improve teaching in Years 8 and 9, using materials from national initiatives. This has raised standards for fourteen year olds since the last results, by ensuring a clearer focus on what pupils need to know and do in each lesson. Recent appointments have created a more stable team of specialist teachers than was previously the case, and this is helping to improve standards.

Literacy

- 127 The school is tackling pupils' literacy needs well across the subjects, especially in Years 8 and 9. Good planning in most subjects ensures that language skills are acquired in lessons. In science, mathematics and art, discussion is used well to articulate pupils' understanding, and pupils are encouraged to recall, understand and use specialist terms. In mathematics, despite good planning, opportunities are missed for pupils to build their understanding further by writing about investigations, and spelling is not yet taught as well as planning suggests. Teachers of modern foreign languages plan carefully, enable pupils to learn well about the structure of language and assist them to develop good speaking and listening skills. In history and geography, pupils benefit from good teaching of the meaning and spelling of specialist vocabulary. Here, writing skills improve as a result of good marking and teachers'

attention to their importance, although opportunities to write at length are limited. A very thoughtfully managed and well-stocked library has promoted reading for pleasure and information successfully. Club activities after school, special events and good links with the subject areas, have all played a strong part in capturing pupils' imagination and interest in developing their reading skills. The school's policy to ensure that each subject takes responsibility for improving literacy is having a beneficial effect.

Drama

128 Drama is taken as an optional subject in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results were significantly below the national average in 2002, and pupils made significantly less progress in drama than in the other subjects they studied. The evidence, from observation and a scrutiny of recorded work, is that the standard of pupils' work, at the end of Year 11, is generally well below that normally expected. In Year 10, standards are higher but still below average. Pupils, nevertheless, are making satisfactory progress in relation to the well below average attainment and wide range of dramatic ability on entry to the GCSE course. There has been massive staffing disruption within the drama department over the last few years and this has been a major factor in the current very low standards.

129 Pupils learn satisfactorily because teaching is generally sound. Improvisation skills are taught adequately but the more technical and theoretical aspects of the course are not covered in sufficient detail. Pupils gain in confidence and learn to work together satisfactorily in small groups. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. In one Year 11 lesson, pupils did not make as much progress as might be expected because the pace of learning was slow and the activities too teacher-led, resulting in the pupils not being sufficiently creative. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory overall. Many pupils respond well in drama lessons, showing consideration for others and a willingness to work together and support each other. A high proportion of pupils in the Year 11 GCSE group can become inattentive when teaching is not sufficiently effective in managing their immature attitude. This results in unsatisfactory progress and very low levels of work being produced. Year 10 pupils performed, in groups, prepared improvisations of non-linear use of time, based on the theme *Wedding?*. They had been taught how to present their pieces in a well-focused way. However, a minority of pupils, particularly girls, could not sustain their concentration, and their frequent giggling and coming out of role, disrupted the overall mood of performance.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching which leads to pupils achieving well
- Most teachers are skilled in the use of the three-part lesson
- The very good assessment system is used for monitoring, target setting and the marking of pupils' work
- Good leadership of the department has a strong vision and commitment for future development

Areas for improvement

- New schemes of work do not yet include fully integrated planning for ICT use and investigative work
- The most able are not always challenged sufficiently
- Some teachers are not using the three part lesson to maximum effect

- 130 Pupils join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding which are well below average standards. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were well below the national average with girls performing a little better than the boys. In comparison with pupils from similar schools, the results were average. The results were above average in comparison with those of pupils, nationally, with similar Year 6 results. These pupils achieved well in relation to their attainment when they came to the school. The school did particularly well for those pupils who had very low attainment on entry. Averaged over the last three years, pupils' performance in mathematics has been better than in English but below that in science. The trend over time has shown overall rising standards, broadly in line with the national trend.
- 131 Based on the evidence seen in lessons and in recorded work, pupils' standards of work at the end of Year 9 are below those expected for their age and better than the 2002 results indicate. Most pupils are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 8. Lower-attaining pupils generally achieve well. In Year 9, pupils had successfully and accurately plotted examples of quadratic graphs. The high expectations of the teaching resulted in pupils learning well and achieving higher standards than might otherwise be expected. Some higher-attaining pupils were not suitably challenged and their achievement was reduced. In a Year 9 class, for example, a small number of higher-attaining pupils, successfully working on algebraic substitution, finished quickly and then had to wait for further work. Pupils in a low-attaining Year 8 class were able to demonstrate a very good understanding and use of the terminology associated with work in polygons. This same group, in a typical starter activity, were able to use mental arithmetic quickly and confidently to calculate the values of angles in a range of simple problems. In some classes, where pupils did not have the same amount of practice, their skills were less well developed and their general standard in numeracy was lower.
- 132 GCSE results, in 2002, were below the national average but above the average for similar schools. They were in line with the average for pupils with similar end of Year 9 test results. Overall, the achievement of pupils was satisfactory. Across the whole grade range, the achievement of pupils with low initial attainment was better than for some pupils who achieved higher results at the end of Year 9. Girls and boys perform equally, as they do nationally. In 2002, only 89 per cent of the year was entered compared with the national figure of 96 per cent. Although there has been improvement over recent years, the rate of improvement has flattened out.
- 133 Overall, standards are below average in Year 11. However, pupils are achieving well in relation to their well below average attainment at the start of the course. In some classes, the standards are higher. For example, a group in Year 10 could mentally work out the squares of numbers to one decimal place. Their answers were fast and accurate and demonstrated high standards for these pupils. Some other pupils showed a lack of confidence in basic numeracy, for example having difficulty with calculations involving simple fractions. Overall, the classes with more consistent practice, usually through the effective use of starter activities, showed higher standards and improved learning.
- 134 Where the teaching made high demands on the pupils, as it did in a substantial number of classes, higher standards and higher achievement resulted. A Year 10 class was working on some simple algebraic factorisation before moving on to the more difficult quadratic factorisation. The teacher carefully explained the work, set clear time limits for completion of a well-designed worksheet and enthusiastically urged the pupils to respond. This was positive and lively teaching. The pupils responded by learning quickly and meeting the standards the teacher had demanded. This was very good achievement for these pupils.
- 135 Overall, the teaching observed was good. Starter activities are effective, but some are particularly good because the activity has become part of the routine, and the pace of the activity is high. In some classes, work was very effectively matched to the needs of the small number of higher-attaining

pupils. For example, in a Year 10 class carrying out an investigation using graphical calculators, completion of the task was followed immediately by the issue of a worksheet at three different levels, each level designed to meet the needs of particular pupils in the class. Staff work hard to create a positive working atmosphere. As a result pupils attitudes were overall good, particularly where careful lesson planning, with clear goals, good starters and good pace resulted in pupils gaining success. They responded well to demanding, well-organised teaching and showed good independent learning skills. Where teaching was characterised by relative weaknesses, such as not matching work to the full ability range of pupils, lack of pace and expectation or poorly-focused starter activities, pupils' learning was only satisfactory and their progress, in the lesson, sound.

- 136 The department has a very good system of marking and keeping regular checks on pupils' progress which contributes to pupils' achievement. Pupils are given individual target grades including a higher, challenging grade. These are well known to the pupils who generally work hard to attain the grades. Work is marked, and from time to time a grade is given which enables the pupils to compare their performance with the target. The constructive and useful comments that teachers record in the books enable the pupils to make further progress.
- 137 Leadership of the department is good. The vision and commitment to improve is supported by a clear and well-designed development plan. Schemes of work are effective, although further development is essential to integrate work in ICT and in developing pupils' investigative skills. Not all teachers are fully confident in using the three-part lesson. The department has very effective systems for keeping track of the work of teachers, judging its quality and identifying weaknesses. Lessons are observed, pupils' work is reviewed and the effective management of the department ensures that the results of these reviews are taken into account in developing the work of staff. Staffing problems, caused by the shortage of suitably qualified staff, are being managed well. The current setting arrangements provide a very broad range of ability in some classes which can make the matching of work to ability very difficult, particularly in the higher-attaining groups in Years 10 and 11.
- 138 Library provision is generally good although the distance between the library and the departmental teaching means that any routine use of the library during mathematics lessons is virtually impossible. Since the last inspection improvement has been satisfactory, and the department has the organisation and quality of management to continue to develop.

Numeracy

- 139 Standards of numeracy are below average but these do not stop pupils learning and making progress in other subjects. The school has worked hard on developing its numeracy policy and the majority of departments have built numeracy into their schemes of work. As a result most departments are using opportunities to develop this work as part of the routine teaching. In geography for example, pupils use scales and coordinates. In modern foreign languages, pupils produce data surveys and calculations using the euro. Science includes the use of graphs, measurement and the plotting and tabulation of data as part of routine practice. Extensive work on numeracy was also seen in design and technology, where pupils use various forms of measurement, dimensions and scale and the number work involved in 2D and 3D drawing. In some other departments work is less well advanced, but is gradually being introduced as schemes of work are improved.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Good teaching results in the good achievement of pupils
- Pupils' good attitudes to the subject and their keenness to do well contribute to their good learning
- Leadership and management re very good
- The level of staffing, resources and accommodation is good

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons , the range of teaching strategies is not wide enough to meet all pupils' needs
- ICT equipment is rarely used to measure and record experimental information
- Technical support is insufficient overall

140 In 2002, results of national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average, but were in line with the results of similar schools. Boys and girls did equally well. The results were well above the average for pupils with similar end of Year 6 test results. This means that the pupils achieved very well. On average, over the last three years, pupils have done better in science than in mathematics or English.

141 Standards in lessons, seen in Year 9, were slightly better than those reflected in the 2002 results and below average. Higher-attaining pupils were working at expected levels for their age. They were able to recall factual information but were more reluctant to explain their understanding, for example of the biological processes they were studying. Middle-attaining pupils were able to explain the difference between metals and non-metals and were eager to use their knowledge to make predictions. Lower-attaining pupils, whilst showing interest in their work, needed a lot of support to help them with written work. They were good at recalling factual information, orally.

142 At the end of Year 11 in 2002, 26 per cent of pupils took double science, 60 per cent took single science and the rest took a Certificate of Achievement. Overall, the results were in line with the national average, well above the average for similar schools and in line with the average for pupils with similar Year 9 test results. This means pupils did as expected. More detailed analysis shows that, while some pupils reached higher than expected standards, others, whose attendance was poor, underachieved. Pupils made significantly better progress in science than in the other subjects they studied.

143 Standards seen in lessons, in Year 11, were below average. Pupils of all abilities could recall factual information and, with teacher prompting, could link ideas to explain the biological process of menstruation, for example. However, teachers had to work hard to encourage a minority of pupils to respond, even to relevant and exciting experiences. Overall, pupils are achieving well in relation to their well below average attainment, and immaturity, at the start of Year 8 and their well below average standard at the start of Year 10.

144 Overall, pupils learn well in science. The majority show interest in their work and respond well to good, challenging teaching. Lessons are well-planned and taught within supportive and well-managed classrooms. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to make ideas accessible to pupils and the majority are very good at using question and answer sessions to promote and monitor pupil progress. They show that they value pupils' contributions, as in a Year 8 lesson, where a suggestion about burning matches was recorded for a future investigation. The very good display of work in the laboratories and in the corridors, by valuing pupils' contributions, encourages pupils to work hard and to learn. Teachers use many strategies to improve the literacy skills of their pupils effectively. These include sharing clear learning objectives, explaining and using key words, encouraging the expression of ideas through discussion and giving pupils opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. They explain clearly what is needed to work at different National Curriculum or GCSE levels and this helps pupils to raise their standards. Teaching

was only satisfactory when teachers had not organised the work sufficiently well to meet the wide range of needs within a teaching group so that some pupils were not able to make enough progress. Whilst boys are keen to answer questions, in some lessons girls need encouraging to participate.

- 145 Pupils' written work shows that pupils of all abilities have difficulties with writing and spelling. However, their books are well kept and presentation skills are clearly developed as they move through the school. Books are largely well-marked, using the school policy to set targets for improvement, although there are some inconsistencies in the marking of biology sections. Pupils' books suggest that they find physics more difficult than the other parts of the science course.
- 146 Overall, pupils have a good attitude to their learning and are keen to do well. Younger pupils show curiosity, for example asking questions such as 'How does the body know how to use oxygen from the air we breathe?' Older pupils need more encouragement to express themselves and are less willing to take risks. A small minority show little interest in their work.
- 147 The good teaching and learning, and the resulting good achievement of pupils, are the outcomes of a very well-managed department. Since September, the department has been fully staffed with a well-qualified team. Resources and accommodation are good, although the laboratories on the west site need refurbishment. The department works very well as a team and believes in the capacity of the pupils to improve. Teachers are well-supported by the technical assistants, but there are too few for a school of this size, on a split site with sixth form courses. The department has very clear schemes of work with opportunities for numeracy, literacy, ICT, and citizenship clearly identified, and these are taught. The planning for the subject to provide opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is especially good. The quality of teaching and the progress of pupils is carefully checked and this has increased the consistency with which science is taught. The majority of pupils in Year 10 now follow a double science course. A course in applied science is offered, as an alternative to double science, in an attempt to meet the interests of all pupils. Although ICT is used, it needs developing further, especially the use of equipment to measure and record information in laboratory work.
- 148 Extra-curricular opportunities are good, including involvement in the gifted and talented programme and the provision of revision classes. A science club provides a very good link with middle schools. It enhances curricular links with these schools and provides an opportunity for pupils to experience secondary school science facilities. The pupils attending in the week of the inspection were clearly excited by their experience, with lots of 'Wow, look at this' from all. Good progress has been made since the inspection two years ago.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is at least satisfactory and, with much that is good, leads to pupils learning well
- Pupils have good attitudes towards the subject, their behaviour is good and they try hard in lessons
- Art makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural education
- Leadership is good. The department targets for development are being reached and this has resulted in good progress since the last inspection
- The quality of display is good throughout, creating a good environment for learning

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not have enough practice in observational drawing, especially in Years 8 and 9, where time is below the recommended amount
- Teacher assessments have been inaccurate at the end of Year 9
- The availability of resources for ICT is inadequate

149 The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were higher than those reported nationally. However, the evidence of the inspection indicates that these assessments were inaccurate, tending to over-estimate what the pupils have attained. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 9 is below national expectations. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' drawings from direct observation are weak as they have insufficient drawing practice in lessons and most drawings are done for homework in sketchbooks. When they are asked to draw from imagination, they have difficulty in representing shape, shade and texture because they have too little background knowledge for recall. Most pupils use paint brightly, mixing it to gain the colours they need, but much of the work is marred by weak composition linked to weak drawing skills. Pupils' work on paper collage and photomontage is sound. For example, pupils in Year 9, studying surrealism, created the desired effects easily, as they understood about distortion and displacement, and something about the artists who are famed for surrealism. In this work, pupils with special educational needs gain satisfactory results because the effects do not rely on sophisticated drawing skill. Pupils' appreciation of art from other lands and cultures is sound. Pupils in Year 9, for example, understand about cubism, and pupils in Year 8 know about the geometric designs used in Islamic art. Their numeracy skills are also enhanced by topics of this kind, but their skills in using precision mathematical equipment such as compasses and rulers, are weak from all but the higher-attaining pupils. In both Years 8 and 9, pupils do not research or write much about their artwork.

150 GCSE results in art have fluctuated over the last three years but with a rising trend. In 2002, the results were a little below the national average but were significantly better than the previous year. Girls' results were better than the boys'. The standards of work of pupils currently in Year 11 are below nationally expected levels. Most pupils draw naively for their age and rely too heavily on copying from pictures and photographs, rather than using these images as sources of inspiration. Few pupils have the ability or confidence to develop a personal style. Many pupils do not observe closely enough, leading to observational drawings that are lacking in tone and texture. Pupils use paint boldly and brightly but many of them do not blend paint colours successfully. All but the lowest-attaining pupils regularly use their sketchbooks to record their observations, but with an over-reliance on being directed by their teacher rather than responding to what inspires or impresses them. In applied art, such as printing, textile art, making armatures and modelling, most pupils attain expected standards for their age. By the end of Year 11, most pupils have a sound knowledge of the lives and work of real artists, but their understanding of art periods is less secure. Higher-attaining pupils make good use of the Internet to research background material and ICT to scan images and thus extend their portfolios.

151 Pupils in Year 9 are achieving well in relation to their well below average practical work and knowledge of art, in general, at the start of Year 8. During the two year course, pupils gain skill in making pictures and models, they experiment with a variety of tools and materials, learn new vocabulary and gain knowledge about art throughout the world. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11 on the more demanding GCSE course. For example, pupils learn to assess the works of real artists and defend their judgements, in addition to creating their own compositions. Workshop days, when local artists introduce pupils to new techniques, lead to good gains in knowledge and skills. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They make good progress in practical work, but their low levels of literacy and lack of confidence in expressing themselves in critical appraisal, limit their progress in theory. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress in art, as they are encouraged to spend more time in considering their work and producing more and better pieces.

152 Overall, the observed teaching of art was satisfactory with much that was good. The improving results would suggest that, particularly in Years 10 and 11, teaching over time was better than this. Teachers know their subject thoroughly and this, coupled with their enthusiasm, ensures pupils gain correct information and opportunities to experiment and learn about art. The scheme of work interests and motivates the pupils. Some projects, for example *oppression*, have challenged and helped pupils in Year 10 to express their feelings and come to terms with human rights. Other projects, such as those linked to a foreign country or a particular artist, suitably extend pupils' cultural education. Teachers select good quality resources to show pupils high quality work and ensure that pupils learn and use the language of art when discussing it, thus extending vocabulary and raising literacy levels. At the start of lessons, teachers ensure that pupils have clear instructions and that no time is wasted so pupils have maximum time for their own work. Relationships are good and teachers are very patient in helping individuals. Lower-attaining pupils benefit most from this as they feel valued, gain confidence and try harder as a result. At the end of sessions, teachers mark work and discuss what effort has been made, so pupils understand their grades and find out how to improve. Homework challenges the pupils and extends the topics, but too often focuses solely on drawing.

153 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Most pupils settle quickly and listen attentively to instructions. They are keen to communicate by answering questions, but few ask them other than to clarify instructions. They enjoy what they do, are keen to start work and try hard throughout the lessons. Pupils are anxious to have their work appraised, showing a desire to do well. Most pupils, however, are too dependent on the teachers for ideas and assistance and do not show sufficient initiative.

154 Leadership and management are good with clear guidance given to colleagues. Planning of work is constantly reviewed and the tasks have awakened pupils' interests in art. The amount of time allowed for art is below the national recommendation and this places restriction on the work in Years 8 and 9. The setting of targets and checking pupils' progress are good. Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is accurate but that in Years 8 and 9 over-estimates pupils' attainment. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and targets for further development of the department are realistic and include intentions to undertake joint assessments to ensure accuracy. Many lessons now support pupils' cultural and spiritual development. A good range of extra-curricular activities supports the work of the department but there are few resources to allow the use of ICT in support of teaching. Extensive displays within and outside the studios have raised the profile of the subject, but mask the poor fabric of the building and the need for redecoration and refurbishment.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- A well-planned programme builds on existing good practice already in place in some other subjects
- Teaching is based on good understanding of the principles of citizenship, which guides pupils well
- Strong extra-curricular provision supports skills acquisition

Areas for improvement

- Contribution of individual subjects is not yet sufficiently closely monitored to prevent reliance on incidental provision
- Access is not yet assured for all pupils to citizenship opportunities and experiences

- 155 This subject is taught according to the requirements of the National Curriculum, through the PSHE programme and individual subjects. Its discreteness has been understood but the way it is taught within subjects needs to be clarified, with proper emphasis on the practical skills of enquiry and debate, and an involvement in real issues affecting their own lives and that of the community, locally and beyond.
- 156 Due to the emergent nature of this subject there are no results to indicate levels of achievement or attainment. The earliest end of Year 9 indicators will be available in 2004. Pupils are compiling a portfolio of work which will record skills acquired, experiences of responsible action and participation as members of the school and the wider community. This assessment method is currently being piloted. Pupils are aware that their achievements are being monitored, together with their own self-evaluation.
- 157 The lessons observed were either part of the PSHE programme or significant strands in individual subjects. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory in these sessions. Pupils in Year 9 took part in, for example, the *Real Game*, in which they were challenged to make practical decisions, reflecting on the relationship between their dreams for life and the restraints of reality. In a geography lesson in Year 10, pupils were able to decide what their involvement in a cleaner environment should be as well as to discuss why organisations have rules. Pupils in an art class were aware of groups of people in community art projects and the opportunities that existed for them to get involved. Teachers contributing to the subject have good knowledge and understanding which supports and guides pupils.
- 158 The extra-curricular provision is growing and having a very positive effect on the development of practical ways in which citizenship can be promoted, thus contributing to progress and achievement in this subject. The school council has been re-thought and provides the pupils with an arena to exercise personal and group responsibility. Other achievements of pupils include, the attendance of a number at the local Democracy Day, a pressure group to save a local library and a very active and committed Amnesty International group. These initiatives do not as yet involve all pupils but at this early stage much has been achieved, and reflects the positive response of the pupils to these opportunities.
- 159 The contribution to the pupils' social and moral development is good and they are given space to examine implications for themselves and others in life choices. For example, skills in dealing with money are developed in a pupil-run bank, the offshoot of a project with the Personal Finance Education Group and supported by a local bank. This was the first school in the country to work with PFEG.
- 160 Leadership in this subject is good. Much planning has gone into the emerging programme with a strong commitment to improvement. There is a danger, however, that too heavy a reliance on incidental contributions from subject areas may result in the requirements of the National Curriculum not being fulfilled.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**, though good in several of the component subjects.

Strengths

- Good teaching leads to good learning and achievement by all groups of pupils
- Pupils' attitudes to their work are good
- Leadership and management of the department are increasingly effective

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is poor for resistant materials
- Computer related activities and opportunities to use ICT are not well enough developed in schemes of work

- 161 In 2002, the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, were just below those reported nationally. Current work indicates that this position is being maintained because of good teaching, which is structuring pupils' learning.
- 162 The current standards of work in Year 9 are slightly below the nationally expected level. Pupils are achieving well in relation to their low attainment on entry to the school. They develop knowledge and skills in set tasks, for example in the electronic moisture tester, but they also have opportunities to follow the design and make process in producing their own cushions, with applied decoration, and by working in pairs to make strong structures such as model bridges. Overall, achievement is greater in food and textiles, than in the resistant materials subjects, because pupils have more access to designing and making activities. Pupils have opportunities to work to design briefs, carry out some research and investigation and develop their own ideas. They use a range of recording skills when presenting ideas, make flow charts of their production methods and carry out evaluations of both existing products and their own work. Higher-attaining pupils produce good, well-presented work, but lower-attaining pupils do not always complete the work set and their folders are not well organised. Pupils have good experience of working with a wide range of materials, components and ingredients and, overall, practical work is good. Well-planned projects ensure that boys and girls of all ability levels make good progress with higher-attaining pupils reaching slightly above the national expectation.
- 163 In 2002, overall GCSE results continued to be below the national average with considerable variation in the results for the different design and technology subjects. The results for food dropped in 2001, but have recovered to be below the national average. Graphics results improved considerably to be in line with the national average. Resistant material results made continued steady improvement, while remaining well below the national average, and systems and control results continued to decline. This latter was the result of staffing difficulties. Textiles results fell considerably in 2002, after having been in line with national averages for the past 3 years. Overall, pupils made significantly less progress in design and technology than in the other subjects they studied.
- 164 Current work indicates that standards in most design and technology subjects, are improving although those in systems and control are still very weak because of historical staffing difficulties. In most design and technology subjects, pupils are benefiting from improvement in the planning and teaching of courses, which is enabling them to structure their work and meet examination requirements more effectively. Pupils are using a satisfactory range of recording techniques in research, analysis and development of design ideas, and also use good evaluation techniques. Levels of knowledge and understanding are developing satisfactorily but pupils have difficulty in retaining and recalling technical information. Pupils demonstrate good practical skills in a variety of materials but there is insufficient use of computers in the designing and making processes. Overall, pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11 and are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course.
- 165 Teaching is good, overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach the skills of the subject well. Planning is effective and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and suitably high expectations of what they can do. The management of classes is a strength in all lessons, and time and resources are used well. As a result of good teaching, pupils' learning is good. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge about materials, their properties and use. They are good at following instructions and carrying out guided activities, which enable them to acquire knowledge and skills. Most pupils work at a good pace and show interest and concentration when carrying out set tasks. For example, Year 8 pupils worked well in pairs to create very strong bridges, Year 10 pupils organised well their

investigational work on the effects of changing ingredients when making sponge cakes, and Year 11 textiles pupils showed some good independent learning skills when they organised their individual practical work. Assessing pupils' work, as part of individual support in lessons, allows effective guidance to be given and provides good opportunities for older pupils to review and improve their coursework. Teaching contributes to developing pupils' literacy skills and provides many opportunities to use numeracy skills. It is supported by the use of ICT. The planning for these aspects is not sufficiently detailed. Homework is used effectively to enhance coursework.

166 Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils are managed very well and respond positively. Pupils like design and technology and, because lessons are well-planned and managed, they concentrate well and show positive attitudes and behaviour. Good working relationships exist in most lessons because teachers know and care about pupils and their work. As a result, most pupils want to get on with their work and the few attention-seeking and disruptive pupils are more easily dealt with. All pupils benefit from well-organised and structured work, and experiences in design and technology make a positive contribution to their personal development.

167 Leadership and management of the department are good. Development priorities are appropriate. A strong and committed team of teachers work together well. Although accommodation for food and textiles is satisfactory, the provision for resistant materials subjects is poor.

HUMANITIES

There is a close relationship between geography and history, which are managed and led within the humanities faculty.

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

Strengths

In both subjects:

- Pupils achieve well, particularly in history
- Teaching succeeds well in promoting positive attitudes and good learning
- Assessment procedures are very good and marking gives very good information and guidance to pupils
- There are good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Good leadership and management are characterised by commitment, organisation and continuing improvement.

Areas for improvement

- The challenge for the highest-attaining pupils in both subjects is inconsistent
- Insufficient regular, organised geography fieldwork takes place in Years 8 and 9

Geography

168 The results of teacher assessments of pupils' standards, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were well below those reported nationally. However, they were at the upper end of this category. The current standards of pupils' work in Year 9 are an improvement on this, while remaining below the nationally expected level. Most have a sound knowledge of the places that they have learned about. They are able to describe issues and changes relating to these places, such as those affecting the Brazilian rainforests, and physical processes such as volcanic eruptions. Many pupils, however, provide only limited detail in their explanations and this prevents them reaching the higher levels. The work of

higher-attaining pupils contains more detailed explanation and often shows evidence of additional, independent research. All pupils are able to present information in different types of charts and graphs and use these to support their work, for example when comparing climates in different places. However, the standard of presentation varies.

- 169 The GCSE results in 2002 were below average. Although a higher proportion of pupils gained A* to G grades than nationally, a significantly lower than average proportion secured grades A* to C. However, results compare well with the earlier attainment of the pupils who took the examination. Girls' results were significantly better than those of boys. Overall, results have remained quite consistent in recent years, albeit with a decline in pupils gaining grades A* to C.
- 170 The standard of work of current Year 11 pupils is below average. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of the geographical themes that they have learned about. For example, they can identify factors affecting water supply and know how these affect people in such places as Egypt and along the River Rhine. They are able to use generally appropriate geographical vocabulary. Levels of understanding vary. For example, while all can suggest disadvantages of regular Nile floods, many are only able to balance these with advantages to a limited extent. No significant overall variation was seen between the standards of boys and girls. This indicates that girls are more able to carry forward their standards into examinations and coursework. Generally, boys are more confident in making oral contributions in class discussions and question sessions, while girls listen well and approach written work diligently
- 171 When they enter the school, pupils' attainment in geography is well below average. They achieve well by reaching below average standards by the end of Year 9, two years later. Good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11, with the improvement to below average standards being maintained. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve as well as other pupils. This is also generally true of the higher-attaining pupils although, in some lessons, the general level of work does not allow them the opportunity to reach the highest levels.
- 172 Teaching and learning are good overall. Some very good teaching was observed and a very little that was unsatisfactory. In most lessons, teachers clearly set expectations for behaviour and effort, and handle pupils firmly but sensitively. This succeeds well in encouraging a positive approach to learning by pupils. In many lessons, activities start and proceed briskly, with the teachers' own enthusiasm having an impact upon the interest shown by pupils. Questioning is often effective, for example in providing opportunities for pupils to remember, test and improve what they have learned earlier. In one Year 8 lesson, challenging questions encouraged pupils very well to think quickly, clearly and accurately about the sources of the world's water supply. Well-planned activities provide effective opportunities for pupils to improve their knowledge of the places they are studying, their understanding of the geographical themes associated with these, and their geographical skills. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils consolidated their mapping skills in a way that allowed them to think of the characteristics of the Lake District and to consider the conflicts that arise from the use that different groups are making of the area. Teaching was unsatisfactory when tasks were not sufficiently challenging and instructions were unclear, with the outcome that many pupils continued with their own work, when they should have been paying attention to whole class discussions and explanations. Marking is a considerable strength. It consistently provides clear information about how well pupils are progressing and strong guidance on specific points for improvement. As a result, most pupils have a very good awareness of their own learning. Teachers' plans show that thought has been given to providing for pupils of differing need and this usually provides well for middle and lower-attaining pupils. In some cases, plans for higher-attaining pupils do not lead to the provision of sufficiently challenging work.

- 173 Geography lessons provide generally good opportunities for pupils to apply and improve skills in literacy and numeracy. Teachers usually insist on the correct use of geographical vocabulary and often provide additional resources to help pupils who have writing difficulties. These help them to structure and organise their written work. Pupils use graphs and charts and have many opportunities to translate other types of information into this form. Teachers' planning of work identifies regular opportunities to use computers during geography lessons. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils responded well when encouraged to consider the contrasts between life in more- and less-developed countries, and to reflect upon the advantages that they have in living in a rich country.
- 174 The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good in geography lessons. They respond well to the way that teachers manage and encourage them. Individual work is often carried out quietly and quickly. Pupils make good use of opportunities to reflect and consider open-ended questions, often asking interested questions of their own.

History

- 175 In 2002, the results of teacher assessments of pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 were below those reported nationally. In lessons and work samples, the standards of work of current pupils are also below average. Written work is of a significantly higher standard in Year 9 than Year 8. Although there is limited extended writing, the formation of sentences and clarity of writing are considerably better. Most pupils can use historical sources to form relevant conclusions, for example about the extent to which normal life continued during the Blitz. However, many pupils tend merely to describe what is in sources, rather than analysing them, for example by considering how reliable they are, or whether other sources present different points of view. Higher-attaining pupils do succeed in analysing sources, such as when they identified different points of view presented in work by various First World War poets. Most pupils are learning to present opinions, although explanations to justify these are often insufficiently detailed.
- 176 Overall, GCSE results in 2002 were broadly average, although the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C were significantly below average. These results show that these pupils achieved well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course. There was no significant variation between the results of boys and girls. Results have shown a steady improvement during recent years.
- 177 The current standards of work of pupils in Year 11 are close to the nationally expected level. Pupils' analysis of sources is now reaching expected levels. For example, many pupils are able to identify and explain different opinions about whether Nazi rule brought any benefits to Germany. Improved levels of understanding are shown by the way in which most pupils can describe and explain how different groups relate to each other in the societies that they study. Their work on Nazi Germany traces and explains the relationship between the Nazi government and the Catholic Church, and demonstrates awareness of opposition within Germany at the time.
- 178 Pupils enter the school in Year 8 with standards in history that are below average. Although standards are still generally below average in Year 9, most pupils are moving well towards improving these. This is an important factor in the good achievement that takes place in Years 10 and 11, in which the overall standard reaches a level that is in line with that expected nationally. The achievement of lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, is in line with that of other pupils. Although this is also the general case for higher-attaining pupils, there are occasions in which they have insufficient opportunity to show their full capability.

- 179 Teaching and learning are good. In most lessons, detailed planning provides good structure, pace and work which builds on earlier learning. Teachers provide many opportunities to use historical sources effectively in improving knowledge and understanding of the past, while also supporting the development of pupils' skills in handling evidence. Understanding is further enhanced by opportunities to consider the ideas and attitudes behind the events and institutions in the past. This is particularly relevant to the GCSE course where pupils consider, for example, the underlying philosophies of Nazism, and the Victorian attitudes that governed the way workhouses operated. Teachers plan work to meet the requirements of pupils' individual education plans well. Although plans often contain details of additional work for higher-attaining pupils, this is not always implemented effectively, so that their challenge is not always as high as it might be. The faculty is aware that this is an area for further development. Occasionally, teachers do too much for pupils and reduce their independence. For example, they give the answers to questions posed by pupils, rather than giving prompts or throwing them open for others to consider. A major strength of history teaching is the very good quality of marking. Teachers give detailed comments, often asking questions that give strong guidance on improvement, but leave responsibility with the pupils. Very clear indication is given about how well pupils have carried out work and what they need to do to improve. As a result, pupils are very aware of their own progress.
- 180 The faculty is fully aware of the importance of literacy to achievement in history, and the valuable role that the subject can play as a context for reinforcing literacy skills. Many opportunities are provided for speaking and listening, and for improving skills in extended writing. The subject makes an effective contribution to the development of numeracy skills. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils estimated the proportions of time that workhouse inmates spent on various activities and presented this information in the form of charts and graphs. ICT opportunities are identified well in the planning although these are not yet consistently implemented. There are good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils often consider moral issues, for example the position of women in nineteenth century society, the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany and of black people in the USA.
- 181 The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good in history lessons. Pupils quickly get down to work, usually work with effort and concentration and show interest by their willingness to take part in whole-class discussions, often asking thoughtful questions of their own. A small number of pupils work at a more leisurely pace and occasional incidents of inattentiveness or minor misbehaviour were seen. In the great majority of cases, however, pupils respond very positively when teachers apply the school's behaviour code.

Leadership and management of geography and history

- 182 The two subjects are led and managed in a co-ordinated way, within the humanities faculty. Within this structure, the quality of leadership and management are good. Teachers have a strong commitment to the school and towards continued improvement. In pursuing this, good use is made of local authority advisers. The faculty is effectively involved in the national Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teaching and learning are monitored well. Procedures for marking and checking pupils' progress have been significantly improved, so that these are now very good. Much work has been done on improving the curriculum of both subjects, although this is undermined, to some extent this year, by many lessons starting late when pupils have to journey from one site to another. There is insufficient regular, organised geography fieldwork in Years 8 and 9. Although both geography and history are very well organised, the longer-term, strategic development of geography is not as assured as that of history. This is because, while the well-qualified, experienced and capable geography specialists co-operate willingly, no-one is clearly designated with specialist responsibility for the subject.

183 The two subjects have contributed well to the success with which the school has tackled the issues identified by the last inspection. There has been an effective focus on whole-school key issues, such as raising attainment, standards in literacy and numeracy, improving opportunities to use computers and develop spiritual and cultural awareness.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers possess a good knowledge of the subject
- Pupils are given good opportunities to use computers in subjects other than information and communication technology
- Computer facilities are good and pupils have good access to the Internet which helps to develop their research skills.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils with above average computer skills do not make enough progress in lessons because teachers do not modify work to meet their needs
- The marking of work is not consistent so pupils do not always know how well they are doing or what to do to get better.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers to control or measure events

184 The results of the teacher assessments of standards, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were below the levels reported nationally. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 are well below average. This still represents a satisfactory level of achievement given that most pupils join the school with levels of attainment in ICT that are well below the level expected. The difference between the teacher assessments and the standards seen can be attributed to inaccurate assessment procedures based on the levels achieved in different subjects. These procedures have now been changed and teachers' assessments are now based on the levels achieved within ICT lessons and should show a more accurate picture.

185 Pupils access software confidently and can move information, such as text, graphics and pictures, from one application to another. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils created a front page of a newsletter, using a desk-top publishing package, by importing and manipulating text and clipart into their document. Higher-attaining pupils use text and graphic boxes well, and understand how to incorporate the outcomes of a drawing package to improve the overall presentation of their work. Lower-attaining pupils, however, struggle to understand this feature and need significant support from the teacher. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, enjoy using the computers. They are sometimes restricted in their work by their low literacy levels, which prevent them from making as much progress as expected because they struggle to type in information accurately. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, two pupils were unable to access the website because they could not correctly spell the word 'weather'. In another lesson, lower-attaining pupils could not move onto the practical task until they had finished their written work, preventing them from using the computers to develop their ICT skills.

186 GCSE results, in 2002, were significantly below the national average. However, as the great majority were awarded the grades predicted for them, based upon earlier attainment, the results represent satisfactory achievement.

187 The current standards of work of pupils in Year 11 are well below average but all pupils achieve at a satisfactory level in relation to their work in Year 9. Pupils have a sound grasp of a range of software applications. They have an average knowledge of basic facts, but their understanding is very limited. This means that they are unable to answer examination questions that involve explaining how or why computers are used. Pupils following the applied ICT course are achieving better than expected standards. In a lesson focusing on computer aided design (CAD), pupils made good use of a NASA

website and could explain the difference between graphic drawing and CAD, showing their experience of different software packages. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers to control events. As in earlier years, higher-attaining pupils work independently and complete tasks faster than others, but they do not always receive sufficiently challenging work to move them forward enough in lessons. Pupils in Year 11 have had a succession of temporary teachers and have not made the progress that they should have, earlier on. They are now making better progress because they are being provided with opportunities to have additional lessons after school and the staff team is more stable.

- 188 Pupils learn satisfactorily because of the sound teaching they receive. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Pupils following the applied ICT course learn well because of the consistently good teaching and clear explanations provided by the teachers. The best lessons were characterised by a variety of stimulating activities, combined with lots of practical work. In these lessons, teachers keep the pace of learning brisk, giving clear instructions and providing a good review of what has been learnt at the end.
- 189 Teachers do not always set work at an appropriately challenging level for all pupils. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the work set for the higher-attaining pupils was not hard enough, so they completed it more quickly than the teacher expected and then had to wait for the others to catch them up, resulting in them becoming bored and restless. Practical lessons are generally satisfactory and pupils learn as much as expected. Teachers pass on their specialist knowledge well during lessons. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent with errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar not always corrected. Comments range from the very brief, such as 'well done', to very detailed information showing pupils how to improve. However, immediate feedback to pupils during practical sessions is generally good.
- 190 Nearly all subjects build the use of ICT into their work, so pupils get many opportunities to use computers in their other subjects. In history and geography, for example, pupils regularly use computers to research information and then word process their findings. Many subjects take advantage of the good computer facilities through regular use of the computer suites. In music, pupils do not use computers or music software to create or manipulate sounds, and so fail to cover the statutory requirement for the subject.
- 191 Leadership is good while management is satisfactory. This has led to satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Recent appointments have resulted in a clear vision for the future of the subject, and in a short time, the implementation of many good ideas. As the department is not yet aware of what is happening in other subjects, teachers are unable to build easily on a pupil's existing standards and pupils do not get a clear picture of how well they are doing. However, the morale of pupils and teachers is high and they all feel the department is clearly moving forwards. Subject planning is linked to national initiatives well, and the main points of the new national strategy for ICT have been incorporated into most lessons. There are not enough opportunities for teachers to watch each other, to lead to the sharing of really good practice. Assessment procedures have been unsatisfactory but this is being tackled so that accurate assessment, using the National Curriculum levels, is undertaken. New computer facilities have been installed and the ratio of computers to pupils is now much better. All pupils in Years 8 and 9 now have a weekly lesson and all Year 10 pupils now study an ICT related course. Two-thirds of the pupils in Year 11 have ICT lessons.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Standards have improved in Years 8 and 9 and this improvement has carried through into Year 10
- Teaching is consistently good, sometimes very good, lessons are well planned and resourced and teachers motivate and encourage pupils
- Pupils learn well and have positive attitudes to languages
- Despite recent serious staffing difficulties, the subject is well organised and managed.

Areas for improvement

- A significant number of pupils are not taking a language course at GCSE
- Recruitment and retention of a full complement of teachers remains an urgent priority
- The department's audio-visual room is out of commission, which affects opportunities for learning

192 The results of teachers' assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2002, were above the average reported nationally. This was a significant improvement on the previous two years. It was achieved by improvements in the consistency of teaching, which had been affected by staffing difficulties. Girls performed better than boys, consistent with the national picture. Standards of work of pupils currently in Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are developing well and the higher-attaining pupils show the ability to work with text material of above-average difficulty. Their extended writing is less well developed, though their grasp of the grammar of the languages is sound. Standards in German, which pupils begin in Year 8, are comparable with those in French, which pupils began in middle school.

193 GCSE results have been well below the national average for the last three years in terms of passes at grades A* to C. Results at grades A* to G, however, have been close to and sometimes above the national average. In 2002, when German and Spanish were taken, there was some improvement. Pupils achieved their predicted grades, based upon their earlier attainment, and their achievement was satisfactory. Girls performed better than boys. Well-documented evidence on staffing difficulties shows that these had a negative impact on results. Standards in the current Year 11 are in line with national expectation in higher-attaining sets, though somewhat below overall. In a German lesson, boys and girls showed above-average fluency in speaking about their school and examples of written coursework in French were of higher-grade GCSE standard. Elsewhere, the majority of pupils were performing in the grade range C to E. The school's assessment data and grade predictions point to a significant overall improvement in results in 2003. Pupils are achieving well in relation to their low attainment at the beginning of Year 10.

194 Pupils enter the school, in Year 8, with levels of attainment in French which are below those expected nationally at this age. They develop an improved grasp of the structure of the language and an ability to apply it in a range of contexts. Those who begin German in Year 8 make good, rapid progress and achieve in line with those learning French by the end of Year 9. Overall, pupils' achievement is good. Year 8 German pupils, for example, showed good understanding of a video recording of this year's Carnival in Germany, gaining good insights into German culture. A Year 8 French class used their language skills effectively in combination to produce detailed descriptions of other people. Examples of written work seen were generally in line with course expectations for Year 8, though some pupils had not developed their writing skills sufficiently in French. The improving trend in attainment was best illustrated in Year 10, where pupils of a wide range of ability were already producing written work of at least GCSE grade E standard, rising to a good grade C. In lessons, pupils worked intensively to consolidate and develop their listening and speaking skills. In a German class, they combined these

with reading and writing to produce a description of a journey across Germany at a level consistent with GCSE grade C. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. In a lower-attaining Year 9 set, for example, they watched a DVD recording on Austria and successfully extracted key information relevant to the topic they were studying. Pupils with significant levels of special need were seen participating fully in lessons and, in an example in Year 10, performing at a level beyond that which might be expected. Pupils whose first language is not English also make good progress – in one instance at a high level within the top ability set.

- 195 The good quality and consistency of the teaching observed has been a key factor in the overall improvement in the subject. Its main strengths are teachers' own expertise and enthusiasm for French and German, including significant contributions from native speakers of both languages, their lively and motivating approaches and their commitment to the success of all their pupils. Lessons are very well planned and feature a very good range of teaching media, including video and DVD, together with good strategies for promoting active learning and the use of language skills in combination. There is a good focus on the grammar of French and German, as well as their use in practical communication: this lays firm foundations for future success. The department has given due regard to national initiatives on literacy and numeracy. Pupils develop their awareness of language as well as their communication skills and use number in a useful range of contexts, including the euro. Information and communication technology is effectively used to broaden pupils' learning experience further. No significant weaknesses were observed in teaching, though the routine use of the target language in class between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves could be further developed and more use could be made of the department and school library provision to encourage reading for information and pleasure.
- 196 In response to the good teaching, pupils learn well. In all lessons seen, they either made clear gains in knowledge and understanding or consolidated existing knowledge, including revisiting topics studied previously. Their learning was based on good processes such as collaborative work, information-sharing, expressing opinions and making personal responses. They respond well to challenging material such as video recording, motivated by its intrinsic interest. They show positive attitudes to language study, working with enthusiasm and sustained effort and concentration throughout lessons. Their behaviour is consistently good.
- 197 The languages curriculum is well planned, though schemes of work are not always clearly and progressively cross-referenced to National Curriculum attainment levels. Pupils' work and progress are assessed on a regular basis and they are encouraged to set themselves personal targets. Resources are good, though the audio-visual room, a highly useful resource for learning, is currently out of commission. The new, more flexible whole-school curriculum in Year 10 has resulted in a large number of pupils choosing not to continue studying a language. The increasing success in Years 8 and 9 may reverse this trend.
- 198 The department has been well managed through a difficult period. The current team of teachers is skilled and highly committed. The good development plan places raising standards as its top priority. Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress. There will be a need to recruit and retain another teacher for next year, but this is an improved department which has the capacity to maintain and build on its recent success.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The pupils are generally well-behaved with a positive attitude to the subject
- Good instrumental teaching leads to effective learning and some good opportunities for group music-making activities outside the classroom

Areas for improvement

- What is taught does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 8 and 9
- Pupils are underachieving in Years 8 and 9 through a combination of too little time, lack of individual targets and no opportunities to improve performance through recording and the use of ICT
- No clear marking system is used which pupils can understand and which tells them how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve
- Opportunities for group music-making, particularly in lessons, are restricted

199 In 2001, the teacher assessment of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 was well below that reported nationally, with only one-third of pupils reaching the expected level 5. In 2002, the reported standards were lower with a much smaller proportion achieving the level. The standard of work, of pupils currently in Year 9, is well below the nationally expected level.

200 Without the necessary information on pupils' prior attainment from their middle schools, it has not been possible to set appropriately challenging targets for their individual improvement in singing and playing, composing, appraising and listening skills. No formal assessment system is in place, so pupils do not know how well they are doing, nor what they have to do to improve. This, together with the fact that the planned teaching does not follow the requirements of the National Curriculum and pupils have only one fifty minute period per week, has resulted in standards of attainment in the well below average standards.

201 No pupils were examined in Year 11 in 2002. Two Year 11 pupils are due to complete their GCSE in music in 2003. Music is an option in Years 10 and 11. Although at the start of the year twelve pupils opted for music in Year 10, they have all dropped out. Two new pupils have recently started the course, which is taught voluntarily, after school, on three evenings per week. The situation is similar in Year 11 where the two pupils following the course are from an original group of twelve. Insufficient evidence was available to make valid and reliable judgements about this work.

202 Although the teaching observed in Years 8 and 9 was satisfactory, all the available evidence is that, over time, it is unsatisfactory. Pupils are under-achieving. They have little written record of work covered, nor do they have the opportunity to make recordings of their compositions and performances which would give them a reference point for future improvements. Although all work scrutinised had been marked with encouraging comments, the numerical scores given did not appear to relate to any coherent marking scheme. Teaching is over-reliant on undemanding, whole-class assignments using electronic keyboards, alternating with class singing from words-only sheets and with no opportunity for pupils to read from staff notation. Talented pupils have been identified, no opportunity provided for them, within the confines of whole-class mixed-ability teaching, to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, pupils do complete the work they are asked to do in a satisfactory manner, and are generally well-behaved, with a positive attitude.

- 203 Outside the classroom, where good instrumental tuition by visiting teachers is taken up by fourteen per cent of pupils, individual pupils make good progress. In an electronic guitar lesson, a boy enthusiastically and skilfully demonstrated a difficult solo riff from a pop song he had diligently been working on at home. The visiting teacher's technical skill enabled the pupil to make good progress during a short, intensive lesson. The school orchestra provides a valuable opportunity for talented pupils to consolidate their playing skills. Fifteen pupils were observed perfecting an arrangement of Lennon and McCartney's 'Eleanor Rigby' for a concert in a few weeks' time. One teacher was conducting from the piano to provide a secure foundation, with a visiting string teacher leading a confident string section of eight intermediate players. They skilfully changed styles to play a contrasting German Dance by Mozart, which they performed with obvious pleasure. Only three pupils attended the choir practice, but with equal enjoyment of a suite of songs for young singers designed to develop their sense of pitch.
- 204 The accommodation for music is adequate. Having two music rooms allows one to be permanently set up for the teaching of keyboard and other instruments, so reducing time wastage. Additional practice and storage rooms are available, with a third room for visiting teachers. There is a small stock of orchestral instruments, two grand pianos and a very good hi-fi system. Six violins are awaiting funds to become available to enable repairs to be carried out. The collection of pitched and un-pitched classroom instruments is inadequate for the needs of the Year 8 and 9 pupils, and the department has no ICT equipment to support the composition work of pupils. A lack of workbooks results in reliance on photocopying of worksheets and the words of songs. The library contains a very small, inadequate collection of music reference and lending books, with no CDs, tapes or CD-ROMS for listening to or researching music, although Internet facilities are available.
- 205 Music forms part of the arts faculty. The faculty head, an art specialist, has been working to help tackle the recognised weaknesses in teaching and subject management. The peripatetic provision has been well-developed over the last three years. However, the fundamental music provision in the school is ineffectively managed, is not meeting statutory requirements and the subject is not making the normal contribution to pupil development and the life of the school. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching, with good knowledge and understanding of progressive practices, helps all pupils to learn well
- Relationships are very good with very good use of praise and encouragement for all pupils
- Good procedures help pupils to know how well they are doing and to understand what they have to do to improve

Areas for improvement

- The literacy levels of some GCSE candidates affect the results they can achieve in the theory aspect of the course

- 206 In 2002, teacher assessments showed that a lower proportion of pupils at the end of Year 9 were achieving at Level 5 and above than was the case nationally. Pupils join the school in Year 8 with physical skills which are generally below the nationally expected level for their age. For example, in a gymnastics lesson in Year 8, the majority of pupils were achieving at Level 3 with only a few working at Level 4. All were beginning to understand the principles of building a sequence but, although all tried

very hard to answer the task set, there was little quality in their movements and most still lacked a full understanding of body tension. However, a higher proportion of the present Year 9 pupils were seen to be achieving at average and in some cases, above average, levels, albeit in other activities. In a football lesson, boys were able to control the ball well, pass accurately and showed a good awareness of spacing, all of which contributed to open and mature games. In netball, girls showed good footwork and a well-developed and mature sense of moving and passing into spaces. Overall, therefore, standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectation. This represents good achievement for these pupils during their time in the school.

- 207 GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average but were a considerable improvement on the previous year. Any pupil may choose to follow the GCSE course but many are prevented from achieving higher overall grades because their relatively low levels of literacy inhibit their performance in the theoretical aspects of the course.
- 208 In the practical activities seen, however, the standard of attainment was generally at nationally expected levels. In both football and netball, players were able to use tactical skills to play mature and competent games and all recognised the value of practising skills in order to improve. In volleyball, although the skills displayed by a Year 10 group were below average, the pupils were able to utilise the skills they had acquired to play a game. Since they had only been introduced to the game in the present term, this represented good achievement. In almost all the lessons seen there was good achievement by pupils of all abilities. Practices and games were structured, by the teachers, to enable all pupils to acquire the different skills. Lower-attaining pupils were given more open practices to enable them to succeed and higher-attaining pupils had extended or more tightly conditioned practices and games. All pupils, therefore, were enabled to learn successfully alongside each other.
- 209 The teaching is good and this is a key factor in the good achievement of pupils. The teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the use of progressive practices in the different activities enables pupils to learn successfully and acquire appropriate skills. The use of extended and practice activities matched to pupils' learning needs, ensures that pupils of all abilities can make progress alongside each other. For example in a football lesson, three groups of differing abilities completed a practice which was adapted suitably for each, leading to very good progress and learning by each group. Good use is made, throughout the department, of resources such as camcorders and videos. Work is often videoed so that pupils can then watch, assess and analyse their own work. Very good relationships are a strength of the department. Pupils receive great praise and encouragement from their teachers and this motivates them to work even harder.
- 210 Pupils want to take part in their physical education lessons and their attitudes are very positive. One group of boys, in Year 9, were already changed and out on the field conducting their own warm-up, before the first lesson of the day had actually started. A group of girls, in Year 11, worked continuously and strenuously for 40 minutes in a step aerobics lesson. Lessons have very few non-participants and those that are not able to take part join in willingly as coaches, referees and helpers. Pupils take very good care of their environment and are generally conscientious about looking after equipment.
- 211 Procedures for recording pupils' attainment and checking on their progress are good and give a clear picture of pupils' progress and attainment in each activity. Attainment level descriptions are published so that pupils are helped to understand what they have to do to improve. The documentation in the department is very good, with clear and detailed planning of work and of putting policies into practice. For example, the literacy policy has been implemented in planning and in the teaching, both with the display of key words and in the use and definitions of technical language. Lesson plans noted

opportunities for the inclusion of other cross-curricular themes, and examples were also seen of teaching citizenship and considering social and moral issues, particularly in relation to team games.

- 212 In dance, attainment in Year 9 is generally below average. In a mixed gender lesson in Year 9, the challenging behaviour of many of the boys disrupted the lesson and prevented all others in the class from learning. A Year 11 GCSE group of girls and boys, however, worked very well together. A small group of girls were above average and the rest of the group was about average in their attainment. The quality of their movement was not high but they were all able to compose their own short sequence of dance, successfully, ready to integrate it into a longer group composition. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment of their work, coupled with good teaching in this lesson, led to good learning taking place.
- 213 Leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers have a shared sense of commitment to the pupils in the school and to working to help them improve. A consistency of practice throughout the department gives pupils a secure learning environment and the sense of teamwork amongst the teachers is a good role model for pupils. The good range of extra-curricular activities provides opportunities for everyone to take part and also caters for those who wish to excel. Gifted and talented pupils are helped to move on to specialist clubs and facilities in the community, so that they can continue to make appropriate progress.
- 214 Improvement since the last inspection is good. Results are beginning to improve, even though they remain below the national average. All pupils are challenged in lessons with tasks that are appropriate for their needs and abilities. Planning takes account of cross-curricular opportunities including citizenship teaching and spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and often very good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are at expected levels
- Teachers' expectations are high, leading to good progress in learning
- Good assessment and monitoring of progress informs and directs both teaching and learning
- Pupils work purposefully and behave well in lessons

Areas for improvement

- Teaching does not always use a wide enough variety of strategies which would support lower-attaining pupils
- Not enough use is made of extra-curricular enriching activities, such as visits, to extend pupils' learning

- 215 On entry, standards of attainment are below average with pupils having a wide range of religious knowledge. During Years 8 and 9, they make good progress so that, by the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are at or above the expected levels for the Agreed Syllabus. All pupils take the GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11. Results, in 2002, were close to but below the national average. Results have been rising, year on year, and predicted grades indicate a further rise for 2003. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
- 216 Current standards of work, of pupils in Year 9, are at the levels expected by the Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are achieving well in relation to their below average attainment when they came to the school.

Pupils have explored other religions besides Christianity, such as Sikhism and Judaism, and their different approaches to life. For example, pupils used ICT to create a fact file on the Sabbath and the meaning of its rituals. Work is well matched to pupils' needs and lower-attaining pupils, or those with special educational needs, receive extra attention and support. Higher-attaining pupils have extension work but are not always challenged to think further and deeper, for example by more probing and demanding questioning. All are helped to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of key words and concepts, which are displayed in classroom and corridor and rehearsed from time to time in the lesson.

- 217 Current standards of pupils' work in Year 11 are at the expected levels. Pupils confidently explain the different ways that faith groups express their beliefs, for example a comparative study of Muslim and Christian marriage. They respond thoughtfully to a range of contemporary moral issues using their own and others' experience, as well as having the opportunity to explore the deeper questions, for instance the problem of evil. Pupils of all abilities are included in discussion, although higher-attaining pupils take the lead more readily. In Year 11, they develop examination technique through thorough practice in answering past paper questions.
- 218 The majority of pupils have a positive attitude to the subject and respond well when challenged to produce intellectual effort. Behaviour in classes is generally good. Pupils work purposefully in pairs or in groups. Written work is usually of a good standard with evidence of research, and growing confidence in expressing more than one point of view. Lower-attaining pupils sometimes find difficulty finishing assignments or answer in no more than minimal fashion. Areas of non-understanding are noted by teachers and pupils benefit from correction and guidance which supports their learning. Display work is of good quality and contributes to the development of literacy.
- 219 Teaching is good and is a key factor in the good progress of the pupils. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and lesson planning is very effective. The pace of lessons is crisp but allows many opportunities for the pupils to put forward their own views. Teachers' expectations are high, especially of lower-attaining pupils, and they are challenged to make good intellectual effort which impacts directly on their good achievement. Questioning styles are sometimes too generic, allowing the vocal few to answer on behalf of the others. A greater variety of task and of teaching strategies, for instance drama, would support the learning of lower-attaining pupils and allow them to take the lead on occasion, so building confidence in their own abilities.
- 220 Learning is good because pupils are given time to self-evaluate their progress. They know what level they have achieved at the end of each module, as well as what they must do to improve further. They make medium and long term gains in their knowledge and understanding. For example in a Year 10 lesson, they showed more confident use of religious terms such as agnostic and theist. Independent learning is encouraged, particularly through group work and research-type homework.
- 221 The department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, particularly through the study of other faiths and practices. There are insufficient extra-curricular, enriching experiences, such as visits to a mosque or a synagogue, to support the teaching. Not enough use is made of outside experts to speak of their real moral dilemmas to older pupils, who are grappling with the ethical implications of sanctity of life issues such as euthanasia or abortion.
- 222 The department is well managed and there is a clear, shared vision as well as a real commitment to improvement. Teacher appraisal and the sharing of good practice throughout the humanities department, have established a sound base for good, effective practice and consequent improved learning. Assessment measures are very effective and are driving up standards in this subject. Since the last inspection ICT has been used more effectively to aid pupil research. The department is having

a positive effect on the overall spiritual life of the school, particularly through the many reflective quotations displayed around the school, as well as through practical initiatives such as the Amnesty International group.

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

In the inspection, fifteen 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.

Please note, there are no results for The Kett joint sixth form.

The first cohort of students taking A-level examinations will do so in summer 2003.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics, biology and chemistry were a focus in this inspection. The modular chemistry course was the main focus of the inspection but the Salter's chemistry course was also sampled. In the one Salter's lesson observed, very challenging teaching included a probing question and answer approach supported by the use of good resources, such as molecular model kits. This led to students acquiring a very secure understanding of the nature of intermolecular forces. Physics was sampled and in the lessons seen, teachers had good subject knowledge and expertise. Standards were below the average. Students struggled to maintain the necessary pace and concentration throughout the three-hour lesson.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their work
- The good relationships between teachers and students are productive
- Students show positive attitudes, commitment and interest

Areas for improvement

- Too much teaching is directed, not encouraging students to get involved in their learning
- Inconsistencies exist in mathematics across sites
- Data is not used to best effect to set challenging targets and check progress against potential

223 On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 13 are in line with national averages and represent good achievement. The work is developmental and hierarchical, with a good balance of practice and consolidation. Students can differentiate trigonometric expressions and integrate using a variety of methods, including integration by substitution and by parts. In mechanics, they make good use of vectors to resolve forces while in statistics, they have a good understanding of discrete and continuous random variables. Higher-attaining students are able to solve differential equations and identify equilibrium in a plane suspended from a fixed point.

224 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers enjoy positive and productive relationships with their students. They demonstrate very good subject knowledge and show enthusiasm and enjoyment for their work, as illustrated in a Year 12 lesson on functions, where the teacher's enjoyment for the topic enthused and motivated students. Lessons start promptly and lesson aims are usefully shared with students and revisited at the end of the lesson to check that they have been met. Homework is regularly set but marking is inconsistent and too much work remains unmarked and uncorrected. In too

many lessons, teacher talk dominates so that students do not engage themselves fully in the work or develop the skills needed for continuing the work on their own.

- 225 Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. Teachers have a good informal awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses but this information is not always recorded in mark books. Regular assessments were seen in the GCSE resit class and the key skills class, where marking was diagnostic and tailored to individual students. Marking at A-level was inconsistent across the partnership so that some students received regular marking, with exemplar solutions, while others had little work marked or validated. All students are set targets for their examinations, but it is unclear how these are calculated and whether they are sufficiently challenging.
- 226 Students' attitudes to learning are good. They show commitment, interest and enthusiasm for their work. They want to do well and they work cooperatively with one another and with the teacher. They are capable of being more engaged and involved in their learning when they are given the opportunity.
- 227 The courses in the department include retake GCSEs and key skills (application of number) as well as A-level modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Schemes of work exist for all of the courses but these are not used consistently across the partner schools. As a result, opportunities to timetable work, coordinate modules, highlight links and identify resources, including ICT, are often missed. Standards of literacy are satisfactory and students' folders demonstrate good standards of presentation. The provision for ICT is satisfactory but opportunities to develop skills, such as the use of graphical calculators or the Internet, are inconsistent and under-utilised.
- 228 Numeracy skills are taught well in mathematics lessons and teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for students to apply their numeracy skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum. For example, number work is developed well in economics for calculating percentages and the price elasticity of supply of goods, while algebraic skills are used for writing equations and substituting in formulae in chemistry. Data-handling skills are developed for reading graphs of inflation in economics, data analysis in psychology and calculations of correlation and regression in biology. However, The Kett does not have a policy for developing numeracy across the sixth form.
- 229 The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Heads of department, on each site, have a good awareness of the strengths of their respective departments but monitoring is insufficient to identify and share the good practices observed during the week of the inspection. Site based departments operate as individual units, although there have been some attempts at unifying schemes of work and opportunities for further cooperation are planned. Overall, staffing is good, accommodation is satisfactory and resources appropriate, except for an inadequacy of books in the respective libraries.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and lessons build on students' knowledge and understanding well
- Students receive good individual support and encouragement to study independently
- The two heads of department are working collaboratively to raise standards

Areas for improvement

- Assessment data is not always available early enough to set students specific targets to aim at in their course

- Marking of set tasks does not routinely provide guidance on how to improve work

- 230 The standard of work of students is above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to their predicted target minimum grades. In the lessons seen, they were doing well as a result of effective teaching, which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly identify students' prior learning and focus on using this to support their current learning. In one lesson, some students showed their developing understanding through the detailed questions they asked about the blunt and sticky ends of chromosomes and how ligase enzymes function. In another, on household waste and recycling, the teacher used students' knowledge of landfill, recycling and re-use of materials as a basis to extend the learning of all students. Students use the range of books available in the department's library to research the topics and make detailed notes.
- 231 Students in Year 12 are working at or above the standard expected. In a lesson seen, they worked collaboratively, in small groups, to answer a past examination question on the mammalian heart. Extension questions were provided for the higher-attaining students. Students are successfully building on their GCSE knowledge in order to move into new areas. A wall display of digital photographs, showing students' own dissections of the heart, provided an accurate record of the above average standard of students' practical work and was used by the teacher to support their learning.
- 232 Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. The principal features of the teaching are clear objectives detailing the knowledge, understanding and skills students should acquire, effective planning and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations, and in the tasks they set. For example, the lesson on the cardiac cycle in Year 12 focused on key scientific terms, and the relationship between the structure and function of the mammalian heart. The teacher used a student's experience of having an ECG, to link the electrical changes within the heart to the physical processes of the cardiac cycle.
- 233 Much of the written work demanded of the students takes the form of notes, essays, details of practical work and structured questions that consolidate the learning that has taken place in the lessons. When checking students' notes, teachers comment on their quality and provide advice on how to improve. Day-to-day marking is regular and gives details of the standard students have achieved, but it does not provide guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- 234 Students learn well. They are very attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different approaches that they experience. In lessons, time is used effectively. Students support and help each other, and listen to and value each other's contributions as part of their learning. They are given time to think and resolve the details of their own learning points before responding to questions. Some students are not always confident in offering ideas but the teachers encourage them to do so.
- 235 The independent work students undertake is very well prepared and supports the lessons well. Teachers have produced effective module booklets to help and encourage students to revise efficiently for examinations. Teachers on one school teaching base have developed websites with revision activities and notes, which students are encouraged to access. One school site uses conferencing with the teacher and e-mailing of questions, to support students' examination preparation. Year 13 students were also directed to local council websites to obtain information about recycling policies, as part of their independent study.
- 236 The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well-led and managed across The Kett. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards, through closer co-operation between the partner schools, for example a joint field course for

Year 13 students. A detailed scheme of work has been developed in one school, which effectively reflects the subject requirements and underpins good teaching. Target-setting is becoming well established but teachers need the information at an earlier stage so they can focus more quickly and sharply on specific learning goals.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, by well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers
- Teaching and technical staff work very well together
- Students' very positive attitudes contribute to their good achievement
- ICT is used very effectively to support students learning at their own rate

Areas for improvement

- The library facilities do not have a broad enough range of resources to support research and extended study
- A-level laboratory facilities are inadequate for the current group sizes

237 The standards of work seen in Year 13 were average. In one lesson, students demonstrated their understanding of the chemistry behind voltaic cells through very good use of ICT, together with a range of related activities. The lesson was very well planned so that students could learn at their own rate. The teacher dealt with each student's difficulties sensitively, creating a very supportive learning environment. Achievement is good over time, relative to students' starting points on entry to the course. Most began the course having attained below average standards in their GCSE examinations.

238 Standards in Year 12 were also average. In the lessons seen, students were very businesslike in their approach to an assessed practical activity. They listened attentively to instructions and were focused on their work throughout the double lesson. About two-thirds of the group needed help with the calculations. About a third of the students began the course with literacy and oracy skills below the national average. Although this has some effect on the progress they can make, their very positive attitudes to their work, together with the very effective teaching, contribute to their good achievement since the beginning of the year.

239 The teaching and learning observed were very good. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic about the subject. They know the students and are very good at catering for their individual needs. As a result, the students learnt very well, whatever their starting point. Teachers have effectively adapted their teaching styles in response to larger class sizes and students' differing learning needs in Year 12. A very good range of CD ROMs is available to students, especially those in Year 13, to meet their individual learning needs. Teachers are available during the lessons and at other times, to give one-to-one support.

240 Students are very appreciative of the quality of teaching that they receive. Although some students find the course particularly challenging, others really enjoy the opportunity to strive to reach their potential. The Year 13 students had clearly enjoyed a revision course in London, including the social activities they shared with staff.

241 Much of the written work students do is related to examination demands and is made up of structured questions or calculations. This type of work is well supported by the course materials and the ICT

provision. However, the range of books and periodicals in library facilities is not broad enough to develop students' study and research skills as effectively as they might be.

Leadership and management are good. The very good teaching and learning result from the work on the course being well managed. Teachers work as a team and the technical assistants support them very well. The recent changes in teaching and assessment, in response to increased numbers in Year 12, are an example of this good management. A-level laboratory accommodation is now too small for the increased group sizes and does not provide an adequate range of facilities.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focused on design and technology - design and realisation. Other aspects of design technology were sampled, including food studies and electronics.

In food studies, standards were above average. The teaching and learning were good. The lesson proceeded at a good pace and the teacher used effective strategies to promote independent work.

In electronics, teaching was good and students made good gains in their knowledge and understanding. Standards were average. A strength of the lesson was the way the teacher engaged the class and made timely interventions to help students make the link between the theory and practical activity.

Design and Technology - design and realisation

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good specialist knowledge
- Students' attitudes and working relationships are positive
- Teachers from the two sites cooperate closely

Areas for improvement

- Coordination across The Kett and management of resources and accommodation are not yet efficient
- The time in extended teaching periods is not always used to best effect
- Students do not receive written assessments and short-term targets frequently enough to focus their activity, and enable them to improve their work

242 Current work indicates that standards are broadly average and individual students are achieving appropriately, given their prior attainment and predicted grades. Students are following the process of designing and making but the depth of research, analysis, development of ideas and application of materials knowledge is limited in most folders. Students learn about the properties of materials and, through disassembling existing products, develop their understanding of how things are made, assembled and improved over time. However, most students show limited retention of information and require considerable help in identifying areas for in-depth research and then in developing their ideas. Standards of drawing and presentation of work vary but are good for higher-attaining students. The work of lower-attaining students often contains less precise drawings, which lack detail and sufficient annotation, and this reflects their comparative lack of knowledge and understanding when trying to solve constructional details and using the properties of materials. Students use computers for their research and some aspects of presentation, but their work shows insufficient use of computers for designing and manufacturing. Higher-attaining students show more independence in thinking about, and executing their work.

- 243 Overall, students are positive about their work. They work steadily in practical sessions but can be passive in theory lessons. Overall, pace and productivity are relatively low and students do not make best use of time, particularly in the longer lessons. Higher-attaining students are better at organising their own work.
- 244 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge but not all have sufficient experience in organising and managing advanced level courses and this has affected students' learning and the standards achieved. Some good, focused tasks are planned, for example the disassembly of vacuum cleaners but, because students are not always clear about the learning objectives and assessment criteria, the value of exercises is at times diminished. Large blocks of time are not always managed effectively and used well, and this affects concentration and the pace of learning. Teachers are effective in using their specialist skills to support students in their learning and enabling them to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the use of materials. However, whilst students receive very good oral feedback and high quality sketches, teachers provide insufficient written guidance about how they can organise and improve their work.
- 245 Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is close co-operation between teachers in the same school but insufficient coordination and liaison across The Kett. The lack of experience of some teachers, for example in addressing examination requirements, has already led to some under-performance. The quality of accommodation and quantity of resources vary considerably between school sites. Coupled with insufficient access to appropriate computer resources for some, this results in inequalities in what students are offered.

BUSINESS

The inspection focused on the advanced vocational (AVCE) business education, but A-level business studies and economics were also sampled.

In the observed economics lesson, standards were above average, and teaching and learning were good. Good relationships and the attitudes of students had a positive impact on their learning, though they had few opportunities to contribute and tended to be passive rather than active learners.

Business education

The overall quality of provision in business education is **good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning is underpinned by teachers' very good subject knowledge
- Teachers have very good and purposeful relationships with students
- Planning sequentially builds on students' knowledge and experiences
- Very good guidance and feedback is given to students on their coursework

Areas for improvement

- Variations in approach across the two sites mean that a common ethos for the course has not yet been established
- With current ICT arrangements, students cannot access their work across The Kett

- 246 Standards in AVCE business are average. Most students joined the course with GCSE point scores that were below average. This represents at least good achievement, and teachers' focus on driving students to improve their performance means that their achievement over the course is very good

overall. Year 12 students understood the relevance of a business plan. They gained a good understanding of how creative flair and imagination had led to the formation of successful and productive companies that were well known to them. In Year 13, students made helpful notes and articulated their ideas well. They made meaningful links between theory and practice related to business planning, and when considering the needs of customers. Students respond well when there are opportunities to relate their own experiences, either from formal work experience or part-time work, to the theoretical models being described. This was seen in practice when a student compared the experience of working in a local supermarket to aspects of the course, and consolidated the relationship between theory and practice very effectively for himself and others in the group.

- 247 Students have responsible attitudes and are very well motivated. They appreciate the efforts of staff to help them.
- 248 The quality of teaching and learning is very good. All lessons observed had a clear structure and positive working atmosphere. Both teachers and students demonstrated very good levels of subject knowledge. There was excellent use of real-world examples, where students referred to topical items and past experiences. Work is marked regularly and rigorously, and students receive very constructive feedback both on work and in lessons. A very good feature of all lessons seen was the very focused advice on grading criteria, and targeted coaching so students could progress to higher grades. Students' work shows good application of theoretical concepts to the organisations studied. Detailed knowledge of students' work enables very good target setting. There is a very strong history of accurate final assessment, with very good feedback from the examination board. Use of performance data is well established and is used effectively in planning. This contributes to students' very good learning.
- 249 Although teaching is very good, different practices over the two sites leads, in some respects, to a lack of coherence in the course. Students appreciate and value the opportunities for taking responsibility for their learning and find the teaching and learning styles interesting and motivating. They are well supported by the more structured approach of some teachers. Students value the development of speaking skills, and the specific business skills that equip them well for the world of work. The one significant impediment to learning and progress is students' use and access to relevant computer software, of the sort found in a modern business environment. Systems across The Kett are incompatible. Students are unable to access their work on all sites. Accommodation and the quality of resources for business studies also vary across the sites.
- 250 Leadership and management are satisfactory and serve the students well in some respects. The underlying differences of view, amongst the staff, on how the subject is to run and on styles of delivery mean that a shared ethos for the subject is not yet established. These differences have not been satisfactorily tackled.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology runs as an advanced course but was only observed as part of the key skills courses. The teaching was very effective and standards were average for the course. Progress was good, given students differing starting points. All Kett students who would benefit are encouraged to take ICT key skills courses.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was the focus in this area with leisure and tourism, and health and social care being sampled.

In GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, standards were broadly average for the course and teaching and learning were good. A range of successful strategies was used, designed to involve students and develop their confidence in dealing with members of the public. The course meets the needs of the students well.

In health and social care, the teaching had considerable strengths and students learned well. Lesson planning was very good and strong links made with the development of key skills. Students could recognise the connections between their own observations of young children's behaviour and the studies by Skinner and this consolidated their understanding. Standards were average for the course.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Good teaching is underpinned by teachers' knowledge and understanding of the course
- Lessons proceed at a brisk, lively pace, with plenty of interaction between students
- Students work hard and display very good attitudes and relationships

Areas for improvement

- Students are not given sufficient written feedback to help them know how to improve their work

- 251 Standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly average. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge and understanding of a narrow range of sports, but are still coming to terms with the need to widen their horizons to encompass sport in general. Year 13 students have good background knowledge of diet and nutrition and are able to define these two elements effectively. In the lesson concerned, they were able to build on previous knowledge, which led to good learning.
- 252 Scrutiny of coursework assignments and discussion with students showed that many struggle with the notion of independent research and "reading around" a subject or issue. Year 12 students, in particular, find it hard to realise that this is a theoretical course, even though it was explained to them before they started. However, achievement in both years is generally good, particularly as entry to the course is open to all levels of prior attainment. All work is neatly presented and the work of Year 13 students in particular showed good levels of competency in word processing.
- 253 The good achievement in lessons is partly due to the very positive attitudes of students. They are willing to listen, discuss, share thoughts and ideas, and learn from each other as well as from teachers. Students from the three partner schools are well integrated within the group. They are all very appreciative of the support they receive from teachers.
- 254 Good teaching contributes to the good achievement and learning of students. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of the course and are deployed to teach to their strengths. They use a very good variety of activities within a lesson, which maintains interest and motivation. A good feature of the teaching is the brisk, lively pace of lessons with plenty of interaction between students and teachers.
- 255 Assessment is satisfactory and students are aware of their target grades. Verbal feedback on assignments is good but written feedback is insufficient to help students know how to improve their work.

256 Leadership and management are good. The clearly prescribed syllabus is tackled sensibly and methodically. Timetabled lessons are used exclusively for the theory sessions and the students are expected to develop their practical expertise in extra-curricular sessions and in clubs and teams. This is a good way of giving students responsibility for a part of their own learning and development and ensuring that the greatest amount of time possible is devoted to the part of the course students find more difficult.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on art and design and performing arts. In addition, the vocational art and design course, media studies and music were sampled.

The standards in the vocational art and design course are below average for the course, but students achieve well relative to their starting points. The good teaching enabled them to gain confidence and expertise, to explore ideas and use different materials when making their sculptures. The teacher's interventions were very effective.

The music course runs with very small numbers and this restricts the teaching activities which are possible. As a result, in the observed lesson with a single student, the teacher tended to dominate and there was little opportunity to explore and share alternative ideas. Standards were above average and good use was made of computers for composition.

The teaching in media studies had some excellent features, in particular the depth and quality of questioning that enabled all students to recognise the key characteristics used to convey ideas and meaning. They understood and were able to relate these visual qualities to theoretical frameworks. Standards were slightly above average.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Effective teaching leads to good achievement and learning
- Teachers' subject expertise is used very effectively to set challenging work, enthuse students and promote high standards
- The staff share a commitment to work together to raise attainment

Areas for improvement

- Male students are less confident and committed to working on their own, which does affect their achievement compared with that of female students
- Time is not always used effectively in longer sessions to vary teaching and learning styles and sustain motivation

257 The standard of work of current students is above average. In Years 12 and 13, students are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course and their predicted results, based on GCSE performance.

258 In Year 13, the work is highly individual and personal; some is figurative and some abstract. The work produced in life drawing classes adds significantly to the quality and range of work in students' portfolios. Much of the work students undertake is conceptually and practically ambitious. They use well a range of materials and media such as photography, plaster and glass alongside the more traditional mixed-media, drawing and painting. In the problem-solving element of the course, students responded positively to tasks of researching and investigating the work of chosen artists, and made thoughtful references to aspects of their own work. In practical studio activities, and prompted by the teachers' sharp questioning and timely interventions, students were able to argue confidently and convincingly the reasons they were pursuing one course of action rather than another. The lively discussions that take place enable students to test out their ideas, reflect on the range of choices open

to them and make more informed decisions as a consequence. In this respect, students are prepared well for the examination requirements.

- 259 Some students make good use of computers to manipulate images, but computers are more generally used for research purposes. Overall, the potential for using computers more widely, for example in mixed-media work, has not been fully explored and developed.
- 260 Male students tend to be less confident and able to sustain the high levels of independent learning that the course demands. These factors, together with a poor record of attendance by a small but significant proportion of students, have a negative impact on the standards being achieved. However, most students attend lessons regularly and those who start courses generally complete them. A very good range of course options is available for those wanting to take art and design qualifications.
- 261 Teaching is good, overall, and students learn well. The strengths of the teaching lie in teachers' very good subject knowledge and their high expectations of students' performance. In lessons where learning was particularly effective, the teachers made the lesson objectives very clear, the pace was brisk and good use was made of the available time. Most students have well-developed learning skills and manage their time well. Their work journals are valued highly and the visual references and annotations reflect high levels of creativity, personal motivation and interest in the subject. A small number of students struggle to maintain the work rate demanded of them, and to meet the intellectual challenges set. One-hour lessons are used productively. However, in a two- or three-hour session, teachers missed opportunities to introduce a wider range of teaching and learning strategies, such as student-led presentations and questioning, to consolidate and reinforce the learning.
- 262 The subject is well led and managed. Development plans identify the areas where there is scope for improvement, notably the achievement of male students. Teachers have undertaken relevant training in school and with examination boards and so are up-to-date and aware of the arrangements for marking and assessment. Staff have begun to work closely together and there is a shared responsibility and a commitment to raising standards that is benefiting students.

Performing arts

Overall, the quality of provision for performing arts is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students learn very well because of the very good and, at times, inspirational teaching
- Relationships between students, and between students and teachers, are very good
- Students gain in confidence and learn to work together well in both group and whole-class situations

Areas for improvement

- Low numbers of students, all female, are taking the course, which restricts the variety of material that can be used
- The cramped accommodation is unsuitable for practical dance work
- Resources available throughout The Kett are not utilised as no formal links exist between sites

- 263 The standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in Years 12 and 13. Students' achievement is very good considering their wide variation in performing standards when they start the course. During Year 12, students make very good progress, rapidly improving their knowledge, skills and understanding of all aspects of drama and dance through a well-planned series of topics and very enthusiastic teaching. Students enjoy the subject, work very well together and have a growing

knowledge of performance techniques. In practical sessions, students relate ideas to the theme they are working with and the majority speak expressively. Their knowledge of music and its role within the performance arts is generally weaker because they do not incorporate enough music into their work.

- 264 Students are happy to take responsibility for their work. They use their very good relationships to bring the best from each other in group work, in taking initiative and responsibility, and in generating original ideas from outlines proposed by the teachers. In one Year 12 dance lesson, students gave imaginative performances showing the clear influence of Christopher Bruce. They gave solo and group presentations to the rest of the group, who watched with interest, showing respect for their performance. Students then appraised the performance carefully, using technical vocabulary, and suggested changes to the choreography.
- 265 In a Year 13 lesson, focusing on British dance of the twentieth century, students' solo and duet work incorporated common techniques used by Richard Alston, involving physical contact. Students created imaginative group work in a stately, graceful style showing the influence of the baroque music they listened to, through sensitive phrasing. Students use technical vocabulary such as 'locomoting' and 'motif' well, when describing their work.
- 266 Students become more confident in sharing ideas and learn to work together, in both group and whole class situations, because lessons are well planned. In one Year 12 drama session, focusing on Stanislavski's concepts of 'physical action' and the 'magic if', students explored the idea of overlapping natural dialogue within the text of 'Top Girls' by Caryl Churchill. The teacher built sequential practical tasks that resulted in the highest possible levels of concentration and interest from the students.
- 267 Students' very good learning is a result of the very good teaching they receive. Teaching is characterised by outstanding subject knowledge, inspirational demonstrations and a powerful passion for the subject. Students are keen to get involved in work because of the lively and stimulating way in which teachers use their own knowledge and enthusiasm. In the dance lessons seen, the teacher gave demonstrations of very complex phrasing, which inspired the students to emulate and develop. Praise is used well and helps to motivate students during performances. Teachers have high expectations and very good relationships with students.
- 268 Leadership of the course is good, with a shared vision for the development of the subject. The planning, to ensure that students cover all units of the course is good and, consequently, students understand the requirements of all aspects of the course and are well prepared for the examinations. Management of the course is satisfactory. The specialist accommodation being used is cramped and inadequate, in that it restricts movement and the use of space in students' work. There is no dedicated performance space. There are no formalised links between the sites so students and teachers are not aware of other resources or facilities, including good quality theatres, that could be used. Numbers studying the course are relatively low and are all female; this causes problems in choosing material to perform and study. Due to a problem with the current timetable, Year 13 students miss out on one lesson each week because there is no teacher or room available for them. As a result, they are not making as much progress as they could.
- 269 The performing arts department provides a very good range of enrichment performance opportunities, which are enthusiastically supported and appreciated by students and the wider community. A recent community performance, of a piece entitled "Women of Norwich", was particularly successful and highly valued by the students.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on sociology, psychology, geography and history. In addition, lessons in government and politics and general studies were observed.

Standards in the general studies course are above average and the teaching was excellent. The lesson provided a mix of different activities and supported students' learning of aspects of the social sciences very well. Students made well-researched presentations and, with the help of the teacher, explored some important and relevant points about personal motivation and the possible tensions between these and society's need for wealth generation.

In a government and politics lesson, the class was one student. Standards, teaching and learning were broadly sound, with some misunderstandings about terminology and pieces of key information. Opportunities for different styles of teaching and learning are restricted by the group size.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to very effective learning
- The subject knowledge of teachers and their awareness of course requirements are very good
- Teachers give students very good feedback following assessments of their work
- Students' attitudes are positive and the relationships between students and teachers very helpful

Areas for improvement

- Management of provision, and communication between sites is underdeveloped

270 Overall, the standard of work of current Year 13 students is above expectations. When prior learning is taken into account, achievement is very good. In lessons seen, students made very good progress as teacher expectations were high and the work was pitched at the appropriate and challenging level. For example, as students studied air masses and the impact of these on the weather of Britain, they achieved a very good understanding of cyclonic conditions. Students have good literacy skills and their written work is of a good quality. All students have compiled very full records of the modules covered that will support their revision. Their work shows students to have appropriate levels of knowledge, clear understanding and competence in advanced skills. Students' research studies are developing well. In one lesson, students gave presentations to the group, which demonstrated their diligence and the very good progress they had made in establishing hypotheses and investigating their chosen topic. They were aware of the limitations of their research and responded positively to criticism by showing a willingness to reconsider their approach.

271 Year 12 students, who are currently studying weathering, have a secure understanding of the different processes involved and use advanced technical language with confidence. They have many opportunities to develop such subject skills as mapping and data analysis. Students were very well briefed prior to fieldwork in the local area, which will involve the collection, tabulation and analysis of data to test hypotheses. They practised statistical techniques, and discussed how they would be able to apply their theoretical knowledge and understanding as they investigated different rates of weathering on headstones in a local cemetery. Their previously completed work shows that they have frequent opportunities to apply and practise their communication, number and ICT skills; as a result, standards are high. For example, teachers ensure that they develop the skills necessary to write well-structured and argued essays. This is appreciated by students, the majority of whom intend to continue into the

second year of the course. Overall, students are working at the level expected at this stage in the course. A few students are not showing the levels of motivation and commitment expected at this stage.

272 The observed teaching was very good. Teachers showed their very good subject knowledge through clear exposition, and in response to questions that provided opportunities to extend students' understanding. Teachers insisted upon accuracy and precision in students' use of terms, asking follow-up questions to probe the depth of their knowledge and understanding, as in a Year 12 lesson when weathering and the processes involved were rehearsed. In all lessons, students were aware of the objectives and were actively involved. Students value the wide range of methods used that allow them to take responsibility for their learning. The continuity evident in students' previously completed work reflects the very good planning of individual lessons and the curriculum as a whole. Students in both years have the skills necessary for independent learning and teachers exploit this to good effect, for example in their research of hazards in preparation for the examinations. Carefully set work is marked thoroughly and teachers discuss strengths and weaknesses with the students. This ensures that students know what they must do to secure improvement. Students' progress is monitored and teachers keep comprehensive records. Students value the very good support provided by teachers who know them well and who are aware of the examination requirements.

273 Year 13 students, and the majority of those in Year 12, are conscientious and diligent. Always attentive and courteous, they respond very positively to the high quality teaching. Their teachers insist that they contribute to lessons and use targeted questions to ensure the involvement of all. Keen to both answer and ask questions, students can discuss confidently the topics they have covered. They feel that they have made the right choice of subject because they had been provided with very good information concerning the content and demands of the courses.

274 Students have followed three different GCSE syllabuses. There are two different advanced level syllabuses, taught by separate teams of teachers. The management of each course is effective; the teachers in charge provide good leadership and, within the teams, teachers work closely together to plan topics and lessons. However, communication between the teams is limited and this affects the success in achieving the central aims of The Kett. For example, presently, a large group is taught in a cramped room with few facilities for practical work to hand, while a small group is taught in a spacious room containing the facilities required. Teachers share a commitment to improvement.

History

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, based on good relationships
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements

Areas for improvement

- Students have few opportunities for enrichment beyond the classroom

275 Overall, standards of work of students in Year 13 are broadly in line with expectation, with some students above that level. This represents good achievement overall in the light of their prior attainment. In one lesson, students' computer-generated presentations of key issues in the development of Elizabeth 1's reign provided succinct summaries for others in the group. They showed good understanding of the issues, and also of the different interpretations of these that have emerged in professional debate. In another Year 13 class working on their personal research studies, higher-

attaining students were working at standards above national expectations. Standards in Year 12 are currently in line with national expectations. For example, students studying the development and effect of culture in Weimar Germany were able to suggest reasons for the symbolism and representation of society and politics as depicted in the works of two major contemporary artists. Their written work showed they had acquired a sound grasp of the political context of these developments.

276 Overall, teaching seen was good, and students learn well as a result. Teachers are confident in their subject and syllabus knowledge, which results in teaching clearly focused on expected outcomes. Teachers and students enjoy good relationships and teachers provide constructive advice through their assessment of students' work. Students generally work hard and are willing to take responsibility for their learning, with teacher guidance. In a Year 12 lesson, however, the unexpected lack of planned access to online research facilities resulted in an overly teacher-led session, and student progress was just satisfactory as a result. The use of ICT, such as the computer-generated presentations, provides an effective contribution to the students' key skills, in addition to supporting their learning of history. Students are recommended pertinent websites to support different aspects of the course. In Year 13, they use a wide range of text and website resources to pursue their individual research activities. Students have good access to wider reading through teachers' arrangements to introduce them to the resources of the University of East Anglia and local libraries. Wider opportunities beyond the classroom to enrich provision have been few. These are currently being considered by the teachers coordinating history provision across the sites.

277 Management of history in The Kett is satisfactory currently, at this early stage of development, but with a clear commitment to improve provision. For example, discussions between the sites offering history have resulted in the use of a common syllabus, and sharing of information about department resources and assessment procedures.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Some excellent teaching challenges students to great intellectual effort
- Teachers' marking is very helpful and followed up with discussion of areas for improvement
- Students share an interest in the subject and a desire to do well, which contributes to their good achievement
- Relationships between teachers and students are good

Areas for improvement

- Not all teachers have equally high expectations of students
- The nature and requirements of the course are not defined rigorously enough

278 Standards seen in Years 12 and 13 are average overall but range across the full spectrum of attainment. In Year 12, the majority of students are suitably matched to their course but a small minority struggle to absorb the large amount of information and the demands of a subject new to them. They use psychological terms with understanding, such as independent and dependent variables, and ecological validity. Students' work indicates a good grasp of methodology in that they are able to set out key studies and write up their own psychological investigations in a professional manner. Lower-attaining students have satisfactory knowledge but have difficulty in evaluating results of experiments. At times, their essays contain statements that are not built on or enlarged upon. Higher-attaining students have good factual recall and are able to see, for example, ethical considerations in defining mental health. Significant differences are apparent in the standards of Year 13 students. Where

standards are high, there is clear evidence of developed study skills, especially independent learning and research. Written work is of a high standard and students write critically, selecting a variety of sources to support their arguments. They challenge accepted results using their own judgement. Where there is below average work, answers tend to be minimal with little evidence of research, betraying a careless approach and a lack of intellectual effort and rigour.

- 279 Students generally achieve well and their progress through the course is good. There is growing understanding, evident in written work, particularly of their grasp of key concepts. In discussion, students showed an ability to analyse critically and subject assumptions to close scrutiny. In one Year 13 lesson discussing use of animals in experiments, students were able to relate one study to another and showed excellent analytical skills in taking the experiments to pieces and highlighting implications, particularly ethical ones. A significant factor in students' good achievement is how much they are interested and stimulated by the subject and share a desire to do well.
- 280 Teaching overall is good, with some excellent examples. Where teaching is excellent, the teacher's expectations are very high, students are challenged by questions which push them to make real intellectual effort, and there is a pace and purpose to the lesson which is totally absorbing. Independent learning is paramount, with the teacher as guide and animator. Where teaching is less effective, teacher's expectations are lower, students become passive and learning becomes more reliant on the teacher's efforts. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and enables them to help the students very effectively. For example, coursework is always marked frequently and the teachers' comments are considered very helpful by the students, as they identify key issues that are then discussed at length with the student. These, together with target setting and the students' own evaluations, have a very positive impact on learning and progress.
- 281 As an overall picture, students learn well and make good progress, though this does vary with the quality of teaching. There are good relationships with their teachers. The quality of their personal development is good, especially their self-knowledge, gained through their studies of motivation and behaviour. Higher-attaining students extend their learning by attempting more demanding research. Male and female students do equally well although numbers of female students are much greater. Access to computers is satisfactory and all students use ICT with ease, including the Internet, both for research and writing up their coursework. A sufficient collection of reference books is available on both sites. Few extra-curricular opportunities are offered, for example visiting speakers, or close links with college or university psychology departments. Accommodation is satisfactory and, in most classes, wall displays reinforce key words and concepts.
- 282 Leadership and management are satisfactory but much work still has to be done to achieve consistency throughout The Kett. The best practice is not being shared, through monitoring of teaching and learning on both sites. Entry requirements for the course are not sufficiently rigorous or realistic.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, resulting in good learning
- Students' attitudes are very good, especially in Year 13 and they are very positive about the course
- Students receive good support and guidance

Areas for improvement

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers do not always use time well in two-hour lessons, to secure all students' involvement and commitment to learning• Marking does not consistently match examination grading levels |
|---|

- 283 The standards of work of students in Year 12 are close to the national average and they are achieving satisfactorily considering their attainment at the start of the course. They can identify important concepts with reference to the procedures followed in sociological studies. They understand the ethical considerations and difficulties a researcher may face in studying a group covertly, for example where criminal activities are involved.
- 284 Year 13 students are working at the expected level. They have a good understanding of different theoretical perspectives and can apply these to a variety of topics. They appreciate the importance of basing findings on careful observation and statistical analysis. The students can use their knowledge and understanding of underlying principles to explore cultural differences, for example the reasons for suicide in different societies. Higher-attaining students answer questions well, writing well-organised essays with appropriate reference to the requirements of the question. Evaluations and conclusions in the essays of lower-attaining students are not so clearly related to the question, having insufficient reference to the key words in the title.
- 285 Teaching is good, overall. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and are fully acquainted with examination requirements. They use a variety of strategies and stimulating materials and are skilful at questioning students, who learn well as a result. For example, in a Year 13 lesson discussing the merits of experimental research, the teacher dealt with its moral, social and cultural implications. The students were able to suggest reasons why this approach compares unfavourably with other methods. This allowed them to explore an important area of study using reasoned argument and critical skills. They are keen to work independently using supplementary information from books and periodicals and to research topics on the Internet. Achievement of these students is good. Some lower-attaining students in Year 12 are not as highly motivated and teachers' expectations of these students are not as high as they could be. Consequently, teachers have to work hard to maintain their involvement, especially in the lengthy two-hour sessions. Key skills, such as the continuing reinforcement of technical terms in lessons, are not given enough emphasis. Nevertheless, when one-to-one support is given to lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs, they make good progress. Gifted and talented students are provided with extended work and are challenged by more difficult work in some lessons.
- 286 Marking provides students with good feedback on completed assignments and each piece of work sets targets for the next. Although marking indicates areas for improvement, especially helpful for lower-attaining students, it is not consistently matched to examination level grading.
- 287 Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They like the way teachers work together and extend students' thinking through questioning and discussion, resulting in a stimulating exchange of ideas and increasingly confident dialogue. This encourages them to start to take risks when exploring new ideas, but this is still more laboured than might be expected at this level. They enjoy the relevance of the course to present day culture and feel they have a good understanding of how society functions. Overall, students make good progress and are aware of their achievements and targets.
- 288 Leadership and management are good. Staffing is good, with an appropriate allocation of teachers to meet the needs of the students and the course. Good monitoring systems inform teachers of students' strengths and weaknesses and keep students aware of their progress. Accommodation is satisfactory, although a specialist room is shared and teachers have to move equipment and resources. Good, complementary research books are available in the library.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The Kett offers courses in English literature and English language. The inspection focused on English literature and sampled English language.

In English language, teaching is satisfactory. Students acquire a sound understanding of a range of issues to do with language use and variety, such as the use of abbreviations, and the differences between informal and formal language and its use in different settings. Standards of work are below average in Year 12 but above average in Year 13.

English

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

Strengths

- Good subject knowledge of teachers is used well in briefing and instruction
- Whole-class discussion work with students is effective
- Students' very good response and commitment to the subject underpins their good achievement

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities are too few for students to think independently and draw out ideas at length
- An imbalance of class size across The Kett restricts the range of teaching approaches that may be used

289 Standards of work observed in Year 12 are below those found nationally. Students acquire a thorough understanding of the texts they study in response to sensitive, well-informed teaching, which draws out their understanding and appreciation in whole class discussions. Their ability to structure and control written assignments, in order to communicate fully their understanding, is limited at this stage.

290 In Year 13, standards exceed the national expectation and students have achieved well over the length of the course. Students understand literal meanings, imagery and the historical context of poetry, as a result of thorough teaching. For example, one group identified well the multiple interpretations and resonance of particular lines in William Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience', in the context of eighteenth century London. They read aloud passages from Shakespeare with understanding and expression. Students can identify and explain with insight the importance of key phrases and words, both in class discussion and in response to well-focused materials requiring them to understand, summarise and make annotated notes on the text.

291 The quality of students' response is very good, particularly in Year 13, where they contribute well when questioned as individuals by the teacher. They bring a seriousness and commitment to their studies, which leads to good progress over time. In class, they answer teachers' questions willingly, if briefly, and their files show careful, detailed recording of what they have learned. Their written work shows considerable pride and care.

292 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use good subject knowledge to brief and instruct students, and question classes productively. They mark written work conscientiously. As a result, students acquire a thorough basic understanding of the texts they study. Nevertheless, the system for telling them how well they are doing, and what they need to do in order to improve further, lacks precision.

- 293 Within the picture of good learning overall, resulting from the good teaching and students' very good attitudes, a relative weakness is students' skill in learning for themselves. Teachers do not give students enough regular opportunities to think, discuss and share ideas independently. In consequence, students' capacity for autonomous thought and development of understanding is often restricted because they have not learned to express themselves to each other, in more than single words or sentences. In instances where individual students report back on their own research, learning is not consolidated within the group by debating their ideas and discussing alternatives to extend and confirm fully what they know.
- 294 Computers are used well, both to lay out work logically and to research background information on the Internet. Library facilities for reference and independent reading are adequate. At the same time, some students have limited access to these because they have to travel between sites in order to access the full selection of books.
- 295 Leadership and management are sound. The teaching of the subject is led jointly by three heads of department, who benefit from the work of a coordinator. Initial decisions to standardise syllabuses have prepared the ground for better cooperation between teachers. The size of classes in Year 12 varies across The Kett, and where numbers are very low, the range of possible teaching approaches is restricted. This means that students in some groups are not exposed to a variety of ways of learning or the stimulus of their peers, and their performance is depressed as a result.

French

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

Strengths

- Students work confidently on a range of challenging and sophisticated topics and achieve well
- Teachers make good use of questioning and constructive criticism
- Constructive relationships enable students to work well together and enjoy the course
- The curriculum is well planned and resourced

Areas for improvement

- Occasionally, teaching and resources do not match students' linguistic skills
- The range of teaching media and reading material is limited
- Students are not recruited from all partner schools

- 296 The standards of work of students in Year 13 are above average. In a lesson seen, they undertook discussion of the state of the modern world, and a listening task on the same topic, with confidence. Using the knowledge and skills developed through these activities, they produced thoughtful spoken personal responses, which they would consolidate, in written form, for homework. Their written work is often of excellent quality – fluent, accurate and interesting on a wide range of topics such as pollution, euthanasia and capital punishment. Their achievement is good overall.
- 297 Students in Year 12 have built on good GCSE results to make the transition to advanced study. Their written work is a particular strength – extended pieces on topics of general and personal interest, showing a good grasp of appropriate grammar, vocabulary and expression. They work enthusiastically to develop their other language skills. Their spoken French is currently the least well developed. They have had insufficient intensive practice in articulating the language in extended speech, which would improve their confidence in making personal spoken statements and responses. In the lessons seen, they performed best from prepared material, for example in discussing the positive and negative aspects of advertising or in justifying their choice of a television programme from the French national

network schedules. When presented with written or spoken material that was unfamiliar or too challenging for their level of experience, they encountered difficulties. Overall, however, they have made good progress on the course.

- 298 Teaching and learning are good overall. The strengths of the teaching are the excellent skills of the teachers, including native French speakers, the high quality of most planning and resourcing of lessons and the enthusiasm and commitment for the subject which teachers communicate. They provide excellent models of French, which is the teaching medium in lessons. Their use of questioning and constructive criticism on linguistic points are key factors in raising students' standards, notably in Year 13. Teaching is less effective when spoken or written material is chosen which does not match the knowledge, skills and understanding of students. Students' work is diligently marked and they are well supported by assessment processes.
- 299 Students have positive attitudes to the course and learn well in response to the good teaching. They show a high level of motivation and willingness to learn. They enjoy the challenge of discovering French culture and the broad range of social, moral and cultural topics they study. They work well independently, making good use of ICT both to produce written coursework and, through the Internet, to research topics and other areas of interest. There is a strong ethos of mutual support, notably in the Year 12 group. Students appreciate the value of an advanced qualification in languages and a number take up the opportunity of work experience in France offered by the school.
- 300 The course is well planned and managed. A team of teachers provides a good range of perspectives and input. The subject is well resourced, though there are no computers within the department and a satellite television facility, which could provide considerable enrichment, is not currently in use. Students would benefit from having access to a wider range of teaching media. The range of texts available for reading, both for information and pleasure, is not broad enough. The department has so far only managed to recruit students from one of the three schools.

German

Overall, the quality of provision in German is **just satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The small number of students who take the course have positive attitudes to the subject

Areas for improvement

- The course is not well co-ordinated across The Kett
- Teaching does not always meet students' individual needs
- Recruitment of students has shown very limited success

- 301 The number of students studying German is very small and, within that picture, each year is taught on a different site. In Year 13, the above average work seen during the inspection was built on good foundations from the previous year and a strong sense of motivation to improve steadily on performance. Achievement is good. Independent learning skills are demonstrated by the care taken over drafting and re-drafting, and the revision notes made to reinforce and improve standards of grammar. The standards seen in Year 12 were below average. Nevertheless, students are on track to reach their target grades, which broadly represents satisfactory achievement. Progress for them is slower because their learning skills are less well developed. Students display reasonable comprehension skills but have difficulty using language independently and accurately to express meaning.

- 302 Teaching is generally good, though with some variation. Teachers use good techniques to help their students understand the meaning of written texts. For example, they split up compound nouns, direct attention to grammatical forms, use synonyms and simplify more difficult sentences. As a result, students make informed guesses at the meaning of unfamiliar language and this gives them confidence. The textbook is used well to connect abstract topics more closely to students' own experience. Teachers are adept at linking aspects of students' learning and recapping material, both during and at the end of lessons. Students receive good oral feedback on their progress. Marking is regular, but the quality of the advice given is too variable. The best marking is detailed and assesses performance in close accordance with the component parts of the marking criteria. Occasionally, the teaching is less effective in enabling the students to construct their own meanings, and exercises are insufficiently adapted to fully support students, individual needs.
- 303 In response to teaching, learning is good in Year 13, with active engagement in the work and setting of personal goals. Students in both years have positive attitudes towards the subject. Year 12 students are keen and enthusiastic and enjoy the topics. This encourages them to persevere when they experience difficulties. However, they show little initiative. As a result, students do not fully contribute to the work covered in class and their learning is satisfactory. This is reflected in the inconsistencies in the depth of their knowledge in the topic areas.
- 304 The quality of provision for students is affected by a combination of small numbers, inconsistencies in staffing, time allocation inequities and the timetable blocking system. The fact that Year 12 and Year 13 courses are taught on separate sites, by different groups of teachers, hinders a sharing of good practice and the development of a strategic overview for the subject. Current management arrangements are not securing a coherent ethos for the subject nor presenting a clear path for students who may wish to study German over the coming years.