

INSPECTION REPORT

LORD GREY SCHOOL

Bletchley, Milton Keynes

LEA Area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110531

Headteacher: Ms D. Pavlou

Reporting inspector: John Godwood
18242

Dates of inspection: 20 – 24 January 2003

Inspection number: 252105

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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 12 – 19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rickley Lane
Bletchley
Milton Keynes

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A. Evershed

Date of previous inspection: 25 September 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18242	John Godwood	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards: the school's results and students' achievements?</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards: students' attitudes, values and personal development?</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
9189	John Horwood	Lay inspector		
10759	Lyn Bappa	Team inspector	<p>History</p> <p>Religious education</p> <p>Educational inclusion, including race equality</p>	
13734	Harold Davies	Team inspector	Geography	
32080	Brian Dutton	Team inspector	Film studies	
4430	Richard Eaton	Team inspector	<p>Music</p> <p>Citizenship</p>	
32115	John Foster	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10561	Angela Fraser	Team inspector	Science	
18542	Gerald Griffin	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p>	
31135	Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	English	
31441	Margaret King	Team inspector	Mathematics	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art Business education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lord Grey School is a foundation comprehensive school of above-average size, with 1302 students aged 12 to 19. It is a specialist language college and is over-subscribed. One in seven students comes from a minority ethnic background – most of these are of Indian, Bangladeshi or Black British heritage. One in twenty students has English as an additional language, the main home languages being Bengali and Gujarati. One in fifteen students is eligible for free school meals, which is below average. One in eight students has special educational needs, of whom 23 have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Most students with more significant needs have learning difficulties, but a small number have communication problems or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The number of students who join or leave the school other than at the usual times is above average. The school serves one of the less affluent areas of Milton Keynes, where the tradition of further education is not well established. Attainment on entry is below average but is rising.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Lord Grey is a good school. It has improved significantly through very good leadership with a strong focus on learning. Standards have risen and GCSE results are at the national average. Students achieve well from their standard of attainment on entry. Teaching is good, because many teachers are enthusiastic and give good support to individual students. However, in some lessons students need more opportunities to think for themselves. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally good, though a minority have attendance problems. Management is good at all levels and both teachers and support staff work well as a team in students' interests. There is good potential for further improvement. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership has resulted in a strong focus on learning and a significant improvement in standards.
- Most students have good attitudes to lessons and achieve well because they are well taught and their behaviour is very well managed.
- Most teachers are enthusiastic and establish very good relationships; there is a shared commitment and good teamwork among teachers and support staff.
- The systems for communicating with parents and the information they receive on students' progress are very good.
- Extra-curricular activities are very good in music and drama and excellent in modern languages and physical education.

What could be improved

- The attendance of a significant minority, especially of older students, is unsatisfactory.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to be actively involved in lessons and to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Many subjects do not use information and communication technology (ICT) sufficiently to support learning.
- There is a shortage of learning resources in several subjects, including textbooks, ICT peripherals and software.

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 September 2000. Since then its improvement has been very good. Standards have improved significantly in the main school and the sixth form. In particular, the serious underachievement of higher-attaining students in mathematics, science and modern languages has been much reduced. The quality of teaching is now much higher, with a big reduction in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching and a significant increase in the amount of good and very good teaching. Behaviour has improved and attitudes are now good in most lessons. These improvements have been brought about by very good leadership, improved recruitment and good management at all levels.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations. 'Similar schools' means schools with a similar proportion of free school meals.

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

**National comparative data for AS/A-level results in 2002 is not yet available.*

Standards in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002 were average overall. English results were better than those in mathematics and science, though both these subjects have improved steadily over the last three years. Standards have improved in line with the national trend. Students made good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. There is little difference between boys' and girls' performance.

GCSE results in 2002 were average overall and showed a big improvement on the previous year. The trend of improvement is above the national trend. Results were below those of schools with a similar proportion of free school meals but students made good progress from Year 9 to GCSE. Girls did better than boys, though boys' results improved significantly in 2002 and the difference is less than that found nationally. Lower-attaining students made more progress than higher-attaining students. There is some variation between different subjects. The best results were in religious studies, physical education, ICT and design and technology; the weakest results were in French, Spanish and art. Results in English and mathematics were better than those in science. The school exceeded its GCSE target in 2002. The target for 2003 is reasonably challenging and the school is on course to meet it. A-level results in 2002 improved significantly from the previous year. They remained below the average for 2001, but students made better than expected progress from GCSE.

For current students, standards are average at the end of Year 9. They are above average in the new subject of citizenship, but below average in music and design and technology. Standards are also average at the end of Year 11. They are above average in religious studies, citizenship and in the GCSE courses in ICT and physical education. Standards are below average in mathematics, modern languages, history, geography and music. Standards are rising – in Spanish and art they are higher than in recent examination results due to improvements in teaching. Students achieve well throughout the school.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most students enjoy school, respond well in lessons and participate in activities, yet the level of absence is relatively high.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. It is good or better in most lessons and students behave sensibly around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships amongst students and with teachers are very good. Some students take initiative but many are dependent on their teachers.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is below average. Some students also arrive late during registration, causing an uneven start to the day.

Behaviour is much improved since the last inspection because most teachers manage it well and there are very good procedures for monitoring and supporting behaviour. Apart from there being too much absence, students' positive attitudes contribute to their good achievement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is consistently good in all subjects and is very good in physical education. It is good throughout Years 8 to 11 in English, mathematics and science. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are supported satisfactorily in the work of other subjects, though the approach taken by different teachers varies and there is a lack of planning for numeracy.

Teachers typically have very good knowledge of their subjects and in the best lessons they demonstrate their enthusiasm through imaginative work that engages students' interest. Lessons are well planned and in the better lessons students learn actively and think for themselves. In some lessons, however, methods are less interesting and students are not given enough opportunities to get deeply involved and take responsibility for their own learning. Few lessons consistently involve students in reviewing and consolidating what they have learned. Several subjects are short of learning resources, including textbooks and ICT. Teachers give students good individual support and establish very good relationships. In most classes, behaviour is well managed, with teachers making consistent use of the school's very good systems.

The school meets the needs of all students well through grouping students by ability and thus providing an appropriate degree of challenge. In addition teachers are well informed about students' individual needs and use this in planning lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a broad range of subjects and the curriculum is designed to meet most students' individual needs.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Students have additional support and teachers meet their needs well in lessons, though there is a shortage of teaching assistants.

Provision for students with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. There are few students at an early stage of English. The school is aware of their needs and provides additional support as necessary, though it does not monitor their progress in using English.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There is good provision for moral, social and cultural development in lessons and activities and through the example set by teachers. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory but needs better co-ordination in tutor periods and subjects.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. Personal support and guidance are good. There are very good procedures for monitoring behaviour and satisfactory procedures for monitoring attendance.

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. There is an excellent range of modern foreign languages available. Citizenship has been introduced successfully but the teaching of personal, social and health education by tutors is too variable in quality. Many subjects do not use ICT enough to support learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which is particularly strong in music, drama, modern languages and sport.

Students' work is assessed regularly and this is co-ordinated well throughout the school. The procedures to monitor students' progress are satisfactory and improving. Assessment records are used well in planning new developments.

The school has developed a good partnership with most parents, who contribute well to the school and their children's education. Information for parents is very good and the students' log books are a good means of communication between school and home.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction and is well supported by the leadership team. There is very good teamwork and strong commitment by managers at all levels.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are involved in setting the school's strategic direction and have a good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Teaching is monitored regularly and leads to professional development. School performance is analysed and action taken, though no analysis is done of the progress of groups of students.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Expenditure is carefully planned and controlled. The school has a deficit due to essential expenditure on staffing and learning resources. The school applies the principles of best value well.

The school has been successful in recruiting new staff and there is a good match between teachers' qualifications and the subjects they teach. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory, with some shortcomings.

Particular strengths in management are good systems of communication between subject teachers and form tutors; and the contribution to learning made by the support staff. Many staff are relatively inexperienced but the management of faculties is at least good and often very good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school has high expectations.• Children are making good progress.• Children like school.• Teaching is good.• There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents do not feel well informed.• Some think the school is not well managed.• Students do not get the right amount of homework.• Some think behaviour is not good.• Some parents do not think their concerns are listened to and dealt with properly.

Inspectors agreed with parents' positive views. In investigating parents' concerns, the inspection found that the information parents get on progress is very good and the school is very well led. Homework is generally set appropriately but teachers do not use the homework timetable consistently enough to ensure that it is evenly spread over the week. Behaviour is good in most lessons. The school works hard to communicate with parents, but on a few occasions parents are left feeling that they have not been listened to.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Numbers in the sixth form are average and are rising. There are 179 students, with similar numbers of males and females. In 2002, half of the Year 11 students stayed on. A wide range of AS and A-level courses are offered, as well as vocational courses in business, leisure and tourism and sports studies. There are no entry requirements and all students are admitted who can benefit from the courses offered. One in ten students is eligible for free school meals, which is above average. One in seven comes from a minority ethnic background. Attainment on entry is significantly below the average for sixth forms, but no sixth form students have special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Lord Grey has a good sixth form which is cost-effective. Examination results are below average but they are improving and students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry. This is because they are taught well and receive very good support and guidance. Students are less good at learning independently, and some are held back by limited skills in taking notes, interpreting evidence and writing essays. Students' good attitudes and very good relationships with teachers contribute to their achievement, though their attendance is below average. There is a good range of courses to suit students' needs and aspirations. The sixth form is very well led, with a clear direction and regular monitoring of performance.

Strengths

- Students achieve well through good teaching and very good assessment of their progress.
- The quality of support and guidance is very good and contributes well to students' personal development.
- The sixth form is very well led and the curriculum is broad enough to meet most students' needs.
- Students have good attitudes and are very positive about what the sixth form offers them.

What could be improved

- Students are not sufficiently independent in their learning.
- Some students need more support with the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT.
- The level of attendance is below average and is unsatisfactory.

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	Good. Standards are average and students achieve well. Teaching is good, though students need to do more independent problem solving. Marking is good, but students' progress is not tracked carefully enough.
Biology	Good. Standards are below average but students achieve well because teaching is good. They are well prepared for examinations, but do not use computers enough to analyse and interpret data.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Business studies	Good. Standards are average in A-level and vocational courses. Teaching is good and students achieve well. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and there are inadequate library resources.
ICT	Good. Students achieve well although standards are below average. Teachers are very knowledgeable and students have very positive attitudes. There is a shortage of some software and other resources.
Music	Good. Students achieve well and attain average standards in music and music technology. Teachers have good subject knowledge and establish very good relationships and enthusiasm for music.
Film studies	Very good. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. Teachers have good expertise and develop students' skills well. Coursework support is very good, but some students have poor notes.
Geography	Good. Standards are below average but students achieve well. Teaching is consistently good, with good marking and use of fieldwork. Students have some weaknesses in essay writing and analytical skills.
English	Good. Standards are average. Teaching is good and students achieve well. Teachers use their expertise to good effect, though occasionally lessons do not engage students. Marking is thorough and helpful.
Spanish	Satisfactory. Results have been low, but are now rising due to good teaching. Standards are average in Year 13, but below average in Year 12 due to weak oral skills and some lack of motivation.

Work in other subjects was sampled. All teaching was at least satisfactory and most was good or very good. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, use interesting methods and give students very good support through marking. Very good lessons were seen in history, art, physical education, media studies and general studies. An excellent lesson was seen in beginners' Japanese, which was conducted entirely in the language and gave students a strong sense of achievement.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Before joining the sixth form students receive good information about the courses and are able to meet teachers and students to find out more. Students' progress is carefully tracked in relation to their targets, with regular reviews and daily support from tutors and teachers. There is good careers advice, though for some students higher education is overemphasised at the expense of opportunities for employment. Some students need more support with the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT.

Aspect	Comment
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Governors and senior staff have a clear strategy for the sixth form. The head of sixth form provides very good management of tutors and students, providing equality of opportunity for all students who can benefit from the courses. Standards are monitored very carefully and action is taken to overcome weaknesses. Tutors are very effective in guiding and establishing good relationships with students. Most teachers are well qualified in their subjects. The accommodation is satisfactory except in business studies. Most subjects have adequate learning resources.

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"> • There is a good range of opportunities. • Teaching and support from tutors are good. • There are good arrangements for informing new students. • Students are listened to and treated as adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers advice overemphasises higher education at the expense of employment.

Students have a very positive view of the sixth form. Their views are endorsed by the inspection.

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 students' achievements

1. Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average. They achieve well and reach standards that are broadly average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11.
2. Standards in public examinations have improved significantly since the last inspection, when they were below average. At the end of Year 9, results in National Curriculum tests have risen steadily each year, whereas in GCSE examinations there was a small improvement in 2001 followed by a large improvement in 2002.
3. The improvement in results is due to a number of factors, the most important being very good leadership, which has focused the school's activities on its core purpose of learning. There have been many new teachers appointed and the quality of teaching has improved. Most teachers are enthusiastic and committed and give students good individual support. Students' attitudes and behaviour have improved, partly through higher expectations and partly through very good systems of monitoring and support.
4. At the time of the last inspection, there was a tendency for higher-attaining students to underachieve. This tendency has gradually diminished, more quickly in Year 9 tests than in GCSE examinations, where in 2002 there was still some underachievement by higher-attaining students in some subjects. In September 2001, the school introduced a system of placing students into three ability bands, with the twin aims of raising aspirations and ensuring that students are challenged at an appropriate level. This has been successful and the inspection found that most higher-attaining students are achieving well, along with others. In English, for example, some Year 11 students produce stylish and engaging writing of a high standard.
5. Lower-attaining students achieved well in the last inspection and continue to do so. Thus in the 2002 GCSE results, the proportion who gained five or more GCSEs was above the national average and the proportion gaining one or more GCSE was well above average. This is partly because the school adapts the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to suit students' individual needs, while ensuring that they continue to study some GCSE courses.
6. In work seen at the end of Year 9, standards are average and students are achieving well in almost all subjects. The only subjects where standards are below average are design and technology and music, reflecting the fact that attainment on entry in these subjects is particularly low. Nevertheless, achievement is good in both subjects. In citizenship, standards are above average, because the school has made more progress than many schools in implementing this new course in a structured way.
7. Students achieve well in Years 8 and 9 because they are well taught and because the school is successful in communicating its high expectations in all aspects of its work. Thus teachers value individual students and build their self esteem. There are very good systems for monitoring attitudes and behaviour and good communication between teachers and form tutors. The school's values and expectations are also communicated clearly through assemblies, parents' newsletters, the commendations that students get for good work and the presentation evening.
8. In work seen at the end of Year 11, standards are average overall, but vary more between individual subjects than they do in Year 9. This is because the improvements in teaching and attitudes have had more impact on younger students than older ones. In addition the attendance of students in Year 11 is markedly lower than that of other years. Standards are average in English, science, design and technology, art and physical education. They are above average in ICT, religious studies, GCSE physical education and citizenship. They are below average in mathematics, modern languages, history, geography and music. Students' achievement is good in relation to

their attainment at the end of Year 9. It is very good in art, religious education and GCSE physical education. In music it is less good than in other subjects, but still satisfactory.

9. The skills of reading, writing and speaking are below average when students join the school but they reach standards that are about average in most subjects. The English faculty has started to use techniques from the National Literacy Strategy to help students to improve, and there are plans to develop this further. The new citizenship course includes much debate and, while some students find this difficult, the course gives many opportunities to develop writing and speaking – sometimes to a very high level. In geography, literacy weaknesses hamper the progress of some average and lower-attaining students. In history and religious education lessons, students learn a range of writing styles though they often express their understanding better orally than in writing. In GCSE physical education they write confidently using technical vocabulary.
10. Students make good progress in numeracy skills in Years 8 and 9 because the mathematics faculty has used the National Numeracy Strategy in planning what is taught and the methods of teaching. However, standards are not as high as they could be because the development of number skills in lessons other than mathematics is not planned across the school, or co-ordinated with the middle schools. In geography, students carry out statistical surveys and plot graphs. In ICT, they learn to use formulae in their work on spreadsheets. In other subjects, such as science and design and technology, the approach is less systematic.
11. Students with special educational needs generally achieve as well as other students in their classes – better where there are teaching assistants to support them in the classroom. Their individual education plans are well structured and teachers use these to adapt their teaching methods to cater appropriately for individuals. Three students with Statements of Special Educational Needs who took GCSE examinations last year achieved good results, in some cases reaching higher grades.
12. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the progress of students from minority ethnic backgrounds was at least satisfactory overall, and some students from Asian backgrounds made better progress than other students. In lessons, students from ethnic minorities are fully integrated and achieve as well as other students. Those who have English as an additional language also make good progress. There are very few who are at an early stage of learning English, but teachers are aware of their needs and make appropriate provision.
13. The school has set targets for students' performance in GCSE examinations. These were exceeded in 2002, both the number of students achieving 5 or more A*-C grades and the average point score. The targets for 2003 are reasonably challenging and should be met. However, they were set a year ago and are lower than the 2002 results. They could now be revised upwards.
14. As a specialist language college, the school also sets targets for performance in modern languages at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. The Year 9 target was not reached in 2002, though standards have since risen and are closer this year. In GCSE examinations, the targets were not met in Spanish, but were just exceeded in French and German. In general, standards in modern languages have not improved as quickly as in some other subjects, partly because of continuing difficulties with recruitment. However, the faculty is very well managed, new teachers have been appointed and standards are now rising.

Sixth form

15. Students' attainment on entry is significantly below the national average for sixth forms. In 2001, the latest year for which there are national comparisons, A-level results were well below average. Results improved markedly in 2002, both in terms of the proportion of students passing their courses and the proportion gaining higher level grades. An analysis of students' progress indicates that in 2002 overall they made better progress than expected from GCSE to A level.
16. There were variations between subjects. In the 2002 examinations, progress was particularly good in English literature, business studies and general studies. It was poor in Spanish.

17. For current students, standards are below average overall at the end of Year 13, but they achieve well in relation to their GCSE results. In the subjects that were inspected in detail, standards are average in English, ICT and music. They are above average in film studies, but below average in biology and geography. In mathematics and Spanish, standards are below average in Year 12 but average in Year 13. Standards have improved, particularly in art and Spanish, because of improved teaching. Students are achieving well in all subjects except film studies, where their achievement is very good and Spanish, where it is satisfactory.
18. The reasons for students' good achievement are the good teaching they receive and the very good support and guidance. Assessment is thorough and they receive good advice on how to improve their work. Their progress is monitored carefully and they have regular reviews with their tutors. Students are well motivated and appreciate the help that they receive. Their positive attitudes contribute to the progress that they make. Their achievement is in some cases limited by difficulties with the key skills of note-taking, essay writing and the interpretation of data, and by an over-dependence on the teacher's input.
19. Only a small proportion of students leave without completing their A-level or vocational courses – about five per cent in the last school year, compared with ten per cent nationally. A small number of students left at the end of Year 12 after completing AS-level courses, some going into employment and some to further education.
20. As a language college, the school set targets for 100 per cent pass rates in French, German and Spanish A-level examinations. These targets were met in French and German but not in Spanish. In addition all sixth form students take a beginners' course in Japanese.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Students' behaviour is good. At the time of the last inspection, the poor behaviour of a small minority was hindering the progress of other students. This problem has now been addressed successfully, and behaviour is good or better in most lessons. This is because most teachers manage students well. They do not have to spend too much time maintaining order and this benefits students' learning. In a Year 10 business studies lesson, for example, very good teaching with a good pace made the potentially boring topic of profit and loss accounts interesting, with the result that students responded positively, worked hard and did not misbehave at all. There is only a very small number of lessons in which students are restless and their learning slows.
22. Students generally behave well moving between classes and at breaktimes. The school buildings pose a challenge in terms of congested corridors and stairwells, but students respond sensibly and safely. They treat each other well, with little friction between year groups. No bullying or harassment was seen during the inspection and such incidents are relatively rare. Students and their parents are confident that the school deals with bullying effectively. In the last calendar year, there were 57 fixed term and two permanent exclusions – broadly in line with national averages. Several of these, including the permanent exclusions, related to planned vandalism of staff property. Almost all of exclusions were of white British boys. The reasons for all exclusions are recorded and were justified. The use of 'internal exclusion' in the student support centre is used well to ensure that students experiencing difficulties are encouraged to improve their attitudes and to avoid exclusion. In general the students look after the school and there is no graffiti, although there is some litter.
23. Students' personal development is satisfactory. They understand the impact of their actions on others. In a Year 9 citizenship lesson, for example, students were able to debate the issue of poverty sensibly in their groups and then agree a common response. Where there are opportunities to take initiative, students know that they can influence matters. For instance, some students approached the headteacher to request that she amend the arrangements for financing a Year 11 'prom'. The school council is involved in decision-making and the school seeks the views of all students on a range of issues. However, the school is quite closely directed, sometimes limiting such opportunities. For example, there are three tutorial periods per day. These include a

very close review of students' logbooks to ensure that homework is being recorded and completed. Students display satisfactory initiative and personal responsibility. They are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning, such as setting their own targets to work towards. In some lessons, they think issues through with limited support. In an ICT lesson on input and output devices, for example, the teacher did not spoon feed students, leaving them to sort out problems themselves. However, in many lessons, they are very dependent on the teacher for direction. Students in all years are prepared to do the little jobs – sorting out textbooks, collecting in books, clearing up after a practical session – that help ensure that lessons run efficiently.

24. Relationships are very good and are a strength of the school. Form tutors know their students well. This contributes to mutual respect and a partnership in learning. Tutors stay with their year group as it progresses through the school, allowing them to be a stable influence for those students who need additional support. Students' relationships with subject teachers are an important factor in the success of lessons in promoting learning. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on fractions and percentages with a low-attaining set, the good rapport between the teacher and the class ensured that the students were keen to succeed and that their frustration when they found the work difficult was handled and defused very well. The heads of upper and lower school, together with their teams of heads of year, encourage good relationships and the students value their support. In group or paired work, students co-operate and share resources, listening to each others' views. Low and high-attaining students work constructively together with no student excluded from the group. Boys and girls usually work together unselfconsciously.
25. Most students like coming to Lord Grey School. They are pleased that its reputation in the area is improving and that they can feel more pride in being part of the school community. Some, however, lack enthusiasm and a minority are disaffected. Overall, students' attitudes to school are satisfactory. Most participate well in lessons and this makes a positive contribution to their learning. When stimulating teaching provides a fast pace, students contribute well and are keen to learn. Many of them take advantage of the good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs on offer. Paradoxically, positive attitudes whilst in school are combined with relatively high levels of absence and lateness, which has an adverse effect on learning. For example, a school trip to Disneyland in France returned at 7.30pm Thursday evening; several of those who had benefited from this activity did not attend school on the Friday.
26. Students' attendance is below the national average. For the last full school year, 2001/02, it was fractionally below 90 per cent. In the current school year, over 150 students have attended for less than 80 per cent of possible occasions. Older students are absent significantly more often than younger ones:

	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Attendance	93%	90%	90%	86%

27. Despite the considerable effort the school is making to improve attendance, it is a difficult long term task to change basic attitudes of parents and students. This level of non-attendance clearly affects progress. Students' punctuality in the morning is also unsatisfactory. A large number of students arrive late during morning registration, causing an uneven start to the school day and reducing the effectiveness of this time, although most are in school by the start of the first lesson. Currently there is a large number of absences for which no explanation is provided, whilst sometimes parents condone their child's non-attendance. An above average proportion of lower-attaining band C students have a particularly high number of absences, although others have commendable 100 per cent attendance records. There is also variation in students' attendance within bands A and B – a significant number of students achieve very high attendance, though the figures overall are disappointing.
28. The general standards of students' attitudes and behaviour have improved considerably since the last inspection of the school, although attendance has declined slightly.

Sixth form

29. Sixth form students have positive attitudes to learning and to other activities. They are happy and enjoy being a valued part of the school community. They participate keenly in most lessons, demonstrating a clear interest in understanding new concepts. In almost all lessons, most show sustained concentration.
30. Students' behaviour is good. Within the sixth form area, despite the somewhat limited facilities, there is a friendly atmosphere. Year 12 and Year 13 students mix well together. Students are relaxed and confident and willing to talk, with little prompting, about the subjects they are studying and what they have learnt.
31. Personal development is very good. This is reflected in lessons and in the wider life of the sixth form. Students show considerable interest in problem solving and persevere when they encounter difficulties. This positive approach helps them to make progress in their studies. For example, in a Spanish lesson preparing for an oral examination, a student challenged herself by practising without using her notes. Many take advantage of the opportunities to broaden their experience by taking part in extra-curricular activities. Students participate well and at a kick-boxing session at a local leisure centre, for example, students enjoyed the level of independence this offered and did not abuse it. They carry out community service – for example, some help in school with the student support centre or in classes to support younger students who need extra help. The sixth form committee is active. It organises social events such as the sixth form ball and is currently running a tuck shop to raise money to refurbish the sixth form common room.
32. Students in the sixth form have good personal and learning skills, responding well to the less controlled environment within which they work. Relationships are very good, both amongst the students themselves and with their teachers and tutors. Students show respect for the views of others and participate maturely in debate. In lessons, this creates an atmosphere in which they help and learn from each other. There are many lessons, however, where they are too dependent on their teachers and have not developed sufficient independent learning skills. In addition, the level of attendance is unsatisfactory, reflecting the pattern of the rest of the school. The school is encouraging students to attend regularly by giving them a smart card, from which they can earn points, but this system is not yet well established. Sixth form students' attendance is more difficult to monitor because their timetables include periods for private study.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. Teaching is good throughout the school and in the sixth form. In the main school it is consistently good in all subjects and is very good in physical education. It is also good in most lessons. During the inspection almost all lessons were satisfactory or better and more than seven out of ten were good or better. One in four was very good or better and a few were excellent. This consistent good quality is a product of successful recruitment and good management and is a powerful factor in raising students' aspirations and establishing good learning habits.
34. Teachers typically have good subject knowledge and often inspire students through their own enthusiasm. It is for this reason that art has become a popular subject and standards have significantly improved. In the best modern language lessons, teachers use their language expertise to build students' confidence and develop good pronunciation. Music teachers convey their enthusiasm and develop students' enjoyment of the subject.
35. In most lessons, teachers manage students well and establish good, productive relationships. The management of behaviour is supported by the school's very good systems for communicating with tutors, heads of year and the heads of upper and lower school. Teachers also have high expectations of what students can achieve. As a result, most students have good attitudes to learning. In physical education, for example, students respond well to teachers' enthusiasm and management skills and their positive attitudes contribute to their learning. This is typical of many subjects. Drama teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and listening. In mathematics, teachers manage students well in most lessons, but at times the reluctance of a minority inhibits learning.

36. Teachers plan lessons carefully. Science lessons, for example, are well structured and in mathematics, the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been used to improve lesson structure and the quality of activities. Geography lessons are planned carefully to meet students' individual needs. In history also, careful planning and enthusiastic delivery of lessons motivate students to work at a fast pace.
37. The better lessons use methods that involve students in learning actively and thinking for themselves, though this is not so in all lessons. In religious education, activities are well structured to enhance concentration and students are taught to consider their views on moral and ethical issues. Independent learning is often encouraged in modern language lessons through working almost entirely in the foreign language, using pair work, mime and gesture. History teachers build students' confidence, so that they ask thoughtful questions and share their own ideas.
38. A few excellent lessons were seen. These were in mathematics, modern languages, design and technology, religious education and physical education. In all these lessons, students were highly motivated and entirely engrossed. The teachers' skilful planning of activities and very good management of behaviour meant that full use was made of students' own contributions and they made excellent progress. In a Year 9 food technology lesson, for example, students learned how to modify a recipe to meet different people's nutritional needs. The teacher used her subject expertise to relate the lesson to students' own interests and, because of very high expectations and excellent behaviour management, students really enjoyed the lesson, worked independently and were fully involved.
39. In several subjects, however, there are some lessons where methods are less interesting and students are passive in their learning. While the better mathematics lessons develop students' understanding through activities that engage them, in some lessons students lose interest because they have to listen or work from a textbook for too long. Standards in using and applying mathematics are lower than in other aspects of the subject. Most students enjoy English lessons, but there are some where learning would be deeper if they were more actively involved and used a wider range of resources. In science, students are not given enough responsibility to plan investigations and do not have enough opportunities to explain their own understanding. Because of this, standards in scientific enquiry and investigation remain lower than in other aspects of science.
40. The school has begun to use the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to improve the structure of lessons, and to develop students' literacy, numeracy and thinking skills. The methods are showing some benefit but need to be further developed and integrated into teaching approaches. In particular, most teachers do not provide students with good opportunities to review what they have learned during the lesson. In physical education this is done well – the learning objectives are made clear at the start of the lesson and then clarified and reviewed at the end. There are also good review sessions in the best design and technology lessons. More typically – in science or ICT, for example – reviews do not always take place and, where they do, they are often too rushed to be effective.
41. In many subjects students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT to support their learning. ICT is used very effectively in music for composition and performance. In English and geography, students use computers to do research and present their work, though in English this needs to be developed further. In modern languages, students sometimes use computers to present their work and there is a lunchtime computer club with email links to other countries, but there is potential for more planned use of ICT in learning languages. ICT is rarely used in lessons in mathematics, science, art or citizenship, often because of a lack of access to suitable resources. As a result, students are missing opportunities to apply ICT skills in their learning and to benefit from an alternative approach. Computers are used sometimes in design and technology, for revision in physical education and on the citizenship days that take place in the summer term.
42. Teaching is also in some cases hampered by a lack of other learning resources. In some subjects resources are used well, such as flashcards in modern languages and video in physical education.

However resources are inadequate in science and small pieces of equipment have to be shared between classes. Religious education lacks textbooks and religious artefacts and there are insufficient library books to support GCSE physical education. English also needs a wider range of resources to encourage active learning. ICT needs additional software to give students experience of professional applications and peripherals such as colour printers and scanners.

43. The use of assessment to guide students in improving their work is satisfactory, with good practice in some but not all subjects. In physical education, students' performance is evaluated regularly and they are given good, constructive criticism and individual targets. However, GCSE homework is not always marked well. Marking in religious education is good, with helpful comments on how to improve. This is also usually the case in geography, though some marking is poorer. Art teachers give helpful advice and in drama, students are trained to evaluate their own work. In science, the best marking shows students how to improve, but they do not have enough understanding of what they need to do to achieve a higher National Curriculum level or GCSE grade.
44. Homework is set regularly and in most subjects it is planned carefully to extend what has been learned in the lesson. However, teachers do not always set it when it appears on the homework timetable and hence students find that it is not always evenly spread over the week.
45. The support given for literacy in all subjects is satisfactory, though practice varies in different subjects. Some teachers help students to structure their writing, and get them to read different kinds of texts. In a Year 11 physical education lesson, the teacher asked probing questions and insisted that students answered in full sentences, using appropriately technical vocabulary. In history and religious education lessons, there is a strong emphasis on literacy – students sometimes write accounts from other people's points of view and subject vocabulary is prominently displayed. In other lessons, however, literacy is not such a specific focus. In some science lessons, opportunities are lost to emphasise scientific language, and there are few examples of extended reading or writing in mathematics.
46. Support for numeracy is also satisfactory yet inconsistent in different subjects. In some subjects, the development and use of mathematical skills is well planned and integrated into the teaching of the subject. In geography, for example, students' use of surveys and their ability to plot graphs are carefully developed. In ICT, students learn to use formulae in creating and using spreadsheets. In other subjects such as science and design and technology, the approach is less systematic. The lack of a whole school approach means that standards of numeracy are not as high as they could be.
47. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Specialist teaching in literacy, numeracy and basic skills is very well planned and structured. Most subject teachers have very good relationships with students who have special educational needs and use their individual education plans to provide suitable work. Teachers deal well with students who have emotional and behavioural problems. Teaching assistants work well with teachers to provide support, and are attached to faculties and subject areas so that liaison is good. Despite frequent advertising, the school has been unable to appoint sufficient teaching assistants, and some students with learning difficulties struggle when additional support is not available. The innovative scheme of using sixth form students to help teachers in supporting students with special educational needs is developing well.
48. The school is successful in meeting all students' needs. This is partly achieved through grouping them in three ability bands, which enables teachers to plan work at an appropriate level. In addition, teachers are concerned to support individual students. In many subjects, teachers organise extra-curricular activities and additional classes for students who need extra support – this encourages positive attitudes as students appreciate the effort that is made for them.
49. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The main weakness at that time was that some teachers had low expectations and failed to match the work to students' abilities, resulting in underachievement of higher-attaining students. Much work has been done on this – the

curriculum has been revised and students grouped into ability bands; many new appointments have been made of teachers and heads of faculty; the senior leadership team has given a strong focus to teaching and learning, and introduced systems for monitoring lessons. As a result of these steps the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is now much reduced and there is a greater proportion of good and very good teaching. The quality of teaching is also much more consistent across different subjects.

Sixth form

50. Teaching is good in the sixth form. It is good in all the subjects that were inspected except film studies where it is very good.
51. Very good subject knowledge underpins most teaching and helps to build students' confidence. In ICT, for example, teachers give clear explanations of technical matters and in English, teachers explain texts clearly and deepen students' understanding through probing questions. The music teachers have a range of skills that complement each other, from which students gain broad expertise.
52. Teachers give students very good support and guidance and create good relationships, so that students trust them and develop positive attitudes. This is a feature of all subjects. Students appreciate the guidance that they are given.
53. In many lessons teachers use a range of methods that enable students to rely on themselves and learn actively. In film studies, for example, students work together and share their ideas before making a presentation to the class. Business studies lessons have good links between theory and practice, using students' own experiences. In geography, students are challenged to think for themselves and do research in pairs.
54. In some lessons, however, students are not encouraged sufficiently to become independent learners. In the best mathematics lessons, students solve problems in context and explain their thinking but in the weaker lessons they do too much listening. Mathematics students are not confident to learn for themselves. In biology, students learn well through teachers' explanations and questions, but find it difficult to take the initiative in planning investigations. The better Spanish lessons encourage students to think for themselves and discuss in pairs, but some lessons lack challenge and students lack confidence in speaking.
55. Students need more support with key learning skills in communication, numeracy and ICT. In film studies, for example, some students have poor quality notes and they make little independent use of the handouts that teachers prepare for them. Achievement in geography is limited by a lack of skill in analysing information and writing essays. Biology students do too little extended writing and lack skills in using computers to analyse data and derive conclusions. ICT is used well in business studies, geography and music but there is little use in other subjects.
56. The quality of assessment and feedback is generally very good. Work is marked thoroughly and students are usually given detailed, helpful comments. In film studies, students are given very good support and guidance with their coursework.

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

57. The school's curriculum meets students' needs well and has improved since the last inspection. It makes a good contribution to the standards they achieve and prepares them well for further education and adult life.
58. The range of subjects is appropriately broad in Years 8 and 9. Dance and drama are taught in addition to the National Curriculum subjects. The curriculum is well balanced, except that there is only one period of music a week, which is too little time to teach the National Curriculum thoroughly. The new subject of citizenship has been successfully introduced and other personal, social and health education topics are taught in morning tutor sessions. Students are placed into

one of three ability bands. This has enabled teaching to become better focused on meeting the students' differing needs. It has been particularly successful in raising the standards of higher-attaining students. Students are able to move between bands when their progress merits this.

59. In Years 8 and 9, higher-attaining students study two foreign languages. Middle and lower-attaining students study one language and have an additional art lesson. An effective 'skills plus' programme covering literacy, numeracy and independent learning is also followed by lower-attaining students. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy is being introduced in history, modern languages and design and technology and is beginning to help students improve their achievement through working towards individual targets.
60. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good. It has sufficient breadth to enable students to follow a course that suits their abilities and aspirations. All students take English, mathematics, science and design and technology. They choose one of history or geography and almost all take a modern language. There is a wide range of other GCSE options, including religious education, physical education, business studies, dance, music, art, ICT, drama, and several modern languages. There are GNVQ courses in ICT and health and social care.
61. Students in band A all take two modern languages. Each language is allocated two 50-minute lessons per week, which is not enough time for students to reach the highest standards. The students now in Year 11 fulfilled the National Curriculum in ICT by following a GCSE short course in Year 10. This has been discontinued for the current Year 10, for whom it is intended to teach ICT within other subjects. Plans are being drawn up but are not yet in place, and many subjects, including mathematics, science, art and citizenship give students few opportunities to use ICT in lessons. ICT is used well in music for composition and performance and in geography for research and presentation. In English, modern languages and design and technology, there is some use with the potential for further development.
62. There is good provision for students with special educational needs. They are generally in smaller classes in band C and have appropriate work provided. Some Year 10 students take one fewer GCSE subject and receive additional support for their other courses. A few are withdrawn from modern languages in Years 10 and 11 to have intensive literacy development with special needs teachers. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has very good links with the middle schools and there is also extensive liaison with parents, special schools, and educational psychologists. Because of appointment difficulties, there has until recently not been enough support from local education authority specialists in hearing impairment, speech and language and speech therapy. Good links exist with other secondary schools and the further education college.
63. The school has created an alternative curriculum for students who require a work-related programme. They follow English and mathematics at the school and attend the local college for courses such as engineering. They also have work placements in local industry. The good attention given to these students means that the number who leave school without any qualifications is much lower than the national average. Lower-attaining students who study one language have an additional two lessons of physical education. Whilst they take part in worthwhile activities such as self defence, this fails to build on the 'skills plus' programme in Years 8 and 9.
64. There is satisfactory provision for students with English as an additional language. The support is managed by the SENCO and overseen by a deputy headteacher. The SENCO identifies students' needs, communicates with their teachers and monitors their progress informally, though there is no formal system for tracking their progress in learning English. A support teacher from the local education authority provides individual tuition on one day a week. For students who are fluent in English, there are some booster classes to ensure they are familiar with the academic language they need for examinations.
65. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are particularly strong in modern languages, sport, drama and music. Drama productions are popular and in music there is a wide range of clubs, ranging from rock guitar groups to a school choir. In English, the students produce an informative school magazine and visit a number of theatre productions. In history, visits to

Belgium and Holland add extra depth to the topics studied. For two days in the summer term the timetable is suspended for students to take part in environmental projects such as cleaning the local canal and working in primary school gardens. There are revision and study support clubs in many subjects that help students to make additional progress. In design and technology, students can design robots. However, there are only limited opportunities for students to further their interests in mathematics, science, ICT or art.

66. There is an excellent range of activities in modern foreign languages. This is a result of the school being a specialist language college. In addition to the GCSE courses in French, German and Spanish, some students learn Japanese, Russian or Italian. There are also opportunities to study Greek. For the local community there are breakfast classes in Spanish and Japanese, though these are not well attended. During lunchtimes there is a language computer club with email contacts abroad. There are regular exchanges to France and Germany and more occasionally to Spain. There is also a residential trip for Year 8 students which combines intensive study of a foreign language with outdoor pursuits.
67. The range of activities in sport is excellent. Students enjoy individual and team successes at local, county, regional and national levels in netball, badminton, basketball, hockey, football, gymnastics, cricket and judo. There is much activity from early in the morning to late at night, both in school clubs and district organisations. This gives the students access to additional coaching and talent development squads. Wimbledon Football Club trains at the school and gives coaching sessions to boys and girls. There are examination revision clubs and sessions for middle school students to try new activities. Students enjoy the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and over sixty students achieved second place in regional dance competition, 'Rock Challenge'.
68. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory, though the quality of teaching varies too much. Since the introduction of citizenship as a new subject, PSHE has been taught by tutors during the morning form period. The programme includes the topics not covered by citizenship, such as drugs awareness and sex education. Experts from local organisations are invited to give in-depth talks on these issues and tutors follow up with discussions. In the best tutor sessions there is thoughtful discussion where students explore values and discuss their views. In others, learning is interrupted by other tutorial work such as notices or support for individual students. The monitoring of PSHE teaching is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that its quality is consistently good.
69. There is a good programme for careers education. Every student has an interview to discuss their aspirations and there are good links with the local education authority's careers agency. Year 10 students undertake work experience. This is well planned and has a positive impact, with many students continuing with a Saturday or holiday job, or a full-time job on leaving school. Students on vocational courses use their work experience in course assignments. The GNVQ courses in business and leisure and tourism make good use of links with local industries, which provide guest speakers and study visits. Students also have the opportunity to visit Paris to study tourist attractions. Learning about citizenship is enhanced by an innovative programme in which students stage a mock legal trial, supported by visits to the local magistrate courts. Through all these local links, the community makes a good contribution to students' learning.
70. The school has good links with its partner middle schools. There are regular meetings to ensure that students are placed in the correct bands and tutor groups. There are also curricular links in subjects such as modern languages, science, design and technology, ICT, drama, religious education, physical education and special educational needs. In other subjects promising links have recently been re-established, though in mathematics, teachers do not have enough accurate information on the level that students have reached. There are satisfactory links with the local college of further education. The students are aware of choices available to them, especially in vocational courses such as engineering and hairdressing.
71. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall. The school's aims support these aspects of students' personal development.

72. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, but more co-ordination is needed to ensure opportunities are taken for spiritual development in subjects and school activities. Assemblies are planned to include spiritual moments, though these are sometimes limited by a lack of time. For example, a student was performing the song 'Let it be' at the end of a Year 9 assembly. The need to rush staff and students off to their first lesson disrupted the tranquillity generated by the song. There is a 'thought for the week' that is introduced in Monday tutor periods, but often it is not developed through the week. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. In religious education, opportunities are taken to bring a spiritual dimension to lessons. For example, a Year 11 lesson used a 'magic eye' picture to show how different people see the same thing in different ways, leading on to a discussion about the 99 names for God in Islam. Students' writing sometimes reflects spiritual themes, such as Year 8 work on the feelings involved in suddenly going blind. Art lessons encourage students to recognise their own talent and music promotes creativity and appreciation of the expressive nature of music. Individual subjects could do more to build spiritual development into their lesson planning.
73. Provision for moral development is good. The school's stance is that teachers are not on pedestals – there is a clear expectation that all members of the school community will treat others as they expect to be treated. Teachers set a good example and require students to behave considerately. The school aims to develop honesty and fairness and students are made aware of the difference between right and wrong. They are expected to show respect for each other and for accepted codes of behaviour. The PSHE and citizenship programmes raise awareness of rights and responsibilities. Moral issues are considered in a number of subjects. In history, for example, students study the witch-hunt in 17th century Salem, whilst in English students consider the subject of animal testing of products. In Year 9 geography, students discuss the moral aspects of globalisation. In religious education, students consider moral and ethical issues, such as the rules for a just war, and the subject increases their awareness of the needs of the less fortunate. This is also developed through charitable fund-raising events.
74. The school's ethos and daily activities provide a secure environment in which relationships are largely founded on mutual respect and co-operation. There is good provision for the development of social skills. There are some opportunities for students to show initiative and accept responsibility. These include the school council and the sixth form committee as well as many activities in tutor groups, clubs and sport. Sixth form students provide learning support for younger students. Students are given the opportunity to work collaboratively in many subjects, developing teamwork skills and learning to value the contribution of others. Friendships and social skills are encouraged, as is empathy with others. For example, in a Year 12 physical education lesson, students were encouraged to consider the factors that affect the different participation rates in sport by different social groups. Citizenship and the PSHE programme contribute to students' social awareness. Social interaction is also promoted through extra-curricular activities and on residential and day visits. Basic social skills are encouraged, such as the correct use of cutlery in the dining hall.
75. There is good provision to help students develop an understanding of their own and other cultures. They visit places of cultural interest and are involved in music and drama productions. During the inspection many students were involved in rehearsals for the next school production, 'Fame'. Art displays around the school are of high quality and stimulate students' interest. A girl in the student support centre searched the internet for examples of Andy Warhol's paintings as a stimulus for her own pop art work. Past cultures are studied in history and in art, where students studying Breugel's painting of a peasant dance discussed marriage customs and the nature of the food illustrated within it. Students study and reflect on artistic traditions around the world, such as Australian aboriginal paintings or music from Indonesia. Geography also contributes to cultural awareness, through the study of countries and their ways of life. Cultures are explored in physical education using music and dance from around the world. Religious education includes the importance of worship and sacred writings to different faiths. The school is successful in preparing students for life in a multi-cultural society.

Sixth form

76. The sixth form offers a good range of AS and A-level courses, as well as vocational courses in business, leisure and tourism and sports studies. Music technology, media studies and film studies are popular. There is an extensive range of modern foreign languages on offer including Japanese, in which all Year 12 students take a short introductory course. There are no specific courses in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT, though some students' progress would be improved if they had better skills in note-taking, essay writing and evaluating evidence. All students follow a citizenship programme, in which guest speakers introduce students to a range of appropriate moral and ethical issues. The sixth form is open to all students who can benefit from the courses, regardless of their qualifications.
77. The school responds well to local needs. Students are given impartial advice when their best interests are met by courses on offer at the local college. The school does, however, encourage students to stay on where they wish to follow courses that are on offer at both institutions. There are well thought out plans to run courses at the school for those students who do not yet feel ready to enter a college environment. For example, vocational courses in travel and tourism and ICT are planned for the next school year to add further breadth to the curriculum. The school is successful in helping students to progress from intermediate vocational courses to A level and then on to university courses.
78. The school responds to local initiatives and is active in broadening students' opportunities. It is involved in developing closer links between the local sixth forms and with universities to give students broader opportunities. There are close links with Oxford University, where higher-attaining students can participate in a study programme.
79. Year 12 students have a good programme of enrichment activities. They select between physical education, community service and art. There is a good range of sporting activities such as football, badminton and kick boxing, which is run by specialists at the local leisure centre. The Young Enterprise scheme is very well organised and through this students visit local industry and successfully apply for jobs.
80. Other enrichment activities that support the curriculum include trips to theatres and exhibitions, residential trips and geography fieldwork. In the vocational sports studies course, students work in local leisure centres and primary and middle schools, organising tournaments and coaching. However, there are few opportunities for students to gain work experience linked to their own aspirations, other than placements directly linked to vocational courses. There are very positive relationships between teachers and students. Tutorials effectively support students in their work and personal development. Life in the sixth form helps students to become confident and mature individuals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

81. The school provides a caring environment in which students feel safe and valued, allowing them to concentrate on learning. Procedures for child protection are satisfactory. The deputy headteacher responsible liaises with social services as required. Staff are aware of their child protection responsibilities and proper records are kept. The strength of the form tutors' relationships with their classes means that students have the opportunity to discuss problems with a trusted adult, with the heads of year providing useful additional support. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately in science, design and technology and physical education and there are procedures to ensure safety on school trips. In the rest of the building there are routine health and safety checks, and formal risk assessments are being introduced. There are plans for the governors to become more involved in overseeing health and safety issues, but recent resignations from the governors' premises committee have delayed this. There is sound provision in the PSHE programme to help students take responsibility for their own safety. The anti-bullying policy is given to students as a leaflet, giving clear practical advice on how to deal with it if it occurs.
82. All teachers are active in the pastoral care of their students. The learning support team consists of the tutors, heads of year, heads of upper and lower school and a deputy headteacher. They assist

other staff in helping students who have personal difficulties and put in considerable effort to address their needs. Students believe that the staff are approachable and will do their best to give help when it is needed. The school is effective in helping students become mature and responsible individuals, assisting them to face the challenges of their everyday lives. The school's own resources are augmented by a Connexions adviser and a community police officer. Each has an office in school and they provide a useful service in helping students when the need arises.

83. The school has satisfactory procedures to monitor and support attendance. At the time of the inspection, the school had major problems with its computerised system of recording attendance, hindering data analysis. The heads of upper and lower school and the heads of year are active in monitoring attendance and ensuring that form tutors take correct action. Good attendance is encouraged by certificates for 100 per cent attendance. The school has in the past followed up absences quickly by contacting parents by telephone on the first day; this system currently applies only to students with known attendance problems. The local educational welfare officer provides support for students with particular problems. The school has been very firm about students taking holidays in term time and few are sanctioned. Registration with tutors three times a day largely prevents students from truanting after attending registration. The student support centre is effective in helping those students who have difficulty reintegrating after a period of absence.
84. There are very good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour. The school has a clear set of rules and a system of rewards and sanctions that is well known to students. The learning support team is effective in working with students who have difficulty meeting the school's expectations. The key is often the strong relationship between tutor and student. For students who have behavioural difficulties, report cards are used to monitor the student's progress with specific targets and act as a communication between teachers and the learning support team. The computer network also enables subject teachers to inform tutors of any difficulties. The tutor period at the end of the day provides an effective opportunity for one-to-one review of any problems and a chance to deal with them promptly. For more major issues, senior managers provide support to individual tutors, whilst parents are involved at an early stage. The agreed approach is carried out throughout the school on a uniform basis – a key factor in the success of such a system, since students are thus faced with consistent expectations of how they should behave. Procedures for dealing with oppressive behaviour are good. Students believe the school will help them and are usually prepared to approach their form tutor if problems occur. The student support centre provides a constructive alternative to exclusion for some students.
85. Raising students' aspirations and attitudes to achievement has been one of the school's key aims in its drive to improve provision and raise standards. This is expressed in the school's motto – 'Excellence: Dare to Succeed'. Achievement is celebrated by commendations, the annual presentation evening and by reporting on successes in the weekly newsletter. By setting sights high, together with the very well organised support, the school has succeeded in improving attitudes and behaviour since the last inspection. Many students are quite dependent on their teachers, however, and need more encouragement to take responsibility for their own learning.
86. There are good procedures to assess students' academic progress. In each subject, attainment is measured at least once a term in relation to National Curriculum standards in Years 8 and 9 and GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. Teachers discuss the expected standards in order to ensure that grades are assigned accurately. The process is overseen by an assistant headteacher and a staff working group. The assessment grades are collected centrally and communicated to form tutors, teachers and the senior leadership team. They are also reported to parents each term.
87. The use of assessment information to monitor students' progress is satisfactory and is currently being extended. In Years 10 and 11 students are set individual targets for their GCSE performance in each subject. Subjects vary in the extent to which they use regular assessments to help students know how to reach their targets. There is good practice in physical education, for example, but little tracking of progress in mathematics. In science, assessment of work is not often linked to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades, which would help students to assess their own progress. Starting this term, students are to have regular reviews with their tutors in order

to discuss their targets and what they need to do to reach them. The target setting process is also about to be extended into Years 8 and 9.

88. Assessment information is used well by heads of faculty and the senior leadership team to analyse strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and to guide developments. There is little analysis, however, of the progress of different groups of students, though the school has begun to check that students from minority ethnic backgrounds are achieving as well as other students.
89. The identification and assessment of students with special educational needs are good, and detailed records are kept. The SENCO knows the students very well and their individual education plans are effective in informing teachers and teaching assistants of their needs. Teachers are briefed on how to help students overcome barriers to learning. The SENCO meets regularly with heads of year and heads of faculty to pass on information and discuss progress. However, some students' individual needs have not been fully met. This is partly because of a lack of specialist help from the local education authority, and partly because the school has not been able to recruit enough special needs teachers or assistants. Students in Year 10 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs did not have the required transition review at the end of Year 9 as at the time there was no Connexions adviser. The records of statemented students do not always include academic or attendance information.

Sixth form

Assessment

90. There are good procedures for assessing sixth form students' work and very good procedures for monitoring and supporting their academic development. A particularly helpful feature is that teachers mark work carefully and provide students with useful written comments on how to improve their work.
91. Students are given targets for their performance in their final examinations. Tracking of students' progress is carefully planned and tutors have opportunities for one-to-one interviews on a daily basis in the tutor periods at the start and end of the school day. Each student's academic progress is regularly reviewed. Teachers and tutors are able to diagnose individual learning needs accurately and early and then ensure students receive the support they require. Reviews also lead to students' setting targets for improvement.
92. Subjects vary in the extent to which they use the target setting process to help students make good progress. There is good practice in film studies, where coursework assignments are broken down into manageable tasks and carefully monitored; students are given clear guidance what they need to do to achieve a particular grade. Similarly good guidance is given in English, but in mathematics there is no systematic tracking of students' progress. In biology, teachers use the targets that the school has set for each student, but the specific tasks students need to do are not always made clear enough. Assessment is good in music and geography, but in ICT students' work is not marked using A-level grades to show them the standard they have reached.
93. Assessment results are generally used well to see how improvements can be made to the curriculum. Such analysis is done by the head of sixth form and also by some heads of department, such as in geography and modern languages.

Advice, support and guidance

94. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic and personal progress. Students appreciate the help and guidance given by subject teachers, tutors and the head and deputy head of the sixth form. Most teachers give good day-to-day advice within their subjects and the tutorial team is always accessible and provides effective help. Students appreciate the ease with which they can raise academic and personal problems with members of the tutorial team. The school is taking steps to encourage good attendance and improve the

monitoring of attendance through issuing students with smart cards. This initiative is at an early stage and needs to be made more effective.

95. There are effective induction arrangements for students transferring from Year 11 to the sixth form. Good information on courses is provided and students are able to meet teachers and students to find out more about those courses they are interested in. On starting their courses, they are provided with further information and advice to help them settle into the sixth form.
96. Students receive good guidance on careers and further study. This has improved in the current academic year and students receive well-informed guidance from a specialist careers adviser. Higher education advice is provided by subject teachers and the head and deputy head of sixth form. In addition there are good contacts with a number of universities for advice on courses, entry procedures and finance. A small number of students participate in the Oxford University 'Access' shadowing scheme. The only negative issue raised by students was an overemphasis on higher education to the detriment of other career avenues, particularly employment. There are links with local businesses and some students take part in the Young Enterprise scheme. Very few students however have opportunities to undertake work experience other than in some vocational courses. Up-to-date careers literature is available in the sixth form centre and in the learning resources centre.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

97. Overall, most parents are broadly satisfied with the school, though there are some widely diverging views within this. The results from the parents' questionnaire are very similar to those at the time of the last inspection. This is surprising, given the extent of the improvements that have been implemented in the past two years. Although a majority of parents responding were positive, most only tended to agree with the statements, suggesting qualified support. There is a small group of parents who have been highly critical of the school. However, the majority of the parents who attended the parents' meeting and those seen at a school event during the inspection week were very appreciative of the efforts of the headteacher and staff and believed the school had improved considerably.
98. Generalising, most parents believe that their children like school, that the teaching is good and that their children work hard and make good progress. They think that the school helps their children to become mature and that it provides a good range of activities outside lessons. Some parents think there is too much homework. A significant minority of parents also have some concerns. Some would like the school to work more closely with them and keep them better informed about their child's progress; they need to feel more comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem. Some parents do not think behaviour in the school is good and some do not believe the school is well led and managed. Inspection findings support parents' positive views of the school. On the communication issues, the inspection found that the school places a high priority on good communication with parents and in almost all cases does respond to concerns. However, a few parents have been left feeling that that management is too remote and their concerns have not been listened to. Inspection findings do not support parents' concerns about behaviour, which is generally good. The leadership of the school is very good – the governors, headteacher and the senior leadership team, supported by the staff, have had to make massive improvements to the school in a very short period of time. This was in response to the last inspection report and they would have been failing in their duties if these changes had not taken place. Inevitably, the pace of change has been fast. The school has consulted appropriately over proposed changes to the school day; while there has been no formal consultation with parents over school uniform, changes have been limited to a tightening up and reinforcement of existing uniform rules.
99. The school provides very good written communications with parents. The annual report on progress is a very good document, with a sheet per subject giving information on behaviour, progress and the level of work achieved against national benchmarks. Comments are often very pertinent to the individual student, particularly in the form tutor's section. The page completed by the student is useful and forms the basis for future targets. Interim reports, produced in the other two terms, are

businesslike and give a steer on progress, although they have occasionally included inaccuracies due to computer entry errors. Parents' evenings allow parents to discuss progress with teachers – the Year 9 evening, for example, saw a good turnout, with staff working hard to give parents a full picture. The prospectus is well produced, and the governors' annual report provides the required information. The school publishes an interesting collection of students' work in the Lord Grey Magazine. There is a four-page weekly newsletter about the life of the school. This contains very useful information about the life of the school and is a real asset. However, the style of writing sometimes comes across as somewhat remote or authoritarian, and a more accessible tone might help improve parents' views on the management of the school. The school has a well-presented web site containing a lot of useful information.

100. Parents are very pleased with the logbook, in which students record homework. This provides a good way for parents to keep track of homework and to communicate with form tutors. The log books are used well by students and staff, and are signed regularly by the form tutor and the parent. There is an active Lord Grey Association that organises social and fundraising events. It meets three times a term to discuss ways of supporting the students and the school. Most parents have signed the home-school agreement. Many parents contribute to children's learning at home, assisted by the information in their child's homework log. For example, many students have access to computers at home. The Year 8 parents group has run educational sessions for parents on numeracy, ICT and special educational needs. Overall, parents' involvement with the school is good.
101. Parents of students with special educational needs are regularly informed of progress or problems. The SENCO keeps in regular contact and attends all parents' evenings. Most parents attend annual review meetings and contribute well to the discussion of their child's needs.
102. Very few parents commented specifically on sixth form provision. They seem satisfied with what the school provides and believe that their young people are happy and achieving well.
103. Sixth form students express strong satisfaction with the school. They believe it has improved considerably over the last two years. In particular, they appreciate the range of opportunities, the quality of teaching and very good support and guidance they receive from teachers and the tutorial team. They also appreciate the quality of information about the sixth form provided to them in Year 11 and the ways that they are helped to settle into courses and sixth form life. They consider that in the sixth form they are listened to and treated as adults. The sixth form council in particular, is a good vehicle for them to express their views about the management of the sixth form and take some responsibility. They also appreciate the other opportunities to be involved in the life of the school and the wider the wider community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

104. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is very good. This is the most important factor in the significant improvement that the school has made in students' achievement, their attitudes and behaviour and the quality of teaching.
105. The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction, with a strong focus on learning. This vision is expressed in the school's mission statement and is successfully communicated. As a result it is shared by teachers, support staff, the governing body and the majority of students and parents. The headteacher is well supported by the senior leadership team, which consists of two deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers and the business manager.
106. The emphasis on learning has also guided the management of the school, which is good. Much effort has been made to appoint well qualified staff. While there remain shortcomings in the accommodation and in resources, as far as possible teachers have been given the resources they need to teach their subjects and the accommodation has been organised to support teamwork within the faculties.

107. There is a very good team spirit among both the teaching staff and the support staff, with a strong determination to create a learning ethos and raise standards. This is a result of good delegation. Faculty heads and other staff with management responsibilities are clear about their roles and are expected to be leaders of their teams, but at the same time they are accountable through the school's quality assurance procedures and there are good communication systems which unify the work of the teams.
108. Many staff are enthusiastic about their subjects and about teaching. This communicates to parents and to students, who particularly appreciate those teachers who make the lessons interesting and who are generous with their time in extra-curricular activities and in giving additional support. It is also felt by prospective teachers who visit the school and feel that their talents will be used and appreciated.
109. The school has been relatively successful in recruiting staff at a time when there is a national shortage of teachers and the school has been going through difficulties. This has been achieved through being very active in seeking appropriate staff and offering them the opportunity to make a contribution to an improving school. The school is fully staffed and there is a good match between teachers' qualifications and experience and the subjects they teach.
110. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well and have given good support in improving the school. They are fully involved in determining the school's strategic direction and help to shape the school development plan. Many governors know the school well, though there has been some turnover and several governors are new. The chairman visits the school regularly and provides the headteacher with strong support. Governors are well informed through regular written reports from the headteacher and from faculty heads. In addition, individual governors are linked to faculties, though the value of these links varies according to the time governors are able to devote to them. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, while they receive full reports on the schools' performance they do not question these in depth.
111. Governors fulfil almost all their statutory duties. They receive regular training and have a good understanding of their role. The committees have clear terms of reference, though none of these includes a responsibility for questioning examination performance. Governors have ensured that the school has a full set of policies, and they review some of these, but there is no regular programme for the review of all policies. Because of the turnover of governors, they have not recently checked on health and safety, though there are plans to rectify this.
112. The priorities in the school development plan are very appropriate and have provided a clear programme for improvement. The development plan is well known to governors and staff and has been communicated to parents. The main school plan is backed up by a series of faculty plans which outline each faculty's own targets and the actions that will support the school's priorities. These plans form a good basis for improvement and the coherence of the whole plan is powerful in ensuring that all staff work to the same ends. However, some of the targets in the faculty plans are not expressed clearly enough for progress to be easily measured.
113. There are good procedures for monitoring students' performance and the work of the school. Heads of faculty are held accountable for their work and meet with the headteacher once a term to review progress. In addition each faculty is linked to one member of the senior leadership team, who holds weekly meetings with the head of faculty. The school aims to be self-evaluating and the importance placed on this is reflected in the fact that the major responsibility of one assistant headteacher is quality assurance.
114. The procedures for monitoring and supporting teaching are very good. Lessons are observed regularly by heads of faculty and teachers receive feedback on their work. This is co-ordinated by the assistant headteacher, who ensures that action is taken where necessary. Other aspects, such as marking and homework, are monitored periodically.
115. Professional development and the improvement of teaching are central to the school's aims. There is a satisfactory system for performance management, within which teachers agree targets and

are observed teaching. This is fairly new and could be improved by ensuring that teachers' targets are measurable and more closely linked to the priorities in the school development plan. Performance management is in the process of being extended to include the support staff. There are plans to establish a system where teachers will observe each other teach, in order to share good practice.

116. In-service training is supported well, though because of budget difficulties there is a lack of funds in the current year. The school is aware of this and has supplemented the available training by opportunities provided by the local education authority. When staff go on courses they are expected to pass on what they have learned and to evaluate the course, but there are no arrangements to evaluate the effect of the training on the quality of teaching or students' achievement. Professional development has been strongly supported through the school's links with the Open University. Several staff work with lecturers from the university to carry out research on their own classroom practice. Some of this has been published and has led to increased esteem and professional knowledge. Teachers' development has also been supported by a series of in-school focus groups on curriculum developments such as literacy, numeracy, special educational needs and provision for the gifted and talented.
117. There are good arrangements for the induction of newly-qualified teachers and for training unqualified graduates on the graduate training programme. These new teachers each have a mentor with whom they meet regularly to get practical support with their teaching. They have fortnightly meetings as a group to learn about practical matters such as dealing with special educational needs and writing reports. Their teaching is observed and they receive helpful feedback. They feel well supported by these arrangements and by the good team spirit among the staff. They are able to observe other teachers teaching, though only if they take the initiative to ask for this; there are however no arrangements made for them to learn from visiting other schools.
118. The school is active in analysing students' performance in examinations and using this to identify areas for improvement. The analysis is done thoroughly and results in a good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses. However, the techniques that are used are still developing and do not yet fully identify the progress made by different groups of students. Heads of faculty take responsibility for evaluating the performance of their own faculty and report on this to the senior leadership team and governors.
119. There are effective procedures for ensuring that all students have equal opportunities and are included in the school's ethos of learning and achieving. Students with different levels of ability are supported through the banding system, with a curriculum designed to meet their needs. Where students have special educational needs, these are well known to teachers. The senior leadership team have taken a systematic approach to raising boys' achievement, which has had some success. While the school is only beginning to check on the progress of groups of students, those from ethnic minorities integrate well and achieve in line with other students. There is a detailed and practical policy on race equality which gives staff clear guidance. Racist incidents are properly reported – there were two in the last school year. The student support centre provides a suitable environment and teaching approach for some students who cannot cope with normal lessons. The school buildings have been adapted in part for disabled access, but access is limited for wheelchair users and needs further improvement.
120. An important factor in the school's recent success is the consistently good leadership and management of the subject faculties. These are at least good in all subjects and are very good in modern languages, design and technology, history, geography, religious education, art, physical education and citizenship. As a result of this consistency, students and parents increasingly expect to find good teaching and support in each subject, and this has a positive effect on students' attitudes and aspirations.
121. Students' attitudes and behaviour are also very well supported by the learning support team. This team is very well led, with particularly effective systems of communication between teachers and tutors. Where problems with behaviour arise in class, these are followed up by the student's tutor or, if necessary, a more senior member of staff. This has led to improved attitudes to lessons

because students are managed in a consistent way, with care and high expectations. There has not yet been a significant improvement in attendance, though it is better in Year 8 than in other years.

122. The provision for students with special educational needs is well managed. The SENCO has a good knowledge of the range of special educational needs, and is well qualified and experienced. She is aware of the implications of the revised Code of Practice, although not all aspects are yet fully in place. The attached governor is well informed and has helped to review the policy. The school is anticipating improved provision of specialist advisers from the local educational authority. There are not enough specialist teachers or teaching assistants, but this is due to recruitment difficulties rather than lack of funding. Additional administrative assistance would increase the SENCO's effectiveness. Resources are adequate apart from a lack of computer software for literacy and numeracy.
123. The school has a very effective team of support staff. It is a high priority in the headteacher's vision for management to provide teachers with good quality support in order to enable them to focus on teaching. As a result of this, new appointments have been made and the school has effective systems for communication and managing resources. The support staff are led by the business manager, who is introducing performance management for them. The school now employs its own catering staff. Technicians provide good support in science and design and technology. The school has an extensive computer network, which is efficiently maintained and developed to support teaching and administration. Teaching assistants and foreign language assistants provide valuable support in lessons. School administration is also efficient.
124. Finances are now managed well, though the school has experienced some financial problems. Following the last inspection it was necessary to fill many staffing vacancies and to support teaching with additional resources. At the time, however, financial records were not reliable. This has since been rectified and the procedures for financial control are now good. However, the necessary expenditure has resulted in a deficit at the start of this financial year of £85,000. The school has taken steps to reduce the deficit and there are sound plans to eliminate it within two years. Cutbacks in expenditure have resulted in a low allocation for staff training and a continued shortage of learning resources in some subjects.
125. Financial planning is appropriately linked to the school's priorities as contained in the school development plan and is overseen by the governors' finance committee. The business manager is a member of the senior leadership team, which helps to ensure good links between the school's educational priorities, finance and other administration. Governors receive helpful reports and monitor expenditure regularly. Heads of faculty are appropriately involved in financial planning. They complete an annual statement of need; their expenditure is monitored by the business manager and they account for the effectiveness of their expenditure in termly meetings with the headteacher.
126. The school makes good use of new technology for administrative purposes. Students' records and financial records are stored electronically. A particularly effective use is that where students have learning needs or behavioural support, the details are available to all teachers through the school's computer network. As a result teachers plan well for these students in their lessons and this enhances their progress. The current problems with attendance records are outside the control of the school. The termly computerised progress reports are appreciated by parents, though they occasionally contain inaccuracies due to errors in data entry.
127. Specific grants are generally spent for their proper purpose and the expenditure is monitored properly. This includes the funding for the language college activities. Language college funds are spent mainly on teachers – to provide additional language classes in the school and local community – foreign language assistants, training and learning resources. The language college funding is spent appropriately, for the benefit of the school and the local community.
128. While financial management is good, the school does not compare how much it spends on different aspects with figures that are available for schools nationally. In addition, while the balance

between expenditure on the main school and that on the sixth form is appropriate, it is not monitored formally. However, the school implements the principles of best value well through consulting parents and students, challenging itself over what courses and services it should offer, comparing its performance with other schools and ensuring that it gets competitive quotations for supplies and services. The school is effective and students' achieve well. Since the funding per student is above the national average, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

129. The director of the language college is an assistant headteacher. Since the last inspection the leadership and management of language college activities have been much improved. The staffing within the languages faculty has been re-structured and effective measures have been taken to improve students' behaviour in lessons and improve their attitudes towards learning languages. As a result teaching has improved and is now good. Standards in languages were low at the time of the last inspection and have risen, though more slowly than in many other subjects, partly because some recruitment difficulties have only recently been resolved. The faculty is now very well managed, though because of the focus on raising standards in languages, languages have had too little impact on the life of the rest of the school. The support for language teaching in the local middle schools has been good.
130. The school's accommodation is of mixed quality due to variations in the age of the blocks but overall provides a satisfactory learning environment. A major roofing project is nearing completion and the existing single boiler, over which there is very limited control, is about to be replaced by a zoned system. This should overcome the current problem where some rooms become too hot for effective learning to take place. There are significant problems with dampness in some areas and the rectification of this is part of the school's planned work. The problem of water ingress in the sports hall, identified in the previous report, is still evident despite significant efforts. The problem has been reduced slightly and work to eliminate it completely is scheduled. Some areas of school, such as art, have been transformed by redecorating since the last inspection but other areas, for example English, await completion of the heating and dampness repairs before they can be improved. Some floor surfaces in the older parts are showing significant wear.
131. Several departments have been relocated since the last inspection, including the special educational needs department and the library, which were then both unsatisfactory. Accommodation for special educational needs is now satisfactory, with a suite of small rooms in a pleasantly decorated corridor. Its remoteness from the rest of the school reduces its effectiveness slightly. The library is now called the learning resources centre and is a good, well-used facility. As a result of the relocation and improvement in library facilities, the issues of the last report about the library have all been addressed.
132. Most of the specialist rooms are of good quality but the teaching rooms are sometimes limited in size or inflexible in use. There is major disruption to some departments when they lose their normal teaching areas for examinations to take place. Several large display boards have been erected in corridors and more are planned in order to brighten up the older parts of the building. At present, the humanities corridor does not create a motivating learning environment, despite good displays within classrooms. The location of the reception area and the incorrect labelling of some buildings (for example the library and administration block) create difficulties for visitors and reduce the approachability of the school to parents.
133. Resources in the school are generally satisfactory though there are shortages in several subjects that affect learning. The school has increased resources significantly since the last inspection, including in the music and special educational needs departments, where they were unsatisfactory. However, science classes have to share some small pieces of equipment and geography lacks field study and audio-visual equipment. There are not enough textbooks in history and religious education and the library lacks books to support the GCSE in physical education. Whilst there are a good number of computers, there is a shortage of computer peripherals, such as colour printers, and a need for additional software and handbooks for students to learn professional applications and apply their skills in other subjects.

134. In order to supplement resources, the design and technology department charges parents for materials if they wish their child to take home the products they make. There is no compulsion to pay, and where no payment is made children take part in the same activities. However, the school should make it clear in the letter parents receive that this is a voluntary contribution.
135. Leadership and management are much more effective than at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher had then only recently been appointed but had clear ideas about what needed to be done. Over the last two years the ideas have been turned into reality. There have been a number of key developments that have led to the improvements in standards. The school has been successful in building a cohesive and motivated team of teachers, support staff and managers who work together in the interests of the students. Secondly, students' aspirations have been raised through the introduction of banding, changes to the curriculum, systems for managing behaviour and the celebration of achievement. Most importantly, all the developments, including the improvements to the environment and resources, have been guided by a strong focus on learning. There is more to do, to consolidate what has been achieved and to make further improvements, but the shared commitment and capacity to succeed are very good.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

136. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The governors and senior leadership team have a clear strategy for the development of the sixth form. The aim is to provide a curriculum that is relevant to the needs and aspirations of Lord Grey students and thus maximise the number of students who stay on. New courses have been introduced and the sixth form has grown in size. The governing body is supportive of the work of the sixth form and knows its strengths and weaknesses. One governor keeps in close touch through being linked to the sixth form.
137. The head of sixth form has a clear vision and appropriate planning is taking place for the future. He is also a teacher governor. Sixth form tutors are well managed and play an important and effective role in advising and supporting students. The head and deputy head of sixth form ensure that there are supportive relationships and that all students have equal access to the opportunities that the sixth form provides.
138. Most subjects are well staffed with qualified teachers. Teachers' good subject knowledge is an important factor in the good quality of teaching.
139. Sixth form performance is carefully monitored by the head of sixth form. Students' individual progress is reviewed regularly, as well as the progress that students make in each subject between GCSE and their sixth form examinations. Strengths and weaknesses in each subject are analysed.
140. The sixth form accommodation is satisfactory. Sixth form students have their own common room and study area, which are used well and provide good access to tutors. Displays are used effectively to promote study habits and raise aspirations. Sixth form lessons are taught in the main school. This is in most cases satisfactory, but there are insufficient rooms for business studies and music and learning suffers when these subjects are taught in a non-specialist environment.

Resources

141. The sixth form is cost-effective, in that there is a good balance between its income and expenditure. Governors, the headteacher, head of sixth and the business manager have a good understanding of the need to obtain best value for the resources and services provided in the sixth form and put these principles into practice.
142. Learning resources are satisfactory. Music is well equipped with keyboards, computers and software. ICT has sufficient computers but lacks specialist software and software manuals for students to study independently. There is also a lack of computer peripherals, such as colour

printers and scanners. Film studies has a good stock of films on DVD, but lacks textbooks. For business studies, there is a lack of books in the learning resources centre for students to use in independent study.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

143. The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. It now needs to consolidate the improvements that have been made and exploit the very good capacity that exists for further development. The governors and senior leadership team should:

- (1) improve the level of attendance by:
 - continuing to celebrate and reward good attendance;*
 - ensuring that parents are clear about the school's expectations;
 - increasing the rigour with which attendance is monitored and parents are contacted.
(paragraphs 8, 25, 26, 27, 83, 121)
- (2) increase the responsibility that students take for their own learning by:
 - making more use of teaching methods such as those in the Key Stage 3 National Strategy that involve students actively;
 - giving students more opportunities to explain their own understanding;
 - improving students' skills in investigating and applying their knowledge;
 - using assessment records to track students' progress and set short-term targets for improvement.*
(paragraphs 39, 40, 43, 85, 87)
- (3) improve the availability and use of resources for learning in all subjects, including:
 - textbooks;
 - library books;
 - equipment for experiments and investigations;
 - ICT software and peripherals.
(paragraphs 41, 42, 133, 122, 124)
- (4) make full use of ICT to support the teaching and learning of subjects by:
 - improving the access that subject faculties have to computer facilities;
 - ensuring that all teachers have appropriate training;
 - including opportunities for ICT in the planning for each subject.
(paragraphs 41, 61, 211)

Sixth form

- (1) improve students' skills in learning independently by:
 - using teaching methods that give students more responsibility for their own learning;
 - using assessment to negotiate targets and short-term tasks.
(paragraphs 18, 32, 54, 92)
- (2) ensure that students' progress is not hampered because they lack key skills by:
 - identifying students' difficulties with literacy or numeracy;
 - providing additional support as necessary;
 - making appropriate use of ICT in learning all subjects.
(paragraphs 18, 55, 76)
- (3) improve the level of attendance by:
 - ensuring students' attendance is monitored accurately;
 - setting clear expectations for regular attendance;
 - providing additional support to students who have attendance problems.
(paragraphs 32, 94)

In addition to the above issues for action, the school should consider:

- improving the provision for spiritual development and the co-ordination of the personal, social and health education course; (paragraphs 68, 72)
- continuing to improve the accommodation in order to make all areas welcoming and conducive to learning.* (paragraphs 130, 131, 132, 271)

**These issues are already included in the school's planning.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 8 – 11	157
	Sixth form	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		88

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 8 – 11

Number	4	37	70	45	1	0	0
Percentage	3	24	45	29	1	0	0

Sixth form

Number	2	16	32	16	1	0	0
Percentage	3	24	48	24	1	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.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y8 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1123	179
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	71	17

Special educational needs

	Y8 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	141	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	74

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	40
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	72

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.8
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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	148	138	286

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	88	93	99
	Girls	102	80	89
	Total	190	173	188
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (62)	61 (59)	66 (62)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (29)	36 (32)	23 (27)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	90	87	105
	Girls	101	81	82
	Total	191	168	187
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (70)	59 (68)	65 (49)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (38)	31 (32)	27 (21)
	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	125	108	233

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	41	119	125
	Girls	56	100	106
	Total	97	219	231
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42 (28)	94 (93)	99 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.2 (35.1)
	National	39.8 (39.0)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	24	20	44

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	24 (31)	20 (25)	44 (56)
	Average point score per candidate	12.1 (10.8)	9.7 (10.4)	11.0 (10.6)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	20	18	38	5	3	8
	Average point score per candidate	12.2	9.1	10.7	9.6	10	9.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

*National comparative data for AS/A-level results in 2002 are not yet available. Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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	1111	55	1
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	29		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	38		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	1	
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	23	2	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	13		
Black or Black British – African	14		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	30		
Chinese	5		
Any other ethnic group	33	6	
No ethnic group recorded			

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)	81.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.0

Education support staff: Y8 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	631

Deployment of teachers: Y8 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68
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Average teaching group size: Y8 – Y13

Key Stage 2	24
Key Stage 3	24

Financial year	2001-2
	£
Total income	3,877,852
Total expenditure	4,026,596
Expenditure per pupil	3,387
Balance brought forward from previous year	63,452
Balance carried forward to next year	-85,292

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	42.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	73.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	1302
Number of questionnaires returned	310

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	22	59	15	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	32	58	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	48	18	4	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	15	54	21	7	3
The teaching is good.	15	66	9	2	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	45	26	9	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	27	48	13	9	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	54	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	12	47	28	10	4
The school is well led and managed.	16	50	15	12	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	19	58	14	3	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	54	12	2	10

Other issues raised by parents

Most parents believe that since the appointment of the new headteacher the school has improved, with higher expectations, better teaching and improved behaviour. These have led to higher standards of achievement. However, some parents believe that there is too much homework, or that it is not well spread out.

A small number of parents find that it is difficult to get their concerns dealt with and feel they are not listened to. The majority, however, believe that communication has improved and that concerns are dealt with quickly. A very small number are concerned about a lack of consultation over changes to school uniform and the introduction of banding.

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 **good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and good strategies for managing behaviour.
- Students are introduced to the skills of literary and linguistic analysis from Year 8, and they develop these skills well.

Areas for improvement

- Some lessons need to be enlivened by active learning, using additional resources or methods from the National Literacy Strategy, as appropriate.
- National Curriculum levels are not used sufficiently to assess students' work in Years 8 and 9 and help them to improve.
- Some classrooms are too small and cannot be blacked out when necessary.

144. There were eight new English teachers who took up their posts in September 2002, including the acting head of faculty. As a consequence, a number of policies and procedures are not yet fully embedded. The faculty, has, however, sensibly prioritised the National Literacy Strategy as a development area, and schemes of work now identify opportunities for promoting literacy.
145. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002 were average. When students come into the school their attainment is below average, and the results were well above those of most schools with a similar intake. They were better than in mathematics and science. The 2002 results were a little higher than those of 2001, but over the last three years they have been very similar. Girls do better than boys, though the gap is a little narrower than that found nationally.
146. GCSE results in 2002 were average in English, with few students gaining the highest grades. There was a small decline from 2001, but in both years results were much higher than those in 2000. Girls achieve better results than boys, by a similar amount to that found nationally. English literature results in 2002 were below average and have been at a similar level for three years. When compared with students' prior attainment, the results in English represent good achievement and in literature satisfactory achievement.
147. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are consistent with recent test results and are average. Higher-attaining students write lively, interesting pieces in different styles. They can analyse newspaper articles and advertisements and use the language of literary criticism to write successfully about poetry and prose. Their spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally accurate and they can adapt their writing well for different purposes. Lower-attaining students tend to write short pieces, lacking descriptive detail and with grammatical and spelling mistakes. They can, however, express their ideas clearly and comment on literary pieces in a straightforward way. Higher-attaining students can express their ideas orally quite confidently in informal situations and read aloud fluently and expressively. Lower-attaining students often lack confidence in expressing their views in depth and tend to use quite a restricted range of vocabulary. Most students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well during Years 8 and 9.
148. Students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11. The faculty this year is aiming to raise the attainment of more able students. Although the highest grades were conspicuously absent in last year's GCSE results, the current Year 11 are showing that they can achieve A* and A grades. For example, one student wrote a closely argued, stylish essay comparing two film versions of 'Frankenstein'. In a piece of original work where students were writing the opening chapter of a detective story, a student wrote an arresting and engaging piece, using powerful, descriptive

language. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are average overall, with the full spread of grades represented. Students study a range of literature, and at all levels they analyse how writers achieve their effects. The writing of the middle and lower-attaining students is less accurate than that of the higher-attaining, with some students making basic errors in punctuating, paragraphing and spelling. Students with special educational needs make good progress, along with others. Students from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well.

149. Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons seen were good, with a few that were satisfactory and a few that were very good. Students have positive attitudes to English. They usually concentrate well and say that they enjoy the subject. Teachers are English specialists, and they use their knowledge to challenge students to think deeply about what they read and write. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, a low-attaining group were working on their literacy skills, preparing to write an essay. The teacher had planned the lesson carefully and prepared suitable resources that enabled students to practise the skills of writing in sentences and paragraphs and to improve the range of their vocabulary. In a Year 10 lesson, students were learning about Priestley's play 'An Inspector Calls'. They made good progress in learning about one of the characters because the teacher's knowledge of the play enabled her to explain it effectively and ask searching questions. She took the opportunity to raise moral issues explored in the play, and students responded enthusiastically. Teachers manage behaviour well. A low-attaining Year 11 group were studying the lyrics of 'She's Leaving Home'. The teacher created a quiet, purposeful working atmosphere and managed some potentially difficult students well and without fuss, and as a consequence they made good gains in knowledge and understanding. Learning could often be improved even further if teachers planned to use a wider range of resources or teaching and learning methods. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on Romeo and Juliet, the teacher taught well and her expert subject knowledge underpinned good learning in the lesson. Students could, however, have learnt even better if there had been opportunities to use visual images or for them to be more actively involved. Some lessons give students opportunities to use computers to present their work or to carry out research, and this could be developed further. Homework is regularly set and usually extends the classwork appropriately.
150. There is some inconsistency in the way that teachers mark work, particularly in Years 8 and 9. National Curriculum levels are not often used in day-to-day marking, although students' levels are assessed termly, in line with school policy. Some written comments are too generalised and do not help students to know what they need to do to improve. Other work, however, is helpfully marked.
151. Accommodation for English lessons is unsatisfactory. The faculty is fortunate in its office accommodation, but some classrooms are in poor decorative order, despite teachers' best efforts to cheer them up with displays. In a number of rooms blinds are broken, making it difficult to black out the room to use an overhead projector or television, and in some cases where there are large classes there is not enough room to move around. This means that teachers are restricted in what they can plan to do. There is satisfactory access to computers, but a greater range of resources would enrich learning.
152. The acting head of faculty is doing a good job in organising the new teaching team. He prioritised rewriting the schemes of work for Years 8 and 9, indicating links to the National Literacy Strategy, and has achieved a lot in a short time. He has had challenging staffing issues to deal with, and the team is working together well. New procedures and practices are being established and teaching is monitored regularly. Data on students' attainment is being used effectively to identify underachievement, though there is potential to develop this further.
153. The faculty has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards and achievement have risen, the quality of teaching has improved, and a lot of work has been done on revising schemes of work. The faculty is well placed to develop further.
154. Whilst teachers of English have a key role in teaching literacy, many other subjects make a contribution by displaying subject vocabulary, and some departments stress the differences in writing for different purposes. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and students

could make even greater progress if the approach were more systematic. In science, for example, students would do better if all teachers expected them to use key scientific vocabulary, and there is inconsistent practice too in design and technology. On the other hand, teachers of history, religious education and physical education create opportunities for speaking and listening and give good support for writing.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good, with teachers having high expectations of what students can do and how they will behave.
- The department is well led and managed.

Area for improvement

- New teachers need further training and development opportunities to build a high performing team.

155. The head of department took up her post a year and a half ago, and her two colleagues joined her in September 2002. She prioritised improving standards, as well as raising the profile of the subject across the school.

156. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average. These results represent satisfactory achievement, as most students started the course with limited experiences of drama and many were low-attaining students in other subjects.

157. All students have one drama lesson a week in Years 8 and 9. Students join the school with mixed, but usually very limited, experiences of drama. The course was revised over the last year, and now is structured to give students a good grounding in dramatic skills and conventions.

158. Standards of work in Year 9 are a little below average. Students know about techniques such as 'hot-seating', and can improvise work reasonably effectively. Higher-attaining students use movement and gesture successfully to convey characters and situations, and can hold their concentration to the end of a piece. Lower-attaining students are often self-conscious; their improvised work is more superficial and they find it difficult to sustain a role through to the end.

159. At GCSE, students acquire good knowledge and understanding of dramatic conventions and good performance skills. They learn how to analyse their own and others' performances. They are encouraged to write diary entries reflecting on their feelings – for example, a Year 10 student wrote interestingly about how she felt when performing wearing a mask, and how her feelings affected what she did. By the end of Year 11, students can portray character and sustain a role convincingly, using movement, voice and gesture, aware of the audience. They have a good understanding of conventions and techniques such as 'forum theatre', 'cross-cutting' and 'freeze-frames'. Students achieve well on the course.

160. Teaching in drama is good. Teachers usually have high expectations of what students will achieve and insist on high standards, including good behaviour and listening. Where teaching is good or very good, teachers use their specialist subject knowledge to challenge students appropriately and establish a brisk pace. They encourage students to think hard about their own and others' performances. These features were all present in a Year 9 lesson on stock figures from the 'Commedia Dell'arte' and resulted in students learning a lot about how to present their ideas dramatically. In another Year 9 lesson on the same topic, the teacher's confidence and assurance in demonstrating gesture and movement, and her enthusiasm and encouragement, combined with a very brisk pace, resulted in students learning very well. Where teaching is satisfactory but not better, the pace of lessons is sometimes rather leisurely, and the students are not challenged to work to their maximum capacity. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, students were preparing to

deliver monologues the following lesson. They learnt about the necessary conventions, but they could have got through more in the time available if the pace had been brisker and the challenge greater.

161. Students' work is assessed regularly and in addition they are taught to evaluate their own and others' performances. They usually know how well they are doing and how they could improve both practical and written work. Drama is taught in two specialist rooms which provide adequate space for most classes although, when classes are large, the available space places limitations on practical work. There are also difficulties during examination periods, when there is no available large space.
162. The head of department leads and manages the subject well. Drama is popular among students who take it and makes a very good contribution to the range of extra-curricular activities.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement, particularly in Years 8 and 9, is good.
- Standards in national tests and examinations have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Leadership provided by the new head of faculty is very good.
- Identification of priorities for improvement and the action taken to improve standards are both good.

Areas for improvement

- Students' progress in mathematics is not monitored carefully enough.
- Standards of attainment in using and applying mathematics are lower than in other aspects.
- The range of learning activities is rather narrow and the mathematics curriculum needs to include more use of ICT.
- There is no plan for the development and use of numeracy skills in other subjects.

163. Standards on entry to the school are below average. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, results were below average but above those of schools with a similar intake. Boys' results were better than girls', reflecting differences in their attainment on entry. The results represent good achievement for all students. Results over the last three years have improved much faster than the national trend. In GCSE examinations in 2002, results were close to the national average and to students' results in other subjects. Students made very good progress from a relatively low base at the end of Year 9. Girls' results were better than boys', as were their standards at the start of the course.
164. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average except in Year 11 where they are below average. Standards in using and applying mathematical skills are lower than in other aspects of the subject. By the end of Year 9, higher-attaining students can use algebraic expressions to describe patterns, solve simultaneous equations and interpret linear graphs. Lower-attaining students can add, subtract, multiply and divide whole numbers but make mistakes when adding decimals to whole numbers. By the end of Year 11, higher attainers can add vectors and solve quadratic equations. Even the lowest attainers can convert simple fractions into decimals or percentages. Overall, achievement is good in all year groups. It is least good in Year 11, where some average-attaining students have less positive attitudes to learning and lower than expected standards in their coursework. The highest and lowest attainers in Year 11 achieve well because they are well managed and motivated. While all students in Year 11 are working at standards for a pass grade at GCSE, only about 40 percent of students are working at levels appropriate for higher grades.
165. Teaching and learning are good. All teaching seen was satisfactory or better and sometimes very good or excellent. In lower years, the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has had a positive effect on

planning and classroom activities. Lessons are well prepared and structured with an introduction or quick warm up, the main learning activities and a review at the end. Teachers maintain a good pace and plan appropriate activities to secure progress. They have detailed knowledge of students whose needs have been identified by the school and tailor their approach accordingly. This ensures that talented mathematicians and those with special educational needs make good progress. In a lesson with lower-attaining students in Year 11, for example, thorough preparation and tireless support for individuals by the teacher and teaching assistant secured excellent progress for all students, most of whom had special needs. Teachers' knowledge of students' progress in mathematics is less detailed because they do not have enough assessment information. Liaison with students' previous schools is currently limited, so that teachers do not have accurate information about students' skills when they join the school.

166. In the better lessons, learning activities are varied and students are fully engaged. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, students' motivation was increased because the introduction to the lesson got them physically involved. In the main part of the lesson, activities were carefully selected to ensure that all students understood the concepts as well as learning the techniques. In many lessons, however, learning is satisfactory rather than good or better. There are a number of reasons for this. Sometimes students have to listen or work from a textbook for too long; they lose interest and so learn less well. Secondly, some activities are either too hard or too easy. For example, some lower-attaining Year 9 students learning about co-ordinates were asked to find the mid-point of a line before they could confidently plot the points and understand the relationships between them. As a result they became frustrated. In another lesson, middle-attaining Year 10 students were introduced to symmetry and asked to complete mirror image shapes. They found this very easy and rapidly got bored. Finally, although teachers manage students well in most lessons, in a few lessons, particularly with middle-attaining students, the reluctance displayed by a small minority inhibits learning. Although this has been improved since the last inspection, it has not been completely eliminated.
167. Leadership of the faculty is very good. There is a clear educational direction and staff work well together as a team. Management is good and the new head of faculty has a very good knowledge of the strengths and areas that need developing. Some of these, such as homework, resources and displays, have already been successfully addressed. There is now regular monitoring of most aspects of the faculty's work. Assessment data is used well to set targets and to analyse results from external tests and examinations. A system to track students' progress is planned but has not yet been implemented, so that information about the mathematical skills of individuals and groups is not yet used sufficiently in planning. Schemes of work have been assembled and ensure good coverage of the subject. They outline learning objectives but do not specify appropriate activities to support these, nor do they identify problem-solving opportunities and links with other subjects. For example, students have few opportunities to use ICT as a tool to enhance mathematics learning or to apply the techniques they have learned. The areas for development identified in this report already feature in the faculty improvement plan.
168. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations have improved much faster than the national trend. The quality of teaching and students' attitudes to mathematics have improved. The committed staff in the faculty are well placed to address the remaining issues and to continue to raise standards.
169. The school has not yet developed a whole school policy for numeracy, even though this was identified as a matter for attention in the previous report. Within the mathematics faculty, the Key Stage 3 National Strategy has been used to secure good progress in numeracy skills in Years 8 and 9, but standards are not as high as they could be because the development of number skills in lessons other than mathematics is not planned across the school. There has been limited liaison with students' previous schools, but it is not sufficient to prevent students from repeating some work they have already covered in their middle schools. In some departments, the development and use of mathematical skills is well planned and integrated into the teaching of the subject. For example in geography, students' use of surveys and their ability to plot graphs are carefully developed. In ICT, students learn to use formulae in creating and using spreadsheets. In

other subjects such as science and design and technology, the approach is less systematic and there is too much inconsistency.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards have improved significantly and students achieve well because teachers are successful in motivating them.
- Teaching is good, because staff are committed and plan consistently well.
- Students are valued and encouraged to achieve their best.
- Good leadership and management have led to good teamwork

Areas for improvement

- Standards in scientific enquiry and investigation are lower than other aspects. Higher-attaining students are ready for further challenge through independent approaches.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to explain their understanding or to ask questions.
- Learning resources are inadequate. Students do not use computers enough to extend their scientific skills.

170. Results in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2002 were below the national average though they were well above average for schools with a similar intake. The results were better than in 2001 and have been improving since the last inspection. Boys performed better than girls. Students achieved well, since their attainment was significantly below average on entry to the school.
171. GCSE results in 2002 were below average, though almost all students gained a GCSE grade. Results improved very significantly from the previous year. Most students took double award science and they did as well as in their other subjects. A small number took separate GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics. They did less well than in their other subjects. Girls did better than boys. Students made satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9.
172. For current students, standards are average at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. They are higher than the recent examination results because of recent improvements in teaching and management. Learning has been enhanced because the programme of work is now more structured. Standards in scientific enquiry and investigation remain lower than other aspects of science, though the quality of practical experience has improved. Students' achievement is good.
173. In Year 8, students generally build on earlier learning as a result of effective joint planning with middle schools. However some higher-attaining students in Year 8 found they were repeating some work on acids and alkalis. By the end of Year 9 most students understand from their own practical experience why glucose increases the respiration of yeast. They become more confident in planning an investigation because teachers have good skills in encouraging them to talk about their ideas.
174. Students in Year 10 are able to complete the structure of organic compounds; in this work they use their numeracy skills well and extend their spatial awareness. By Year 11, students understand the abstract idea of radiation and how damaging rays can be reduced. They have a good appreciation of health and safety. Almost all students have positive attitudes to lessons as a result of very good work by all staff to encourage enjoyment of learning. Students behave well; they listen attentively and discuss ideas because teachers value their contributions. Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
175. Students develop good study skills through taking notes as the teacher talks. Their language skills are improving as a result of good expectations for discussion. Year 8 students enjoy reading about science in lessons, but reading aloud or shared reading is not used to improve achievement

further. Students use mathematics where appropriate, but higher-attaining students are given rather easy questions and need more challenge to extend their skills of mathematical application. Students are not developing skills in ICT – they need more frequent access to computers to analyse and interpret experimental data. Students are not learning to be sufficiently independent because teachers do not place a high enough demand on them to take initiative when approaching a science investigation.

176. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are well integrated and similarly make good progress. Boys and girls contribute equally well because teachers encourage their involvement and improve their confidence. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress, though the school plans to provide further sessions after Easter to accelerate their progress.
177. Teaching and learning are good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons during the inspection, which is a major improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to extend students' understanding. In a very good Year 11 lesson, for example, students had time to think deeply about the origins of the universe, drawing on the expertise of the teacher, who gave clear answers to difficult questions. Their comprehension of abstract ideas was helped by a colourful video. Lessons have a consistently good structure, but the quality of teachers' written presentation varies. Students have good opportunities to improve their use of scientific language because teachers pose good questions, and expect everyone to participate in discussion. However, whole-class review sessions at the end of lessons are at best rushed and lose their impact because students do not have sufficient time to speak about what they have understood or still find difficult. Students' work is assessed regularly and the best marking shows them how to improve their work. However, the assessments are not linked to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. This would help students to assess their own progress and give them better guidance on how to meet their targets.
178. Leadership and management are good. After a period of turbulent staff turnover, teachers now form a cohesive team that aims to raise standards and do the very best for students. The teachers are committed and work hard to fulfil school policies. This has resulted in significant improvement in learning through consistent management of students' behaviour. The technicians provide teachers with good support. They are pressed for time because lessons have been shortened, but new technicians are being well trained by the senior technician. Learning resources are inadequate. The sharing of small items of equipment between two teaching groups results in a loss of pace in practical sessions. The quality of presentation materials does not always support students' learning well. Everyone in the team with management responsibilities is striving for better standards. Consequently, the faculty has improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards have risen because teaching and management have improved. The faculty is now in a position to use the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to improve further the quality of learning.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and often very good.
- A new, enthusiastic head of department and teaching team have recently improved all aspects of the subject.
- Standards are improving in all years.
- Students' achievements in art are now good; they learn two-dimensional skills well and make good critical commentaries on their work.

Areas for improvement

- The range of three-dimensional work is too narrow and staff need training to improve students' standards in this area.
- Students' attainment in GCSE, particularly at the higher grades, is still too low.
- The department urgently needs computers so that students can use ICT creatively in their visual work.

179. Standards in art and design have been low in recent years, with GCSE results well below the national average. A new hard-working and enthusiastic team of teachers has transformed the department, resulting in highly positive effects on all aspects of standards and quality.
180. Students enter Year 8 with below average attainment and, by the end of Year 9, standards now match the national average. This represents good achievement for students of all abilities and is a direct result of the improved curriculum and good teaching they now experience. The department has wisely focused on improving basic two-dimensional skills such as painting and drawing, combined with an emphasis on research and on students' personal annotation of their sketchbooks. These aspects are now developed very effectively in Years 8 and 9, with many students, especially boys, achieving above average standards. Three-dimensional work is much less well developed, and standards are lower. Students do not use ICT in creative visual work because the department lacks computers and software.
181. This balance of strengths and weaknesses is also found in the GCSE course. Last year's GCSE results were adversely affected by a lack of suitable quality coursework from Year 10, although Year 11 work improved once new staff were involved. Students in the current Year 11 are still affected by unsatisfactory skills development early in the school, but have enough satisfactory coursework from Years 10 and 11. Their work is broadly average – there is little work at either the highest or the lowest grades. Students' attitudes to their work, however, are very positive, which will help those with the potential for higher grades to improve their work before the examination. Staff are fully determined to support these efforts. Given their low attainment at the start of the GCSE course, the current Year 11 students have achieved very well. Year 10 is stronger, having benefited from the new staff's influence for longer. Students of all ages and abilities appreciate the fervour and passion for their subject which teachers transmit and art is now among students' favourite subjects. Lower-attaining students are well supported, mostly without support staff, and able students are stretched effectively.
182. Teaching is good, and that of the specialist teaching team is often very good. Teachers have different styles and approaches, which is good for students' experience, particularly as they get older. Teachers have consistently high expectations, both of students' behaviour and of the quality of their artwork. They have created an ethos in which students succeed in the subject, and stimulating exhibitions of students' own work reinforce their success. Painting and drawing are taught successfully through demonstrations and controlled experiments, followed by individual development of these skills. Teachers insist on students' commenting critically on what they do, both in writing and orally, so students get used to the annotation and critique required for examination work. An early focus on these key aspects, with clear, direct teaching of how to achieve them, combined with highly effective classroom management, develops students' confidence that they can do art. A small number of Year 8 classes are taught by non-specialist teachers. These students are not achieving so well. They lack confidence and do not concentrate well enough. The majority of students now learn very well, and develop a good insight into the wider context of art. In a Year 11 lesson on Breugel's work, for example, students understood something of the people's relationships with the Church from the artist's portrayal of their having fun on saints' days. Lessons about African art and displays of aboriginal-style painting extend students' knowledge of the meaning of art in other cultures. In a very challenging Year 10 lesson, observational figure drawing was linked with Paula Rego's portrayals of women in the posture of animals.
183. Department management over the last year has been very good and has created profound improvements. The specialist team works very closely together, projecting an infectious sense of

enjoyment in art. Very good improvement since the last report has improved the status and influence of art across the school.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The introduction of citizenship has been very well planned.
- The course is well organised and contains a variety of stimulating activities.
- Citizenship gives good support for students' moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The detailed planning of the course is not yet complete.
- Teachers in some other subjects are not sufficiently aware of opportunities for citizenship teaching.

184. From the beginning of the present academic year the school has taught citizenship as a separate subject. Students in Years 8, 9, and 10 receive one lesson per week. The school has devised a good course which covers the National Curriculum. The outline of the course has been planned well, the detail being completed as each unit is approached. Teachers from the humanities faculty teach citizenship and apply their main subject skills to the new course. The course has been carefully introduced and is successful. Leadership and management in citizenship are very good. The school will have no examination results until 2004, when both the present Year 9 and Year 10 students will complete the GCSE short course.
185. Because citizenship is well organised and because teaching is good, standards are a little above the average for students in Years 9 and 10. All students achieve well, including those with special educational needs. There are no differences between the achievement of boys and girls, although girls are more willing to take part in role play and to demonstrate for the class. Year 8 students have a good grasp of the dangers of stereotyping and Year 9 have a rapidly growing appreciation of the effect of poverty on people's lives in the third world. Students in Year 10 know that employees and employers have responsibilities and what some of these are. The School Council provides an opportunity for students to take part directly in citizenship debate.
186. There is much debate in citizenship lessons, and those students who find it hard to express themselves in discussion and writing succeed less well than those who discuss and write easily. However, citizenship lessons provide valuable help for the former group to speak and write more fluently. It also provides a vehicle for the most able to use their English skills well. A Year 9 student demonstrated this superbly when giving his group's list of solutions to child poverty in the third world. Many students in this class had well thought out reasons for their own priorities.
187. Most students are keen to take part in lessons and realise the importance of becoming good citizens. Only when the pace of lessons is too slow do they become less interested. There are some, however, who do not enjoy the subject. Written work also shows care and a willingness to work in most cases. Students join in discussion enthusiastically but in some classes do not take part in role play so well. Some students find this difficult and are rather self-conscious. Skilful teaching in two instances led to good ideas emerging from the exercise but some students in a third class did not use their time well.
188. Teaching is good in all year groups and sometimes very good. There is a good balance of discussion, role play and practical work. In a simple practical task in Year 9, for example, students clearly understood the spiral of poverty in the poorest countries. Teachers work hard to encourage students to share ideas. In the best lessons the pace is appropriate and activities interesting. Teachers manage students very well and are therefore able to keep them all involved and learning. Occasionally, the pace is too fast. In one lesson, for example, the teacher was too quick to accept answers to questions and, as a result, many students did not answer and did not have enough time to think. In most lessons, however, teachers question well and discussion

prompts students to think about the issues. Teachers give good support to students who find the work hard. In a lower-attaining group of Year 9 students, for example, the teacher used praise effectively and worked well with individuals so that they were able to answer the questions. Most teachers mark students' work thoroughly and positively.

189. The subject makes a good contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development, particularly to their appreciation of some of the world's inequalities. In Year 9, most students have a clear grasp of the unfairness of the division between the third world and the developed world. They understand that a part of being a responsible citizen is to help bring about change to improve people's lives. The work in Year 8 on stereotyping also brings a sharp awareness of unfairness.
190. Most students perceive citizenship as relevant to them in their everyday lives. In the summer term all students take part in a two day citizenship project. This provides practical demonstrations of much of what the course is about. Students develop skills of participation and direct responsible action in one of 27 activities. The school also enhances links with its community through projects such as the clearing and tidying of a community tow path.
191. There is currently very limited use of ICT in the citizenship course although the Citizenship 2002 day included two projects using computers and the internet. While other subjects also have a contribution to make to citizenship education, these links have not yet been planned in any detail.
192. There was no specific mention of citizenship in the last report. Provision for personal, social and health education was satisfactory but not fully effective. The new course enhances this provision. The school is well placed to develop the citizenship course further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students' attitudes are good and they enjoy the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT in their learning.
- Boys' attainment has improved but is still below that of girls.

193. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were at the national average. Students' results in design and technology are better than those in most other subjects. Results have been steadily improving over the past few years. Girls outperform boys.
194. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average but this represents good achievement because standards on entry to the school are well below average. Students use a range of hand and machine tools and kitchen utensils appropriately and with dexterity, but struggle with more demanding tools or where a greater degree of accuracy is required. Overall students' making skills are average and better than their designing skills. Most students understand the design process and sequence their work correctly, but lower attainers require support from the teacher in order to do this. Students work safely and hygiene in food lessons is good.
195. By the end of Year 11, standards are average and students achieve well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. The design work of higher-attaining students is good, though their research is not always completely relevant to the problem they are solving. They analyse their research well but do not always use their findings explicitly to guide the development of their products. All students have a clear understanding of batch and mass production. The design folders of a minority of boys are incomplete and not well ordered, but overall boys' attainment is not significantly different from that of girls because teachers have taken positive steps to ensure that coursework deadlines are met. Lower-attaining students use drawings successfully to

illustrate design ideas but accompanying notes are often too brief. For all students practical work is generally good and the items that they make are carefully finished.

196. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to literacy overall, though not all teachers give this equal emphasis. The contribution is good in food lessons because teachers encourage students to refer to a list of technical words when they are writing. Numeracy is positively promoted, for example when teachers ensure that students measure accurately and when students present the results of their research in graphs. Many teachers promote ICT skills, for example in the use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. However not all students benefit because the use of ICT is not planned in the schemes of work. The department has clear plans to remedy this.
197. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In nearly half the lessons seen, teaching was very good or excellent. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This was seen to good effect in a very good food lesson on making roux sauces. The teacher alerted students to work safely and not to overheat the butter. This gave students confidence in their cooking and they created a good product. The level of challenge in lessons is high and students are thoroughly engaged by the work because clear objectives are set. Students are well motivated because the work is planned within a realistic context. This was seen in an excellent lesson where students were discussing the dietary needs of a wide variety of people – they were all captivated and all joined in. Teachers are very enthusiastic and set high standards – in a Year 11 textiles class, for example, the teacher had reviewed students' coursework and gave each student detailed feedback to show how they could improve their grade. Homework is regularly set and always positively extends work undertaken in class. At the end of the best lessons there is a whole class session in which successes and problems are shared, ensuring students are aware of the progress that they have made. This was seen in a resistant materials lesson, where at the end students were encouraged to share their successes and problems with each other. Students' attitudes are good. Behaviour is good because teachers manage students well. There are very good relationships between teachers and students.
198. The head of department leads and manages the subject very well. As a result standards are rapidly rising and there are realistic plans for further improvement. Students' interest and motivation are raised by the many opportunities provided for them to enter national design competitions. During the week of the inspection prizes were awarded to several students for success in The Good Food Show Schools' Recipe Competition. Two technicians provide sterling support for teachers and students.
199. The subject has made very good progress since the previous inspection report, because standards have risen, and the many other issues raised have been successfully addressed.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching is good – teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned.
- Standards are rising and there is good capacity to continue this trend.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' numerical and computing skills as well as raising their moral, social and cultural awareness.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of a small proportion of marking is not up to the high standard of the majority.
- In a small number of lessons, students' behaviour is not well managed, which slows their progress.
- The department has limited practical field study equipment and little audio-visual equipment.
- The corridor space on the humanities floor is not used sufficiently to display work, maps and geographical information to create a motivating subject environment.

200. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average for A*-C grades but all students gained a pass grade. Girls attained at a higher level than boys. The results were better than in 2001. In both years, students achieved well in comparison to their earlier attainment. There has been an overall upward trend in attainment in recent years at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.
201. By the end of Year 9, standards are average and students' achievement is good in relation to their attainment on entry. Students develop a sound knowledge and understanding of geographical ideas, as well as a range of skills. Higher-attaining students are more secure in recalling what they have learned and explaining what it means. They are developing a sound knowledge of technical language. Most students have a satisfactory understanding of the relationships between physical and human aspects of geography, and were able to apply these in their study of Italy. In lessons on the banana and chocolate industries in the Windward Islands and Ghana, students showed that they were aware of the effects of the growth of global trade on producers, distributors and consumers. Students use computers effectively to research information and present their work. The work of some lower-attaining students is often brief, reflecting shallower knowledge and understanding and weaker literacy skills.
202. Standards in Year 11 are below average but students achieve well in relation to their attainment at the beginning of the course. Standards are improving compared to previous years. Students display satisfactory speaking and listening skills. They are becoming more effective in learning independently, particularly the higher attainers. They use computers well to gather information, analyse coursework data and present their findings. Many lower-attaining students are making good progress. In a lesson on the leisure facilities of Milton Keynes, for example, they successfully mapped and then analysed local provision. Students have a good knowledge of the processes of erosion and transportation in rivers. They also have a satisfactory understanding of the relationship between human activity and the environment. They study, for example, the impact of tourism on the Camargue and the effects of the deforestation of tropical rain forests. Literacy weaknesses impact negatively on the progress of many average and lower-attaining students.
203. Teaching is good overall and some is very good. As a result the learning of most students is also good. Teachers plan lessons well to meet students' individual needs. They are very secure in their subject knowledge and use a wide range of interesting methods that motivate students. Teachers use their local knowledge well to provide interest and enhance learning. Students are expected to think about what they are doing and appropriate emphasis is placed upon the development of enquiry and independent learning skills. Relationships are extremely good and most lessons are conducted in an orderly and brisk manner. Teachers usually have high expectations of the standards of work and behaviour expected. Most teachers mark thoroughly and provide helpful comments on how students can improve their work. Computers are used effectively to assist learning and appropriate field study activities are provided in all years. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed but where teaching was weaker, it was because of poor marking and less effective class management. This has a detrimental impact on learning. Good learning is a consequence of both good quality teaching and the positive and hard working attitudes of the vast majority of students. Students' behaviour and attitudes to work are mainly good or very good. In a lesson on the effects of the globalisation of world production on cocoa farmers in Ghana, for example, students made particularly good progress because they were actively involved as a result of enthusiastic teaching. Students with special education needs and the small number with English as an additional language achieve as well as other students.
204. Leadership and management are very good – the head of department is enthusiastic and hard working. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards are now higher

and there is greater use of enquiry-based tasks. Planning and documentation are much improved and teaching and learning are now regularly monitored. Curricular plans provide teachers with very clear guidance and fulfil the geography National Curriculum, including the requirements for use of ICT. Development planning is thorough and there is good teamwork, combined with a commitment to ensure that the upward trend in standards is maintained. Geography also makes a good contribution to students' personal development and to their numeracy and literacy skills. There are some shortages of field study equipment and audio-visual equipment. The corridor space is not well used to create a humanities environment, though displays in rooms are good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving.
- Teaching is good – it is enthusiastic and well planned, with high expectations of students. As a result, students enjoy their lessons and work hard.
- The department is very well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Occasionally, teachers do not make key questions clear enough and as a result students' work lacks depth.
- There are not enough textbooks and other printed resources.
- Several classroom doors are fitted badly and rattle constantly. The humanities corridor is rather bleak.

205. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This represents very good achievement since students' standards are well below average on entry to the school in Year 8. Students of all abilities make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of historical events, people and concepts. Higher attainers write well, largely because the department is rightly targeting the skills needed for extended writing. Teachers use strategies such as writing frames, reinforcement of key words and detailed mark schemes; these are beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Students in Year 9 studying British rule in India, for example, are taught to plan their essays carefully using 'spidergrams' to list benefits and disadvantages. Average and lower-attaining students can provide much more detail in their verbal responses than in extended writing, but they are prepared to work hard to develop the necessary skills.
206. GCSE results in 2002 were below average but were considerably higher than in 2001. In both years, all students obtained a pass grade. Inspection evidence confirms that, although standards are still below average, they are improving. Students achieve well. GCSE students plan their written work and use specialist vocabulary well. As in Years 8 and 9, teachers make very good use of mark schemes to help students structure their answers. Students build effectively on skills learnt in Years 8 and 9. This was evident in a Year 11 lesson where students showed a detailed knowledge and understanding of how the Nazi persecution of the Jews escalated between 1933 and 1945. Lower-attaining students on the certificate of achievement course also make good progress in their lessons. During the week of the inspection, for example, they were engaged in writing children's storybooks on life in wartime Britain. All took care over the presentation of their work and wrote at length about topics such as evacuation and the home army.
207. Students enjoy history, and it is a popular choice at GCSE. Students in most lessons co-operate with their teachers and with each other. This results in a positive atmosphere where successful learning can take place. Teachers are effective in improving students' confidence so that they become less dependent on teachers telling them what to do. In all lessons students enjoy answering questions and reading aloud. They show historical curiosity, often asking thoughtful questions.

208. The quality of teaching is good overall. In many lessons it is very good. There are many significant strengths in the teaching which are having a positive impact on standards. Teachers plan lessons carefully and deliver them enthusiastically and skilfully. As a result, students show interest and work at a fast pace. Questions are used effectively to motivate and to enable students to share ideas and become more confident learners. This means that they will often speculate – a student in Year 10, for example, worked out why Hitler wanted an alliance with the USSR. Work is well matched to students' abilities so that higher, average and lower attainers are able to work to their respective potential. Year 11 higher-attaining students, for example, showed a good understanding of what buying shares on the margin means and what the implications might be if share values fell. In the best lessons, teachers work hard to develop students' skills in using different kinds of historical evidence to make informed conclusions about events or people. Occasionally, however, the initial questions that teachers pose lack focus and do not help students' to progress beyond simple observation.
209. The subject is very well managed by two teachers who share responsibility for the post. They have a clear sense of purpose and direction and a very good understanding of what the subject's priorities are. After a long period of staffing problems, there is now a stable and committed team in place. Teaching rooms have been developed as effective learning environments with good displays of students' work and other materials. There is now scope to improve the appearance of the humanities corridor and to repair ill-fitting doors on some of the rooms. Departmental documentation is thorough and effective. Procedures for assessment of students' work and for monitoring the quality of teaching and sharing good practice are very good. The department has made very good progress in all the issues identified in the last inspection report. There are, however, insufficient textbooks and other print resources and this means that students have too few opportunities to improve their reading skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Standards at GCSE are high.
- There is a good number of computers.

Areas for improvement

- Computers are not used sufficiently to support learning in other subjects.
- There is not sufficient software for desktop publishing and graphics.
- There are not enough computer peripherals such as colour printers and scanners.

210. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average and well above other subjects in the school. There was a high proportion of A* and A grades. These very good results came about because teachers carefully analysed how students can gain high marks in coursework and examinations. Results have been improving steadily over the past few years. Boys and girls gain similar results.
211. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. This is good achievement because students come into the school with below average ICT skills. Students have good skills in using databases and spreadsheets. They use a word processor well but graphics work and desktop publishing are weaker. Students' internet skills, their use of computers to control events and to create slide presentations are all satisfactory. The development of students' ICT skills in other areas of the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall, although some subjects, for example geography, design and technology and music make a positive contribution.
212. Standards seen during the inspection in GCSE and GNVQ classes are above the national average. They are lower than in the 2002 examinations because fewer higher-attaining students have opted for the subject in Years 10 and 11. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. Students' database and spreadsheet skills are of a high standard. Their knowledge and understanding of the

impact of computers on society are satisfactory. Word processing skills are good and students always choose appropriate fonts and layouts for their work. Graphics and desktop publishing skills are below average because students do not have access to specialist software. However the school has recently ordered desktop publishing software. The ICT skills of students who do not take GCSE are satisfactory overall but the school has yet to implement a programme of study for Year 10.

213. The achievement of students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to students' numeracy and literacy skills.
214. Teaching and learning are good. Because teachers are very well qualified, students learn accurate and relevant skills and information. This was seen in a good lesson where input and output devices were being listed. Students quickly realised that a compact disc drive and a floppy disk drive can fit into both categories. The level of challenge is high and students are thoroughly engaged by the work because clear objectives are set and work is planned within a realistic context. In a good Year 11 lesson, for example, students tackled a project to record computer usage in a cyber café with real enthusiasm and made rapid progress in their spreadsheet skills. Students' attitudes are positive in lessons because teachers are really enthusiastic. Careful planning ensures that each student undertakes a good range of appropriate activities to develop their individual skills and understanding. In a good Year 9 lesson on internet research, students were each given individual help that built on previous knowledge and, as a result, all succeeded. However students would acquire skills even more rapidly if teachers used a digital projector to show how a procedure is done. Homework is also planned carefully and always extends what has been achieved in class. Teachers use the methods from the Key Stage 3 Strategy in ICT, such as planning lessons in three parts. However lesson endings do not always reinforce progress with an effective review of the lesson's targets.
215. The management of the subject is good. Standards are rising because of the good curricular planning. Students have a good choice of examination courses and the department is planning to introduce a course for lower-attaining students in Years 10 and 11. The department has clear development plans that are driving up standards. For example, the recent investment in new computers means the school is now well resourced, although there are still insufficient peripherals, such as colour printers and scanners.
216. Progress since the last report has been good – the school has made good strides in raising attainment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Standards have improved significantly and continue to improve.
- Behaviour in classes and attitudes to learning languages are good.
- The faculty has a well-qualified, committed team of teachers, with expert subject knowledge.
- The leadership and management of the faculty are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers and students make insufficient use of ICT to support learning.
- Language college status has insufficient impact on the life of the school beyond the faculty.
- Attainment at GCSE level is too low, especially in Spanish.
- Few students continue their language studies after GCSE.

217. There have been significant improvements in standards and provision since the last inspection. At that time standards were low, achievement unsatisfactory and behaviour was poor. The improvements are due to very good leadership and management and improved teaching by newly-

appointed teachers. All students study a language throughout the school and higher-attaining students – those in the top band – study two languages from Year 8 to Year 11.

218. GCSE results in 2002 were below average in French, German and Spanish. The best results were in German, in which students did as well as in their other subjects. In French, students did less well than in their other subjects. Spanish results were well below average and students did considerably less well than in other subjects. In all three languages, the results showed a considerable improvement compared with 2001 and very good improvement since the last inspection. These improvements are continuing into the current year.
219. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are close to the national average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate a sharp rise in standards in 2001 and a smaller rise in 2002, although standards still fell well short of the school's ambitious targets. This improving trend has been maintained and there has been a further rapid rise in standards in the current year. Achievement in Years 8 and 9 is now good. Higher-attaining students write fluently and with reasonable accuracy in both their chosen languages. In their first language they can write extended paragraphs about themselves and use past and future tenses competently. Very good standards of writing were seen in Italian. Among middle-attaining students, standards of writing vary considerably. Some students' work is poorly presented and limited in scope to a couple of sentences. Others, notably in German, achieve higher standards. They can write accurate paragraphs, using correct word order and a good range of vocabulary. Lower-attaining students write little, but, with help, some are capable of using past tense forms appropriately to write about their own activities.
220. Students are used to hearing their teachers speak in the foreign language and have good pronunciation. They have developed good listening comprehension skills by Year 9. They are also increasingly confident about speaking the language. One middle-attaining French class was particularly successful at giving and understanding directions. Behaviour and attitudes to language study in all Year 9 classes are good. Some Year 9 students use computers on occasion to present work attractively for display.
221. In Years 10 and 11, while standards have improved considerably, they remain below average overall. However, students' achievement is good in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. In particular, standards are rising in Spanish because the school now has a strong team of Spanish teachers and new teaching and learning materials. Some higher-attaining students are now closer to reaching their potential. Their written work and their knowledge of grammar and range of vocabulary are very good. However, because they study two languages to GCSE, their attainment is affected by an inadequate time allocation for each GCSE course. Two 50-minute lessons per week are not sufficient for thorough coverage; lessons are sometimes rushed and the knowledge acquired is superficial. This is particularly the case for students who began their second language in Year 10.
222. In Year 10, higher-attaining students enjoy their Spanish lessons and are progressing well. In one lesson they handled the future tense expertly to discuss weather forecasts. In this lesson, as in all Year 10 and 11 lessons seen during the inspection, the class benefited from the contribution of one of three language assistants, who are doing effective work to improve students' oral skills in French, German and Spanish. Middle-attaining students learning German have made good progress. With a little prompting they can speak and write about past holidays, using correct verb forms and word order and appropriate vocabulary. Their pronunciation is good. Students of all attainment levels have few inhibitions about speaking the foreign language. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons in Years 10 and 11. Students have positive attitudes to language study and work hard. The only remaining sign of the negative and disruptive attitudes reported at the time of the previous inspection was in one Spanish class of low-attaining students in Year 11.
223. Teaching and learning in Years 9, 10 and 11 are good. Lessons are well planned, with a variety of activities to ensure that the pace of the lesson is fast and students' concentration is good. The teachers are expert linguists, with good knowledge of the latest developments in language teaching. In the most successful lessons, the teacher's skilled use of the language gives students the confidence to respond well and helps them to acquire good pronunciation. Use of pair-work

encourages co-operative and independent learning and provides more opportunities for individual oral practice. Students are encouraged to develop good dictionary skills. Teachers often make excellent use of flashcards, mime and gesture to enable them to conduct the lesson almost entirely in the foreign language. A Year 9 Japanese lesson was an outstanding example of success in language learning, leading to the raising of the self-esteem of students with special educational needs. In the few less successful lessons, lack of variety very occasionally leads to the lesson being dull.

224. The languages faculty has a suite of computers which teachers book for use by their classes. However, little use was made of these during the inspection. All Year 11 students have at least one ICT lesson introducing them to software they can use in revising for GCSE. Further planning of the use of ICT in learning languages is on hold because the department is expecting to move to new premises. The three foreign language assistants run a daily lunchtime computer club. The faculty recognises that there is much more potential for students to use ICT in lessons to support their learning.
225. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Problems of recruitment and retention of teachers have been resolved. There is now a stable, well-qualified team of committed teachers. Teachers' morale is very good. Their good classroom control, together with the introduction of ability banding and smaller language classes have rectified the problems of poor motivation and negative attitudes. Students now enjoy their lessons and behave well. They are presented with challenging work appropriate to their ability and the great majority respond well. The quality and range of learning opportunities are excellent. Six languages are offered – in addition to the languages taken to GCSE, some students take courses in Italian, French or Japanese. Students have the chance of an intensive residential course in Spanish, French or German early in Year 8. There are close contacts with partner schools in three countries, which help to make language study relevant and meaningful. There have been recent exchanges to France and Germany and, a few years ago, to Spain.
226. New resources of good quality have been acquired and the accommodation has been improved, which has enhanced the image of the faculty and helped to improve attitudes and behaviour. The faculty has a new management structure with clear roles and responsibilities. Teaching is routinely monitored and this has led to effective sharing of good practice. The leadership and management of the faculty are very good, ensuring that teachers are in close touch with modern developments in language teaching. There is a clear vision for the future development of modern languages. However, because the management team has rightly been preoccupied with the faculty's own previous weaknesses, the impact of language college status on school life in general has been minimal.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The courses in music use ICT very well.
- The courses have well-balanced approach to music, which students perceive as relevant. They enjoy music in class and in extra-curricular activities. The take up for GCSE music is high and growing.
- Most of the teaching is lively and increases students' interest.
- Leadership is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The schemes of work for students in all year groups need more detail.
- Students in Years 8 and 9 do not produce enough written work, despite the good use of ICT.
- Work in some classes is not marked regularly or fully enough.

227. At the end of Year 9 standards in music are slightly below average. Although students achieve well, the proportion that reaches the nationally expected level is below average. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the school has only two years to build on attainment from entry instead of three, since students come to the school in Year 8. Secondly, students have only one period of music per week in Years 8 and 9, which is too little. Although the course is good and students respond well, they do not have enough time to practise the skills and acquire the knowledge that the National Curriculum demands.

228. GCSE results in 2002 were close to the national average and substantially higher than the previous year. The work of the present Years 10 and 11, however, is below average. The main reason for this is that the head of faculty has established a policy of having a truly comprehensive intake to the course, which means that some students do not have the performance or general abilities and skills to succeed at the higher levels. In addition, the lack of time in Years 8 and 9 means that some students begin the GCSE course from a low base. Students' achievement, however, is at least satisfactory and many make good progress. Numbers for GCSE are growing and the benefits to music making in the school are considerable.

229. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 have a good grasp of the idea of a tone row and can make a 'tune'. Less capable students find this work harder and compose their 12-tone tunes more at random than through listening and design. Because students use keyboards regularly their skills are at least average. In Years 8 and 9 most students have progressed beyond using one finger only and many have a growing idea of how to use all fingers on a keyboard. This continues well in Years 10 and 11. However, most read letter names rather than staff notation, even in Years 10 and 11, apart from those students receiving instrumental lessons. Some Year 10 students have a good grasp of swing and syncopation, but others are not so confident in what should be straightforward work for a GCSE class. Students made a very pleasing two-part singing sound in a show rehearsal that took place during the inspection.

230. Instrumental work is well organised. The school invests substantial money into this and it pays dividends in extra-curricular activities. However, students do not use their instrumental skills often enough in class lessons.

231. Teaching is good overall. Teachers use ICT very well. Together with a balanced course containing much popular music, this attracts students and makes them want to take part. This in turn helps them to concentrate and to learn. The growing numbers for GCSE are at least in part a result of this enthusiasm. Written planning is sometimes brief and lacking in detail but teachers are secure both in subject knowledge and in their objectives for lessons. They manage students well, the only exception seen being with a difficult class of lower-attaining students. Another group of low-attaining students enjoyed a very good lesson, which was lively and pitched at just the right level. Teachers establish good relationships, in turn leading students to enjoy music and to want to take part. Teachers also convey their enthusiasm for music. They ask questions skilfully and lead students to think about music. There are a small number of lessons that flow less well. This is because, although they are thorough and carefully prepared, they are too slow. The deliberate pace detracts from the excitement of making music. In one, too many students played examples of a simple short tune. The activity was well organised but took too long and students' interest waned. In Years 8 and 9, students do not write enough about music.

232. Music is very well led and satisfactorily managed. The head of department has, in recent months, put much effort into running the expressive arts faculty. This balance needs to shift towards planning and monitoring the work of the music department to enable the many good ideas and initiatives to reach their potential. Accommodation is satisfactory although one of the main teaching rooms is too small, making the teaching of a full class difficult. Some sixth form teaching

has to take place in the special needs department, which, whilst not being a major inconvenience, is not ideal. The proximity of the drama studio to the music department encourages good co-operation between the two departments.

233. Although results at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are less good than reported at the last inspection, enthusiasm for music in the school is good. Numbers for examination music are rising (in Year 10 over 30 students study GCSE music) and extra-curricular activities are many, varied and well supported. The department has made important changes in the recent past, and although progress from the last inspection is satisfactory overall, it is well placed to make substantial progress in the near future. Marking in some year groups and classes is still inadequate as reported in the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are above the national average.
- Teaching is very good and is improving standards.
- Students have positive attitudes.
- There has been rapid improvement since the previous inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Boys do not have the opportunity to learn dance in Year 9.
- The range of tasks for lower-attaining students is too narrow.
- There is a continual leak in the sports hall.

234. GCSE results in 2002 were above average. Many of the students achieved higher grades than in their other subjects and better than their predicted grades. There has been a rising trend over the last two years.

235. Standards reached by students in Year 9 are average. A minority are above average in activities such as basketball, hockey and football. When the students arrive in Year 8 they have had very limited experience of dance and gymnastics. The boys are dynamic but have less body awareness than the girls, who are more refined and concerned with timing and shape. All students achieve well during Years 8 and 9. In games, higher-attaining students have refined basic skills and use them with increasing precision in competitive situations. In Year 9, girls are able to create dances using basic principles of choreography, though boys have no opportunities to study dance. Students are quick to grasp new ideas and enjoy a healthy level of competition. They all have a good grounding in health-related principles. They are able to answer questions about performance, but require more practice in problem solving, evaluating and coaching.

236. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a core course and some choose to study the subject to GCSE. In the core course, students reach average standards by Year 11. Students' achievement is good. A significant minority are above average in games. Their skills become more refined and they have a better understanding and application of rules and tactics. Badminton is a strength. Students use a variety of shots to outwit their opponents and a few are able to use advanced tactics, such as disguise. Lower-attaining students are less effective in using different strokes but have a good understanding of the principles. Girls understand the concepts of aerobics and are able to sustain a high work rate whilst performing routines.

237. In the GCSE course, standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Overall, students have a good depth of knowledge and are able to link theoretical concepts to practical activities. For example they can discuss their personal performance in relation to their fitness and their pulse recovery rate. They write confidently using technical vocabulary and research the topics well. A small number of students do not have a good recall of facts and are not confident to give oral answers without considerable prompting. Lower-attaining students have a satisfactory grasp of the

basic principles of each module but make slower progress than could be expected because work is not always matched well to their needs. The students have advanced skills in practical activities. They are able to analyse performance and are quick to adapt their skills through coaching.

238. Standards reached by Year 10 students in the newly-introduced dance GCSE are above average in practical work and average in theory. They have a good understanding of choreography for this stage of the course and use evaluations of professional performance well to improve their own. They are able to interpret a theme and music and relate well to others in their group. The students achieve very well in both GCSE courses.
239. Teaching is very good. The students' positive attitudes and behaviour also contribute to the quality of learning. Teachers have high expectations and students respond enthusiastically. Lesson objectives are always shared with the students and the question and answer sessions at the end of lessons clarify and consolidate the skills and knowledge learned. In the best lessons questions are designed to target specific students at their level of knowledge. Opportunities are given for students to evaluate each others' performance and practise their coaching skills. Tasks progress logically and there is nearly always enough time for the final activity or game. Good ongoing assessment leads to effective constructive criticism. Teachers know the students well and give additional support to those with special educational needs so that they too make good progress. Occasionally lower-attaining students struggle to consolidate skills in the final activity because they feel rushed in a competitive situation. The teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and the students appreciate the amount of time that is given to extra-curricular activities and individual tutorials. Achievement is celebrated at every level. The teachers effectively use resources such as video, photographs, work cards and white boards to show different ways of performing. Non-participating students are not always totally involved in the learning process of the lesson. There is a strong social and moral emphasis in all lessons. Students value each others' points of view, play fairly and accept officials' decisions.
240. Both GCSE courses in physical education and dance are well planned and very well taught. There are particularly good links between practical and theoretical modules, which aid students' understanding of the theory. Homework is linked effectively to class work, though it not always marked well. Assessment is used well to highlight individual students' areas for improvement and appropriate targets are agreed between the teacher and each student. There is effective use of internet programs for revision, and heart-rate monitors are used well to compare levels of performance.
241. The quality of coaching in extra-curricular activities is very good and high standards are consistently reached at local, county and regional levels for teams and individuals in badminton, netball, hockey and basketball. Students also enjoy success at national levels in judo, gymnastics and speed skating. The students respond very positively to all aspects of physical education. They enjoy the environment that is a hive of activity from early morning to nightfall.
242. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. GCSE results have improved steadily. There are more opportunities for dance, though not for boys in Year 9. Assessment systems are now effective and are used well to improve teaching and the curriculum. Students have improved skills in evaluating their own performance, though these could still improve further. The quality of teaching has improved. The programmes of study are very well planned and build more logically from one year to the next. The management of the students is excellent, and as a result there is no poor behaviour. High levels of participation in extra-curricular activities have been maintained. Teaching is now effectively monitored and team teaching is used well to share good practice.
243. There are some aspects that have not been successfully addressed. Despite many efforts, the sports hall floor still leaks and needs to be dried after every lesson. With the increase of dance in the curriculum there is the added pressure of the need for further indoor space. The use of the hall and gym for examinations adds to this pressure. Overrunning assemblies seriously shorten teaching time. The range of books in the library is not sufficient to support examination courses effectively.

244. New leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning in lessons and in the excellent extra-curricular programme. The teachers are dedicated and successful in creating a challenging, yet caring environment for their students. Notice boards have eye-catching displays that celebrate achievement, illustrate the curriculum in action and inform the students of clubs and forthcoming events at school and in the local area. Very good links with the community and other schools result in access to expert coaching and the sharing of good practice and resources.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving and are now above average by the end of Year 11. This improvement applies particularly to students' understanding of moral and ethical issues.
- Students achieve very well in all year groups.
- Teaching is good – lessons are enthusiastically taught and enable students to learn effectively.
- Efficient and very professional management of the department gives clear educational direction for students and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not remember the detail of key beliefs and teachings of the major world faiths.
- Although there is very good display of students' work and other materials in classrooms, there is scope to make the humanities corridor a more positive learning environment.
- There is a shortage of textbooks, other print resources and objects from religious traditions.

245. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the Milton Keynes Agreed Syllabus for religious education. GCSE results in 2002 were above average in both the short and the full GCSE courses and were better than in 2001. The work seen during the inspection is consistent with the 2002 examination results. These standards represent very good achievement for all year groups since standards are well below average on entry to the school in Year 8.

246. In Years 8 and 9 students develop a sound knowledge and understanding of religious language and principles. They learn about the major world faiths and come to appreciate some of the ways in which such faiths affect people's daily life. Teachers make effective links between everyday experiences and religious values so that students generally make sense of what they study and can relate it to their own lives. Students are better at understanding general principles of religious life than they are at gaining detailed information about key beliefs and teachings of the major world faiths. Students in Year 8, for example, have a good understanding of why adherents of particular faiths show respect for their holy books but they are less certain if asked which holy book belongs to which faith. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that students develop an understanding of what religions have in common as well as what divides them. This was evident, for example, in Year 9 lessons on creation stories. Students studied a traditional Chinese creation story, while in the previous lesson they had compared the account in Genesis with the theory of evolution.

247. Students in Years 10 and 11 extend their knowledge and understanding through exploring religious perspectives on issues such as animal rights, the environment and marriage. Students' writing shows a range of styles used for particular purposes, although literacy levels are generally below average and students often show a greater depth of knowledge and thought in their oral than in their written work. The department is working hard to improve literacy levels, however, so that, for example, students use specialist vocabulary with growing confidence. However, the department lacks some basic textbooks and other print resources that would enable students to improve their skills. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make similar rates of progress to those of their peers. Students are led to realise that religious education has practical applications to everyday life and consider their own beliefs and values about a wide range of moral and ethical issues.

248. Students in religious education are enthusiastic, eager to learn and tolerant of each other's beliefs. Classroom relationships are positive. Students respond well to difficult challenges, such as thinking through why moral questions are often difficult to answer.
249. The quality of teaching is good overall and occasionally excellent. Staffing has improved since the last inspection and this has had a positive impact on standards. The specialist teachers are very knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject. As a result, expectations of students are generally high. Students are taught to think for themselves and to consider a range of moral and ethical issues. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, students were led to a deep appreciation of why Muslims have 99 names for God. Students appreciate the enthusiasm with which their lessons are taught and respond with interest and good behaviour. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson on the contrasting characteristics of Yin and Yang, where a student remembered work done in art on cool and warm colours and used these in her answer. Non-specialist teachers are well supported with high quality schemes of work and lesson plans, but they sometimes lack detailed knowledge about specific religious beliefs. This difficulty is compounded by the shortage of textbooks and other print resources which would enable them to research particular aspects of topics. All teachers establish clear expectations for work and behaviour and are good role models for the subject. Activities are well structured to enable students to maintain concentration and gain confidence in their work. Teachers use praise well to encourage students to answer even when they are not completely sure about whether they are right. As a result students of all abilities participate actively in lessons. Marking is conscientious, with comments and targets that indicate what students have done well and where they need to direct further effort.
250. The subject is led by a teacher who combines the highest level of subject knowledge with a sustained enthusiasm for developing the subject within the school. There is a very clear sense of purpose and direction in the department and a commitment to raising standards. Schemes of work and lesson plans have been extensively rewritten. Staffing has improved so that, although some lessons are still taught by non-specialists, there is now a stable and committed team who work well together and have good opportunities to share good practice and gain confidence. Assessment procedures have improved significantly – students are tested on entry to the school and at the end of Year 9. A certificate of achievement has been introduced in Years 10 and 11 to run alongside the full and short GCSE courses. Religious education makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although there is good display of students' work and other materials in classrooms, the humanities corridor is bleak and unattractive.

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

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

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

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	50	62	0	15	1.0	1.5
Chemistry	1	0	43	0	5	0.0	0.8
Physics	1	100	52	0	4	1.0	0.9
Business studies	1	100	76	0	12	2.0	1.7

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	8	75	87	38	43	5.5	5.8
Biology	5	60	88	0	34	2.0	5.3
Physics	3	33	88	0	40	0.7	5.7
Design and technology	4	100	91	75	30	7.0	5.3
Business studies	13	100	92	38	32	5.5	5.5
Sports studies	2	100	92	0	25	4.0	5.1
Art	7	71	96	14	46	4.0	6.6
Music	2	100	93	50	35	5.0	5.7
Geography	9	100	92	44	38	5.8	5.7
History	9	100	88	0	35	4.8	5.5
Sociology	10	40	86	0	35	0.8	5.3
English language	10	80	91	30	30	4.8	5.3
English literature	9	89	95	0	37	3.8	5.9
Communication studies	1	100	93	0	31	4.0	5.5
German	1	100	91	0	40	2.0	5.8
Spanish	1	0	89	0	39	0.0	5.7
Business AVCE	8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.8	10.5

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England

Business	15	87	76				
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

251. The focus was on mathematics and biology, but physics and chemistry were also sampled. In physics, A-level results were well below average in 2001, though the number entering the examination was small. There were no A-level entries in 2002, but AS-level students achieved as expected from their GCSE results. One satisfactory lesson was seen in which students were given useful guidance in preparation for an examination.
252. There have been no A-level chemistry results for the past two years. In 2002, AS-level students made satisfactory progress from their GCSE results. One lesson was observed, which was good. The one student had a good grasp of the essential features of a catalyst. Good practical skills resulted from productive work with the teacher. Through a new appointment, the school has overcome the previous staffing problems that existed in chemistry.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Students attain higher results than expected from their GCSE results.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good.
- Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good.
- Advice, support and guidance provided to students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Assessments are not used enough to track students' progress through the sixth form.
- There is not enough co-ordination where several teachers take the same class.
- There is little mathematical enrichment beyond the timetabled lessons.
- Students are not confident in learning independently.

253. A-level results in 2001 were average and results in 2002 were maintained at a similar level. Students' attainment on entry to the course was below average and their progress was better than expected. Numbers taking A-level mathematics have in past years been small but are now growing. Typically 90 per cent of students complete the course and more than two-thirds chose to progress from AS level to A2 level last summer.
254. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below average in Year 12 and average in Year 13. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results. Standards are comparable across different sections of the syllabus. About 40 per cent of students in Year 13 are likely to secure higher grades and more than 90 percent to pass. The highest-attaining students can confidently manipulate complex expressions to solve problems and prove statements. Lower-attaining students can solve problems that are similar to the examples given but cannot, without help, solve problems presented in a different way.
255. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Teaching is better in Year 13 than in Year 12. Teachers have very good knowledge of and enthusiasm for mathematics. They also know examination requirements very well, so that students are thoroughly prepared. Relationships are very good and students have great confidence in their teachers, who provide considerable advice and support in and out of lessons. A weekly clinic is used well by students who are finding the work difficult. Apart from this, however, there is limited enrichment beyond timetabled lessons. The best teaching sets the learning in a relevant context and engages all students in not only giving answers to problems but in explaining their thinking. In a very good

lesson introducing logarithms to Year 12 students, the teacher explained his wish to invest money after his daughter was born, in order to secure sufficient funds for her wedding. This introduced a real-life problem that can be solved using logarithms and students were immediately interested. For the remainder of the lesson, most of the input was from individual students as they explained the reasoning behind their answers to the various problems posed. They developed understanding as well as facility with logarithms. Where teaching is satisfactory, students spend much more time listening, and while they usually solve the problems set, they are less actively engaged and therefore do not develop such a secure understanding of the processes. When faced with problems presented in a less familiar form, their lack of understanding limits their success. Students' work is thoroughly marked and constructive comments indicate how it can be improved. They value this guidance and act on it. They are less secure in learning by themselves without guidance from their teachers. Students use graphic calculators in many lessons but otherwise ICT is little used.

256. The school also offers a GCSE resit course. One lesson was observed and the teaching was good. The teacher provided a tutorial to the small group and used a range of resources to secure good learning. Standards are average for students on such courses.
257. Leadership is good and shares many characteristics seen in the main school, which the new head of faculty has rightly prioritised. Management is delegated and is good overall. The work of the large team who contribute to the teaching is monitored through observation of lessons and sampling of students' work. However there is not yet a systematic approach to assessment and monitoring of student progress, nor are students' attainment on entry and the targets set by the school used as the basis for tracking individuals. Students in Year 12 have fewer lessons than in Year 13 and lessons are split between three teachers. The teachers have informal discussions but there is not enough formal co-ordination to ensure that these students make good progress. Since the last inspection, results have improved from below average to average, representing good improvement.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement is good by Year 13, some showing high levels of motivation.
- Teaching is good, with a strong emphasis on extending students' linguistic and mathematical skills.
- Good management is characterised by planning for further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Targets are not explicit enough to give students clear tasks to improve their work between lessons.
- Computers are not used enough to develop skills in analysing and interpreting data.

258. A-level results in 2001 were well below average and while they improved significantly in 2002, no students achieved A or B grades. In 2002, however, students made better than expected progress from their GCSE results. The subject retains about half of its students into the second year of the course, a small number of weaker students repeating Year 12.
259. For current students in Year 13, standards are average. They are higher than recent examination results because teaching has improved and standards are rising at GCSE. They learn well because teachers explain clearly and prepare them for examinations with care. During a revision session, for example, Year 13 gained a better understanding of the style of examination questions. They improved their ability to interpret experimental data because the teacher demanded a high level of participation. However, their coursework does not include sufficient extended writing or evidence of appropriate use of ICT. Students do use the internet for research to consolidate and extend their learning. Students achieve well; they sustain good progress from GCSE and rise to the challenge of the course.

260. Year 12 students make sound progress. They have a good mathematical understanding of the ratio of surface area to volume in the transport of biochemical substances across cell membranes. At the start of the course they are reticent to answer questions, but they improve their ability in this because the teacher places a high demand on accurate verbal explanations. In this way, students become more adept at using scientific language. With good support, students work effectively as a team, but find it difficult to engage in active learning methods because they have not gained these skills lower down the school.
261. Students' positive attitudes aid their learning. Every student wants to complete the course and has realistic aspirations for higher education. They have positive attitudes to analysing their strengths and weaknesses and are appreciative of the guidance teachers offer them. A student in Year 13 spoke about his very good improvement in Year 12 and valued the opportunity he had for a second chance following low GCSE grades.
262. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers ask searching questions, challenging students to offer logical explanations. They work hard to ensure individuals have understood. They continue to question individuals as they work on tasks and students grow in confidence to seek clarification and correct errors in their thinking. Students' work is assessed carefully. They are well supported by written comments, offering individual guidance of what each needs to do to improve. Year 12 students are beginning to use the school's process of setting targets for improvement. However, their targets need to be more explicit so that they are clearer about what they need to do to achieve them. All students are offered extension sessions, but some do not make best use of these opportunities. They would benefit from more formal tutorials in order to refine their abilities and prepare them further for their next career stage.
263. The subject is managed well and the team of teachers aspires to improve achievement further. They are succeeding in recruiting more students in the current Year 11 as standards improve at GCSE. Computers are not used sufficiently as a routine element of teaching and learning. Consequently students are inexperienced in manipulating data and deriving conclusions from mathematical information.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

264. The school offers an A-level course in product design, which was sampled. Examination results were above average in 2001 but declined slightly in 2002. Numbers taking the examination have been small. Students made better than expected progress from GCSE. The number of students enrolling has risen in 2002 and the subject is becoming a popular sixth form choice. A Year 12 lesson was seen, which was good. Students each gave a presentation to the class on the progress of their project, reviewing successes and problems. The presentations were carefully planned and of a good quality. After each talk other members of the class offered useful and constructive comments.

BUSINESS

265. The school provides business studies courses at three different levels in Year 12. Students can study for AS-level business studies, or for GNVQ qualifications at intermediate or foundation level. Year 13 has only business studies A2 level. These courses were inspected.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Students achieve better than expected results on the AS-level and A-level courses.
- A good new head of department has brought energy and vigour to the subject.
- Good and very good teaching gives students a good range of relevant activity.
- Young Enterprise and other aspects of students' work experience are used well in their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation for business studies is unsatisfactory.

266. Students have followed a number of different courses in business studies in recent years and results have varied. In 2001, standards were average in the vocational and A-level courses. A-level results improved in 2002 and students made significantly better progress than expected from their GCSE results. A small number of students took the AVCE, where achievement was much less good. AS-level results in 2002 were average and students made good progress from relatively low attainment on entry to the course. In 2002, the school also entered students for accounting and finance at AS level, where none attained the higher grades, and results and achievement were unsatisfactory. The department ceased to provide this course as a result of an analysis of these grades and of monitoring the quality of teaching at that time.
267. For students currently following vocational and A-level courses, standards are average. Students' achievement remains good, with those of differing levels of attainment well provided for, and included equally in all aspects of the department's work. Teaching is good on all the courses. Difficulties over staffing and the quality of teaching have been resolved through the very recent appointment of an effective new head of department. Previous strengths in teaching from experienced, senior members of staff are still in place. As a result of the improved staffing, the department is planning to re-instate accounting and finance courses and offer a combined course in A-level business studies and economics.
268. Year 13 students develop a good understanding of marketing. In one very good lesson, for example, students used a real example of marketing toothpaste in a well-planned exercise that improved their understanding of product differentiation and pricing. In a Year 12 lesson, students made good progress in understanding production methods and stock control through a video that set these in a real context. A feature of the teaching is the effective way in which students' own experience of work and business is used to reinforce their learning. Year 12 students' involvement in the Young Enterprise scheme in particular is very helpful in linking theoretical learning to reality. Most of the Year 12 AS-level group take part in this scheme. They created a successful product last term and have now been commissioned by the head teacher to produce a batch of wine glasses etched with the school's logo. Production of the prototype was in progress during the inspection, with students learning very effectively through solving initial technical problems in the sand-blasting process.
269. Students in the GNVQ Intermediate group compile a portfolio about how new businesses acquire information. They develop a good understanding about the sources and use of data and of how such information needs to be up-to-date. In one lesson, the teacher showed clearly how inaccurate data can be misleading and lead to wrong interpretations. Students' ICT skills are sound – they can access current information on the internet, and present this in suitable formats, such as different types of graphs. Good, patient teaching of lower-attaining students helps them to understand the data and how to interpret and use it.
270. The GNVQ Foundation course is being dropped from the range offered. This is mainly because standards coming up through the school have improved, so this lower level of provision is now unnecessary. The very small number of lower-attaining students currently studying for this qualification are achieving well and have developed a good degree of independent operation. They work very effectively on ICT presentations, with the teacher wisely not intervening too much. A visit to a local organisation has informed these students' work well.
271. The new head of department has brought a breadth of experience to the subject and a lively energy which students enjoy. The school recognises that accommodation for business studies is unsatisfactory, because there are not enough rooms for the current demand. Some courses, particularly the GNVQ Intermediate, have lessons in many different rooms, some of which are unsuitable. The department cannot develop a suitable business studies or vocational environment. ICT access is good because many lessons take place in ICT suites and the department is part of the same faculty. Library resources are inadequate, but the librarian has plans to extend these when finance becomes available.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

272. The school offers an A-level course in ICT. This course was inspected.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge promotes good learning.
- Achievement was good in the 2002 AS-level examinations.
- Students are positive about their learning in ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have colour printers to enable them to evaluate their graphics work.
- There are not sufficient software manuals or appropriate software for graphics and desktop publishing.

273. Numbers have risen this year and there are around 40 students taking ICT in the sixth form, making this one of the most popular subjects in the school. It is very rare for a student not to complete the course.

274. The school has not entered students for A-level ICT yet. Results in the 2002 AS-level examination were similar to the average of other subjects in the school. Overall, students attained grades that were better than predicted from their GCSE results. This represents good achievement.

275. The standards of work seen during the inspection are below average in both Year 12 and Year 13. This reflects accurately the ability of students taking the courses and students achieve well. Students' knowledge of theory is secure in AS and A2-level classes. For example, students clearly understand health and safety issues and the history of the development of ICT. Students' practical skills are average in database and spreadsheet work. Higher-attaining students can link spreadsheets and databases but their progress is hampered because they do not have access to software manuals to develop their skills. Standards in graphics and desktop publishing are weaker because the school does not have suitable software for students to use. Students' designing skills are good. Evaluation of work, particularly graphics, is limited by poor access to colour printers.

276. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and real enthusiasm for the subject. This was seen in a very good AS-level lesson where the teacher clearly explained the differences between flat and relational databases and went on to explain the finer details of database construction. This gave students the confidence to design and write their own database and undertake validation checks. Lessons include a high level of challenge and students enjoy the work. In a good Year 13 lesson, for example, students made rapid progress in learning to write macros in Word and Excel. They were encouraged to look at the programs and make on-screen adjustments to alter the effect of their commands. The high level of involvement and quick feedback led them to enjoy the experience. Lessons are well planned and students learn from a good range of appropriate tasks. A feature of all lessons is the valuable individual help given by teachers which ensures that all students make good progress.

277. Students' attitudes are good. Students in Year 13 are particularly positive about their work in ICT. All appreciate the personal help they are given by their teachers. They respect the high standards set by their teachers and expect to do well. They would like ready access to colour printers and scanners to help them in their work. Most students agreed that feedback from teachers on their progress and attainment is good but AS-level students would like this feedback to be in grades as well as marks.

278. The leadership and management of the subject are good and there are clear plans to improve attainment. The department supports the school's inclusive policy by allowing students who have

not studied ICT at GCSE to enrol. There are plans to broaden the curriculum by providing a course for students that have completed GNVQ in Year 11.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

279. The school offers an intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism, AS-level and BTEC courses in sports studies, as well as recreational sport. These courses were sampled. Leisure and tourism is a new course and one lesson was observed, which was good. Students were learning about business aspects of leisure and tourism, using McDonald's as a case study. The discussion was well managed and hence involved all students, who made good progress.
280. In sports studies, students reach average standards in most aspects of sixth form work. They are below average in the scientific modules of the AS-level course, because many of the students achieved lower grades in GCSE science. The BTEC students have a good grasp of facts and have placements in local leisure facilities and schools to support their studies. There is a good range of activities for recreational sport and good use of local leisure facilities. Three lessons were seen, which were all at least good. Particular strengths are the teachers' depth of knowledge, which enables them to match tasks to the learners' ability, and the use of ICT and resources to reinforce learning. There are very positive relationships between teachers and students.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

281. No courses are offered in health and social care.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

282. The focus was on music and film studies. Drama and media studies were also sampled. There were no A-level results in drama in 2001, but in 2002 they were about average. A Year 13 lesson was observed. It was a theory lesson on Brecht, and the teacher's very good subject knowledge enabled her to explain important theatrical techniques clearly and interestingly. The students as a consequence learned well.
283. Media studies has been introduced this year as an AS level. Two lessons were observed. One was very good and the other satisfactory. The very good lesson was an introduction to print advertising. Students were fully involved and challenged by very good questioning; through group discussion they contributed their own ideas, which were developed and linked together by the teacher. The satisfactory lesson achieved less because the discussion allowed many students to remain passive. In addition, facts were not always distinguished from opinions.

Music

The school offers A-level courses in music and music technology. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers have a good range of complementary music skills and knowledge.
- ICT is used well on both courses but especially on the music technology course.
- Work is marked regularly and well; assessment is good.
- There is much enthusiasm for music; relationships with students and between students are very good.
- There are good opportunities for making music in extra-curricular activities.

Areas for improvement

- Students should use their instrumental skills more in lessons.
- Some lessons are gently paced and lack urgency.

284. Standards at the end of the sixth form courses are average. In 2002 one student took A-level music, obtaining a B grade. This year's four Year 13 students should score at average levels

overall. In music technology, the first AS-level entries were in 2002 and results were similar to the 2001 national average; the five students in Year 13 currently attain average levels overall. Students work consistently and carefully and achieve well. The minority who came to the A-level music technology course without having taken GCSE music cope particularly well. On both courses, but especially on the music technology course, students have a good knowledge of music ICT skills.

285. Year 12 music technology students have at least an average knowledge of studio recording techniques. They listen acutely to examples of recording faults, showing good aural skills as well as quick thinking. Year 13 students also show good listening skills. When listening to the music for the film 'Titanic', for example, they could identify which sounds were natural and which were computer generated. The teacher's comprehensive knowledge of this technical aspect of the course helped to make the work clear and interesting. Many Year 12 students on the music course have a slender knowledge of harmony. However, Year 13 students have a much better working knowledge. They have an average grasp of four-part harmony based on the style of Bach's chorales. In the last inspection, composition skills were weak and students struggled with four-part harmony. Students now compose using keyboards and computers and standards are average overall. These aspects of the music course have improved.
286. Teaching is good overall. The three teachers of sixth form music have good and complementary skills and knowledge. This provides all-round expertise to the advantage of students' learning. Lessons are well prepared, although written preparation is sometimes brief. Some lessons lack urgency but all are well organised and no time is wasted. As a result, students make good progress in the aspects of music which are new to them. Relationships are very good; the tutorial atmosphere reported in the last inspection still helps students to work well with one another and with the teacher. Teachers ask questions skilfully and give students ample time to consider before deciding and replying. This enables all students to take a full part in lessons and learn. Teachers are aware of students' individual strengths and weaknesses. This helps them to plan the course to the benefit of all students. It also gives students confidence and a positive feeling about progress.
287. The number of students studying music at A level is growing. The new music technology course is popular and adds another dimension to sixth form music. The school provides free instrumental lessons to all A-level music students. Sixth form students have access to a good range of extra-curricular activities in which they can use these skills but they need more opportunities to use them in lessons. Provision has improved considerably since the time of the last inspection. It is well thought out and managed, although more detailed written planning is needed. Leadership is good. The department is well equipped, especially with keyboards, computers and software; this widens the opportunities on both courses.

Film Studies

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

Strengths

- AS-level results in 2002 were above average.
- Students achieve significant added value.
- The teaching is based on strong subject expertise.
- Students' ability to analyse films is developed well.
- Students receive very good guidance and support in managing their coursework.

Areas for improvement

- Some students have poorly-developed notes.
- There is a limited range of books and magazines to support the students' learning.

288. A-level results are above average. In 2002, students were examined in film studies for the first time, and attainment was above the 2001 national average, with a 100 per cent pass rate and over half the students obtaining grades A or B. In addition, students performed well above what would be expected in relation to their GCSE results.

289. In work seen during the inspection, standards are also above average and students achieve very well. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the way films create meaning, particularly in relation to narrative and genre. For example, several students were able to write effective analyses of the film 'LA Confidential' as a modern example of film noir. Students also show good skills when applying their understanding of film in the creation of storyboards and screenplays. There are good relationships between teachers and students.
290. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The teaching is well informed by good expertise in the subject. In class, there is an emphasis on developing students' understanding and communication skills by requiring them to work together and share ideas when analysing films and then present their ideas to the whole class. In a Year 13 class, for example, students were able to talk fluently and perceptively when discussing the opening of the New Zealand film drama 'Once we were Warriors'. In a Year 12 class, students worked well in pairs mixing and matching appropriate film genre conventions from a menu supplied by the teacher, before explaining their choices to the rest of the class. Good learning is further developed through the teachers' careful probing and questioning of students' responses in class. When tackling coursework assignments, students benefit from very good guidance and support. The assignments are broken down into well-defined manageable tasks and students' progress is then helped by careful monitoring. The students' work is thoroughly assessed and teachers' feedback allows them to see how they can improve the standard of their work. Moreover, students are given a clear idea of their progress and how to work towards achieving a higher grade. Whilst students are provided with a good range of handouts to support their learning, these are often not actively used. Furthermore, the quality of some students' notes is poor and their course folders are disorganised or incomplete. There is good enrichment of the course in a film club, which enables students to see screenings of films outside classroom hours, as well as borrow from a large video and DVD film collection.
291. Film studies is a well-managed department. There is good teamwork in planning and delivering the course, but there is an emphasis on older films and genres that restricts students' opportunities to make use of their own experiences of films. The students enjoy good facilities for viewing films in the well-equipped lecture theatre. However, it is not very suitable as the main teaching room for the subject, lacking a whiteboard or desks for the students to use. Although there is a good collection of videos and DVDs in the library, there is a poor stock of suitable textbooks to enable students to undertake additional reading. Furthermore, the library does not subscribe to any film magazines.

HUMANITIES

292. The focus was on geography, but history, religious studies, psychology and sociology were also sampled. In history, examination results were average in 2001 and similar in 2002. One lesson was observed, which was very good. Students made very good progress in understanding how the Bolsheviks survived their first few months in power because of the teacher's high expectations and good organisation of the lesson.
293. Religious studies and psychology were introduced in 2001 and there have not been any A-level results. One lesson of religious studies was observed, which was good. Two lessons in psychology were both satisfactory. In one, students were learning the main methods of sampling used by psychologists, using a model farm as a concrete example. They enjoyed the lesson because they were doing the work practically and some were able to relate the sampling methods to studies they had met. However, the teacher did not systematically check students' understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of each method.
294. Sociology results were very low in 2001, but much improved in 2002. One lesson was observed, which was satisfactory. Students were discussing gender roles in the family. They were interested but the pace was slow because the teacher did not involve them all in the discussion.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Leadership, management and teamwork are very good.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- There are good quality case studies and opportunities for fieldwork.
- Most marking is done very well.

Areas for improvement

- Students' progress is limited by weaknesses in essay writing and lack of higher order skills in analysing and interpreting data.
- In a small number of instances marked work is not always returned promptly.

295. In the A-level examinations in 2001, standards were average. All the students passed and nearly half gained A or B grades. In 2002, results were lower, but all students gained a grade and, in relation to their GCSE results, they made good progress. In both years, boys did better than girls. The AS-level results in 2002 were weaker, with a third of the 12 candidates failing to achieve a grade.
296. For current students, standards are below average, with few students achieving at higher grade A or B level. Most students are working at pass grade level in coursework and assessments. However, as these students started the courses with below average GCSE grades, these standards represent good achievement. The higher grades achieved in 2001 and also in 1999 were due at least in part to the higher level of ability in those year groups.
297. Students show satisfactory knowledge of coastal processes and landforms. Year 12 students' field study work on the north Norfolk coast shows that they have effective practical techniques, but their ability to analyse and interpret evidence is less developed. Students in Year 13 display a satisfactory understanding of natural hazards and their management by man. They are able to do independent research, making effective use of interactive CD-ROMs and the internet to gain information. The progress of students in both year groups is limited by weaker skills in analysing and evaluating evidence, difficulties structuring essays and a lack of detail in written work. Students in both years are working well with their teachers to overcome these problems. They are making good progress.
298. Teaching is consistently good. Lessons have a clear structure and are carefully planned to meet the particular needs of individual students. Resources, particularly computers, are used effectively. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. Most marking is very thorough – helpful comments give students accurate judgements on the quality of their work and provide guidance on how to improve. Occasionally, however, marked work is not returned promptly. Students are challenged to think for themselves and develop research skills. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students were encouraged to do their own research into the management of natural hazards, but were carefully supported with the skills they needed. In an AS-level lesson, students increased their understanding of sustainable development and urbanisation through thinking in groups in response to the teacher's clear explanation. Most students are keen to learn and their good attitudes contribute to their progress. They work well in pairs when they are doing enquiry work.
299. The subject is very well managed. The scheme of work is planned to meet the requirements of the examination board and topics are well sequenced. Up-to-date case studies are used effectively and contribute significantly to teaching and learning. Students' performance is carefully monitored and the results are carefully analysed. Regular meetings and good teamwork enable teachers to share good practice and make improvements to the way that units of work are taught. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

300. The focus was on English and Spanish, but German, French and Japanese were also sampled. Few students study a foreign language to AS or A level. German A-level results were below average in 2001 and remained similar in 2002. Only three candidates took French A-level in 2002, but performed well. Two lessons were observed in each of French and German and one in Japanese. The teaching in German was good and in French it was at least very good. The Japanese course is a short introductory one taken by all AS-level students. The lesson seen was very skilfully taught entirely in Japanese. Students learned to introduce themselves in Japanese and thoroughly enjoyed learning Japanese numbers through a card game. The lesson gave students a strong sense of achievement and their learning was excellent.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, with teachers' specialist subject knowledge used to good effect to extend students' learning.
- Marking and assessment of students' work is thorough and helpful.

Area for improvement

- A wider range of teaching and learning methods is needed to stimulate and engage students.

301. In 2001, A-level results were average in English language and well below average in English literature. There were no English language candidates in 2002, but the English literature results improved significantly and were among the best in the school. Students' progress from GCSE was significantly better than expected. In the 2002 AS-level examinations, the English language results were around the 2001 national average, but the literature results were considerably lower. Although there have been fluctuations and variations of results between courses, the students have generally made good progress compared with their level when they started the course.
302. For current students, standards are average overall, with the full range of grades represented across the different courses. In Year 12 English language, some higher-attaining students can analyse text accurately, using appropriate technical terms to describe and explain writers' intentions. They can comment on the differences between spoken and written language and they express interesting ideas accurately and often stylishly. In English language and literature, one thoughtful essay comparing 'Northanger Abbey' with 'The Life and Loves of a She Devil' showed an ability to analyse and compare different texts successfully, although the writing suffered from some rather clumsy expressions. In the Year 13 literature course, students had detailed notes on William Blake, with some interesting interpretative comments on his poetry. The pieces were fairly short and superficial, and hence were on target to attain a D or E grade. Many students start sixth form English courses with lower grades than would be expected, and they achieve well throughout the course.
303. Teaching and learning on the AS and A-level courses are good, and some very good lessons were seen. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions, as well as to explain the finer points of linguistic and literary analysis. In a Year 13 lesson on how to structure a comparative literature essay, the students learnt a lot about essay writing techniques because the teacher's excellent subject knowledge enabled her to explain points very clearly, in appropriate detail. She also involved students in the learning process, and had prepared effective visual resources to help them plan and structure their essays. In a Year 12 English language lesson, students were engaged by the very interesting, challenging comments that the teacher made about sexist language. He encouraged them to think deeply and make connections between ideas, and constantly reinforced technical linguistic terms. As a consequence, they learnt very well. Where teaching and learning are only satisfactory, as occasionally is the case, the pace of the lesson is rather slow and students are not actively engaged. In these lessons a wider range of teaching methods are needed to involve students more.

304. Teachers mark work well, grading attainment in relation to A-level criteria. They analyse students' strengths and weaknesses and attempt to address areas that students find particularly difficult, providing good support for both examination practice and coursework.
305. Leadership and management are good. The faculty has responded well to the demands of the AS and A2-level syllabuses, and three different English courses are offered, in order to meet students' interests. A number of the teachers are new, and the acting head of faculty is doing a good job in creating a supportive team

Spanish

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject expertise, know their students well and monitor their progress closely.
- Students have good listening skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students' oral skills are not well developed and they do not read widely.
- An extended study trip or work experience placement in Spain would benefit students' learning.
- Attainment at AS level and A level is not high enough.

306. Results in A-level Spanish in the last two years have been very low. In 2002, students significantly underachieved at both AS and A level. Numbers of students sitting the A-level examination have been few and there are only two candidates for 2003. Seven students are currently studying Spanish in Year 12.
307. The attainment of the current students in Year 12 is below average. It is higher than in recent examination results because there have been recent changes of staff and teaching has improved. Some students began the course with a modest GCSE qualification and have found the transition to advanced studies difficult. They have major gaps in their knowledge of basic vocabulary and structures. Some are not well motivated and have not adjusted to the extra level of hard work needed. Others have made exemplary progress and have written extended essays in accurate Spanish on a range of complex topics. They express mature ideas.
308. Overall, considering their prior attainment, students' achievement in Year 12 is satisfactory. Students' listening skills are good. They understand their teachers well when they speak the language. However, most students are reluctant to give more than the minimum answer. They lack confidence in speaking. Almost all still lack the basic level of fluency needed to participate in discussion. Although they have all taken family holidays in Spain, some frequently, they have not yet taken part in a language study trip. They would benefit from a stay in a Spanish family or a work experience placement. Students do little or no reading in Spanish, apart from the texts used in class, and in most cases their reading skills are not well developed. Students' basic computer skills are sound, and teachers encourage them to use selected web-sites to support their learning. Year 12 students take part in a web-based newspaper day with contributions from partner schools in France, Germany and Spain. However they do not use word-processing to draft written work and enhance its quality and presentation.
309. In Year 13, achievement is good and standards are average. The two students have developed more confidence in speaking Spanish. One student now speaks fluently, expressing her views and knowledge well. The written work of both students shows satisfactory progress since the start of the course in Year 12, although they still make basic errors in spelling and grammar. Standards of work in Year 13 lessons are encouraging. The students understand and use complex sentence structures and have good knowledge of verb forms, including the subjunctive mood. They have developed a useful range of specialist topic vocabulary. They are enthusiastic and well prepared and work hard.

310. Overall, teaching in the sixth form is good; learning is good in Year 13 but no more than satisfactory in Year 12, because of weak oral skills and lack of motivation on the part of some students. Where teaching is at its best in Year 12, the teacher successfully uses pair-work to encourage students to discuss issues such as health and education. The teachers are expert linguists. On one occasion, the teacher patiently and skilfully used Spanish to prompt a response and the students eventually lost their inhibitions. In another lesson, a well-planned combination of grammar study, ICT and a political text prepared students for a debate on a current issue the following week. Less successful teaching occurred when the teacher did not require students to use the language, and so they did not practise their language skills; the work was not challenging enough and students were allowed to do less than their best. Very good teaching was seen in Year 13, where the teacher expertly maintained communication in Spanish throughout the lesson, challenged the students to think for themselves and integrated aspects of grammar study, discussion and competition. The students' response was very good and they took pride in their success.
311. Students enjoy their lessons and get on well with their teachers, who know them well and monitor their progress closely. The courses are well managed and planned. Results are analysed, weaknesses in performance diagnosed, and measures taken to improve provision. However this has not yet had sufficient impact on standards in A-level examinations, which remain modest, with little improvement since the last inspection. Nevertheless there is now a strong team of well-qualified teachers of Spanish and therefore good capacity to improve in the immediate future.